

Hot weather, land abuses fueling algal blooms

By Matt Weiser, Water Deeply

The West is known for summer wildfires. Now it seems Western summers will be distinguished by another kind of flare-up: algae blooms.

This summer has witnessed an explosion of algae problems in Western water bodies. Usually marked by a bright green mat of floating scum, the blooms are unsightly and unpleasant for water lovers. More concerning are potentially toxic cyanobacteria often produced by the algae, which can be deadly to pets and livestock and cause illnesses in people.

These harmful algal blooms have popped up in freshwater lakes and streams for years. But in recent years they seem bigger and more widespread than ever, resulting in closed beaches, public health warnings and risks to drinking water in a few locations.

Blooms are even popping up in unlikely places, such as high-elevation mountain lakes.

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