

HAB Update for Lake Hartwell Association

Latest Lake Hartwell Survey Performed June 3, 2025

SCDES's Aquatic Science Division (ASD) teams surveyed the lake and collected new water samples from 10 different locations, as identified in the map graphic below. SCDES's [Algal Bloom Monitoring Map](#) has been updated with sampling locations and observations since June 2.

The bloom is still present in several areas of the lake, however, SCDES's ASD field teams observed continued improvement in many coves and nearshore areas compared to the previous survey on May 22. While the bloom appears to be lessening in certain areas, it's advised to continue to use caution in areas where the bloom is observed.

The cyanotoxin microcystin was detected in all 10 samples collected on June 3, with a maximum concentration of 0.89 micrograms per liter. This is below the recreational standard of 8 micrograms per liter.

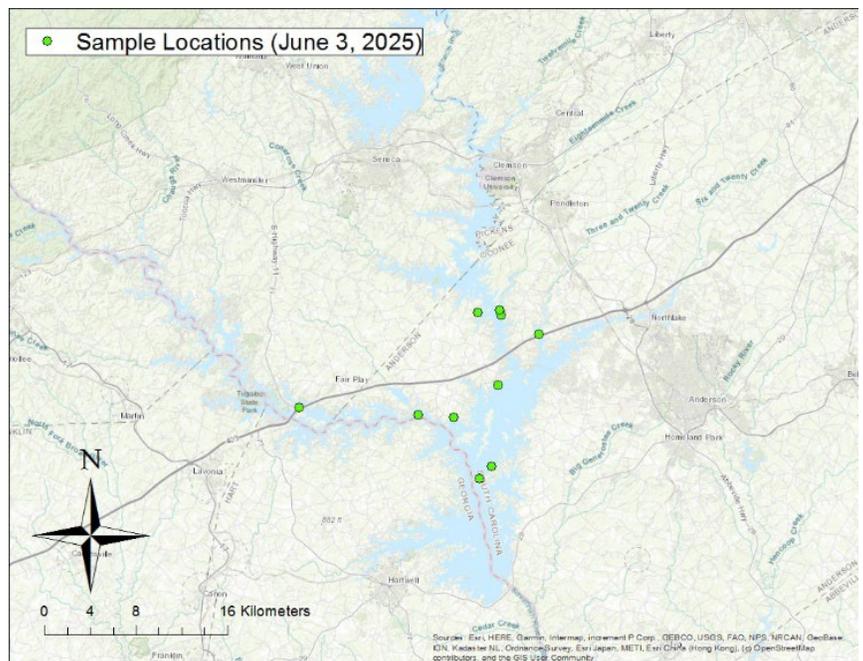
Based on the latest round of sampling, SCDES has updated the Recreational Watch for Lake Hartwell and removed certain areas from the Lake, including:

- Tugaloo River lake arm upstream of I-85
- Seneca River lake arm upstream of West Cherry Road
- Six and Twenty lake arm upstream of Centerville Road

The Recreational Watch for Lake Hartwell remains in effect for areas downstream of these road crossings, with the following recommendations:

- avoid direct contact with lake water in areas where the HAB is observed
- keep pets and animals from swimming in or drinking from the lake in areas where the HAB is observed

The HAB may still be found in areas where the Recreational Watch has been lifted. SCDES encourages caution when using or recreating in coves and near the shore.



Lake Hartwell Association Questions

Please find additional information and Frequently Asked Questions at des.sc.gov/habs.

Background on Toxicity Thresholds

The EPA has developed [health advisories](#) for the cyanotoxins cylindrospermopsin and microcystin in drinking and recreational water. South Carolina has adopted the recreational standards for these cyanotoxins. EPA's drinking water health advisories are used as technical guidance.

- Recreational Standards:

Microcystins	Cylindrospermopsin
8 µg/L	15 µg/L

* µg/L = micrograms per liter, or parts per billion

- Advisories and watches are based on recreational standards. Specific information on Watches and Advisories can be found on the HAB Map at des.sc.gov/habs under the "About HAB" box.

Q: For "WATCH" status at reported areas, then it would be ok to swim since the algae is "producing bloom has been identified but is not producing toxins that are greater than our state recreational standards"? Having stated that.....even if in a watch area, you'd probably not want to swim in an area where blooms are present, right?

A: Correct. SCDES recommends:

- avoiding direct contact with lake water in areas where the HAB is observed
- keeping animals from swimming in or drinking from the lake in areas where the HAB is observed

Q: Is there a different toxic threshold for humans vs animals? Would the "watch" or "advisory" status apply to only humans?---animals would have greater or lesser threshold?

A: SCDES Watches and Advisories are based on human recreation. The agency doesn't have standards for animals; however, we recommend keeping animals and pets away from lake areas where the HAB is present as animals are likely to ingest lake water and consume floating algae.

Q: Can algae be present and/or toxic if not visible in water?

A: Yes, toxin producing algae can be present even if the water appears clear or if algae isn't highly visible. A general rule of thumb with any natural waterbody is, "When in doubt, stay out."

Q: Is there an algae or toxicity self-test?

A: Yes, but SCDES can't comment on the reliability and accuracy of these tests.

Q: Any reason why Lake Hartwell is so prevalent with HABs compared to other lakes?

A: HABs are a common occurrence in South Carolina lakes. It's unclear why the HAB in Lake Hartwell is so prevalent this year. HABs respond to prevailing environmental conditions like rainfall and weather patterns.

Q: Would using a bubble aerator reduce the tendency for the algae blooms to accumulate or the toxicity to reduce?

A: Aerators are used in smaller reservoirs to circulate water and break up stagnation and algae build up.

Q: Is there a life cycle to HABs?

A: Yes, HABs do have a life cycle. Each event is different, and it is difficult to say when the Lake Hartwell HAB will die off.