

Did dry weather aid in algae spread?

Heat could have added to toxic bloom’s growth, officials say

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

One of the hottest and driest months of May on record may have contributed to the growth and spread of the toxic algae bloom wreaking havoc in Salem’s drinking water.

The algae bloom was originally spotted in Detroit Lake on May 8 and reached highly toxic levels around May 21, according to officials.

The record heat and dry conditions apparently kept the bloom strong, allowing the toxins to spread from the reservoir, into the North Santiam River and finally into Salem’s drinking water for the first time at dangerous levels.

Salem issued its second do-not-drink alert

Wednesday for vulnerable populations following the discovery, for the second week in a row, of high levels of cyanotoxins in the drinking water.

"We have a toxic algae bloom at Detroit Lake just about every year at this time," said U.S. Forest Service Detroit district ranger Grady McMahan. "In most years, we get some rain that helps dissipate the bloom and kind of clear out the lake. But this year we just didn't get rain."

The month of May was parched by every standard. It was the fourth-driest and sixth- hottest May in records dating back to 1892, National Weather Service officials said.

In a normal May, the Willamette Valley and Cascade Foothills would get 2.5 to 3 inches of precipitation. This year, only a quarter inch of rain fell, NWS officials said.

Hot and dry conditions can fuel the growth and po-

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The algae bloom was originally spotted in Detroit Lake on May 8.

PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Grateful parents say ‘thank you’

Silverton preschool teacher receives trip of a lifetime



Teacher Meg Feicht is surprised by parents who raised money to send her on an Italian vacation.

CHRISTENA BROOKS / SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

Christena Brooks Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Parents wanting to say thank-you at the end of the school year typically give teachers flowers, food or collectibles made by their kids.

Last week, a group of grateful parents gave their beloved preschool teacher a trip to Italy.

In just three days, families of past and present students and other community members secretly collected nearly \$5,000, and then many of them packed a downtown restaurant on Friday to watch teacher Meg Feicht get the surprise vacation of a lifetime.

"You have sowed love generously and intentionally your whole life," said fundraising coordinator Summer Sheldon, as Meg sat, shocked, at her table. "We

are here to say thank you in a very small way for what you have given this community and all of us – and especially to our students."

Nearly everyone inside the restaurant, Gather, was there because of Meg. Still, she didn't realize she was the honored guest until Sheldon and co-coordinator Krystina Bielemeier walked through the door with balloons – and dozens of friends stood up from their tables, cheering and clapping.

Through her tears, the preschool teacher finally managed, "For once in my life, I'm speechless!"

Feicht is the powerhouse behind Silverton Christian Preschool, a popular program run by Silverton Friends Church. For 13 years, she's been gently intro-

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Why does Gates have cleaner drinking water than Salem?

Bill Poehler Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

GATES – For more than a week, residents of Salem have dealt with toxins in their drinking water.

But in Gates, population 489, the water has been clean. Recent tests of Gates' drinking water haven't detected any of the cyanotoxins produced by blue-green algae and found in Salem.

Gates' water is drawn closer to Detroit Lake – the

site of the blue-green algae bloom –than any other city along the North Santiam River.

In theory, Gates' water should have more cyanotoxins than other towns, but its more advanced water filtration has proved effective.

"I had a conversation (with the Oregon Health Authority) when this first happened, and they said your tests are coming back where there's no detects, so

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Deputy seen in punching video is reassigned

Whitney Woodworth Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Marion County Sheriff's Office has reassigned a deputy caught on video repeatedly punching a homeless man while taking him into custody June 4.

A KGW camera operator captured footage of five deputies arresting Kevin Straw, 28, for allegedly disrupting a search and rescue mission for two missing fishermen in Detroit.

In the video, Deputy Jake Thompson appears to punch Straw in the back of the head more than 20 times.

Thompson, who was previously on patrol with the enforcement division, also had worked providing police services at the Chemawa Indian School through a contract with the sheriff's office. He joined the sheriff's office as a reserve officer in 2004 and was hired full-time in 2011.

In a statement issued Tuesday, Marion County Sheriff Jason Myers said officials are investigating the arrest and the use of force. During the review, Thompson will be temporarily reassigned to a non-patrol assignment.

Myers said upon the conclusion of the investigation, the sheriff's office will request another review by an outside law enforcement agency to ensure transparency.

The other involved deputies were identified as Derrick Ramseyer, who was hired in 2007, Dave Zahn, hired in 1998, Ethan Griffith, hired in 2008, and Mark Ferron, hired in 2006.

Officials with ACLU Oregon called the deputies' actions unjustified and violent. ACLU Oregon executive director David Rogers called for an investigation into the incident.

"Repeatedly punching someone who is appre-

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Marion County deputies take Kevin Straw, 28, into custody, as seen in this video screenshot.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KGW

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