

Risk

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It's unclear what may be required of any systems found to be at risk for toxic algae blooms in regards to testing or treatment. OHA Director Pat Allen said last week that his agency will implement temporary rules requiring testing for cyanotoxins, but those conversations are still ongoing. Any permanent rules would have to go through a more laborious process later on.

Any additional requirements are going to cost money for work hours and testing, likely placing more responsibility on a state department that has been underfunded for years.

Drinking Water Services within OHA, which regulates all 3,000 water systems in the state, has shed almost a third of its staff since 2011, forcing remaining employees to prioritize regulating some systems over others and stop all but the most critical data management.

Department manager David Emme said funding has been stagnant at best as the federal grants that make up the majority of the budget have not kept up with inflation or increasing personnel costs.

The state's funding also proved unreliable, as the medical marijuana fees used to fund the agency over the past couple biennia declined after full legalization. General funds replaced that in 2017, but at levels still below what Emme said is needed to fund the department's core purposes.

Even before Salem's water crisis, Emme said, the department was working on a plan to pitch to the state Legis-



Chris Kowitz, water program coordinator for the city of Salem, pulls a nutrient sample at Heater Creek, a tributary to Detroit Lake. PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SALEM

lature that would raise an additional \$1 million per year by issuing new fees to water systems. The budget for this biennium is \$13.6 million.

The plan is supposed to go before lawmakers during the 2019 session. Fees would vary based on system size — larger systems would be asked to pay more than smaller systems — and the day-to-day benefit would largely go toward those smaller systems that don't have the staff to test their water independently of the state.

"We're in good shape, but smaller cities that may need more help, that might really impact them," said Dwayne Barnes, utility operations manager for City of Salem Public Works.

Salem's Democratic Senator Peter Courtney has also said he wants water funding to be a priority in 2019. He ex-

pects a proposal to be presented during September legislative days so lawmakers can be ready to move forward when the January session begins.

"That part of the budget has got to get special attention in the next session," the Senate President said.

Courtney said he also wants to see a major water testing facility built in Oregon, so water samples no longer have to be shipped to out-of-state labs. Results from samples of Salem's water during the crisis arrive on a two-day delay because testing is done in a lab in Ohio.

"We have a very serious problem in the state of Oregon that we have to address," Courtney said.

Contact the reporter at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich

Oregon Public Water Systems at Risk	
Water Systems	Water Source
Springfield Utility Board	McKenzie River
Eugene Water and Electric Board	McKenzie River
City of Gates	N. Santiam River
Mill City Water Department	N. Santiam River
Lyons Mehema Water District	N. Santiam River
Salem Public Works	N. Santiam River
Stayton Water Supply	N. Santiam River
City of Albany	Santiam River
City of Jefferson	Santiam River
City of Cottage Grove	Row River
City of Creswell	C. F. Willamette R.
City of Lowell	M. F. Willamette R.
Springfield Utility Board	M. F. Willamette R.
PP & L-Tokatee Village	N. Umpqua River
City of Glide	N. Umpqua River
City of Roseburg	N. Umpqua River
Umpqua Basin Water Association	N. Umpqua River
City of Estacada	Clackamas River
Clackamas River Water-Clackamas	Clackamas River
North Clackamas County W. C.	Clackamas River
South Fork W. B. Oregon City	Clackamas River
Lake Oswego Municipal Water	Clackamas River
Tiller Ranger Station	S. Umpqua River
Tiller Elementary	S. Umpqua River
Milo Academy	S. Umpqua River
City of Canyonville	Canyon Creek
Lawson Acres Water Association	Cow Creek
City of Riddle	Cow Creek
Tri-City JW & SA	S. Umpqua River
City of Myrtle Creek	S. Umpqua River
Clarks Branch Water Association	S. Umpqua River
Roseburg Forest Products-Dillard	S. Umpqua River
Winston Dillard Water District	S. Umpqua River
Roberts Creek Water District	S. Umpqua River
Country View Estates W. S.	Rogue River
Anglers Cove/SCHWC	Rogue River
Medford Water Commission	Rogue River
City of Gold Hill	Rogue River
City of Rogue River	Rogue River
City of Grants Pass	Rogue River
City of Gold Beach	Rogue River

Source: Oregon Health Authority

Alert

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■ **May 23:** Tests show high levels of toxins, alert issued

■ **June 8:** Tests show low levels of toxins, alert lifted

■ **June 13:** Tests show high levels of toxins, alert issued

■ **June 14:** Tests show low levels of toxins, alert lifted

■ **June 15:** Tests show high levels of toxins, alert issued

Oregon Health Authority officials said that yo-yo number of advisories

was due to the unusual amount of tests.

"It is unusual for the Harmful Algae Bloom Program to get daily samples," OHA said in a news release. "Typically, the program receives sample results for recreational bodies of water on a weekly basis. OHA's guidelines require the agency to issue an advisory whenever cyanotoxin levels exceed recreational guideline values.

"This more-frequent-than-usual sampling, along with daily changes in toxin levels measured in that daily sampling from Detroit Lake, is the reason recreational advisories have been issued and lifted so often for Detroit Lake."

How high are the toxins in Detroit?

The toxins at Detroit weren't as high as they've been in the past. But, they were still well above levels that trigger a health advisory.

This time, the Heater Creek Arm of the reservoir had the highest results, with the toxin microcystin at 15.028 parts per billion.

Elevated levels were also found at Blowout Arm (12.608 PPB), the log boom at the dam (8.260 ppb) and Big Cliff Reservoir (11.824 ppb).

A health advisory is issued when toxin levels reach just 4 ppb.

What about in Salem's water?

Water tests also showed the toxin microcystin in places throughout the North Santiam River above safe levels for drinking, but safe for recreation.

At Packsaddle Park, which is just downstream of Detroit, microcystin levels were 1.45. At the Salem intake plant on the North Santiam, levels were 0.8255. Both of those numbers are above what's considered safe for vulnerable populations — which is 0.3 ppb.

However, all of the tests taken of water coming out of Salem taps showed results below 0.3 — meaning safe for everybody.

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