

Lyngbya Factsheet

What is Lyngbya?

Lyngbya (*Lyngbya wollei*) is a blue-green alga that can form dense mats on the bottom of waterbodies. Healthy lyngbya may appear dark blue, green or black while decaying filaments often appear light brown, yellow or orange. Lyngbya is thought to be a naturally-occurring species that has been reported in the United States for several centuries. There has been a perceived increase in blooms across the southern United States over the last several decades.

What drives Lyngbya growth?

The drivers for lyngbya growth are largely unknown, but are suspected to be light, nutrients, a lack of flow, and shallow water habitat availability. Lyngbya is most often observed in warmer waters with excess nutrients available. Lyngbya mats often float to the surface during periods of high sunlight, and likewise can migrate to the bottom during low light or cloudy days. Very large mats can accumulate during the optimal growing conditions of summer, and lyngbya overwinters in the sediment.



Can Lyngbya be harmful?

Lyngbya can produce surface mats that can cover large areas, clog water intakes and interfere with recreational uses. Lyngbya can also cause taste and odor issues for drinking water withdrawals. Lyngbya has limited documentation of toxin production but has been associated with skin irritation in some individuals. ***Use best judgment and caution – If a water body appears abnormal, the safest option is to keep you, your family members, or your pets out.*** Avoid direct contact with lyngbya, especially if you have open wounds, immune system deficiencies, preexisting illnesses or other susceptible conditions.



How can Lyngbya be controlled?

There are few effective methods to remove lyngbya from a lake. Attempts to control through use of aeration, algacides, peroxides and lake drawdown have all been studied. While some short-term (hours to days) control has been achieved, no long-term eradication of the species has been achieved. Lyngbya is incredibly hearty and can survive and remain viable even if completely dried for years.

What is currently being done to address Lyngbya?

The University of South Carolina and NC State University are reviewing the distribution, spread and potential for toxin production in many southeastern reservoirs. Duke Energy's Aquatic Plant Management Program conducts whole lake aquatic plant surveys of company reservoirs to identify the presence or absence of lyngbya. Duke Energy's team works closely with each university and state agencies, specifically to provide data on the distribution and spread of the species in project reservoirs. The partnership will continue to work with the appropriate state resource agencies to determine appropriate actions and next steps regarding the management of lyngbya.

For more information: <https://scdhec.gov/environment/your-water-coast/harmful-algal-blooms>