



## Environmental Advisory Committee Information Sheet Algae

### **What is Algae?**

Algae are tiny plants, most of which are microscopic in size. Algae are very common in Saskatchewan lakes. Growths of algae dense enough to colour the water are called "blooms". On calm sunny days the bloom-forming algae tend to float at the surface of a lake or slough and form a scum.

### **Does Algae move around?**

Floating plants and algae may or may not be anchored. The unattached types are moved around on or just below the water surface by currents or winds and may cause them to drift to shore. Heavy winds generally will mix the algae into the water.

### **Are there good Algae in a water body?**

The presence of algae is necessary for the normal health of a lake. Beneficial roles of algae include its importance as a primary link in the aquatic food chain, nutrient cycling, and oxygen regeneration. If the algae bloom is green or light green in color and resembles a woolly blanket it may be a harmless green algae called *cladophora* or *spirogyra*, more commonly referred to as blanket weed.

### **Are there harmful Algae?**

If the algae bloom is blue-green in colour and has a foamy sheen-like appearance then it probably is a bloom of one of the species of blue-green algae common in Saskatchewan such as *Anabaena sp.* In this case it is **important** that water body users contact their local health authority and **warn** people to keep their pets and livestock out of the area. Do not drink or come into contact with the infested water. These types of blue-green algae can give off toxins which can kill pets and livestock that drink the infested water. These blooms occur during very hot, sunny, dry weather in many of our shallow fertile water bodies in Saskatchewan. These blooms are usually very short lived. However when they occur avoid the area and wait for them to dissipate.

### **Problems caused by excessive Algae.**

- taste and odour problems in raw water supplies
- clogging filters in water treatment plants
- reducing the carrying capacity of water distribution systems
- fouled pump inlets, irrigation siphon tubes and sprinkler heads
- fouled shorelines impacting on recreational uses of water

(All information gleaned from various internet sources)