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News Release

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DEQ Recommends Caution on Lakes, Rivers and Streams

As the Labor Day holiday approaches, many Oklahomans may be planning a trip to one of the state's lakes, rivers, or streams to enjoy swimming, boating, canoeing and other water activities. While the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) encourages Oklahomans to visit the state's many natural water bodies, the agency reminds residents to be cautious.

Certain bacteria, viruses and protozoa can be present in untreated bodies of water. Some of these microorganisms occur naturally while others are carried into surface waters from a variety of sources. Some of these microorganisms are harmful and can cause mild problems such as ear infection, swimmers itch, gastrointestinal upset, or relatively rare but serious conditions such as eye infections and some forms of meningitis.

Swimmers should pay close attention to water conditions. Also, it is important to pay attention to posted signs and follow the recommendations. There has been an increase in blue green algae blooms this summer at multiple lakes. The most common symptoms of blue green algae exposure include upper respiratory problems, eye irritation, vomiting, and gastrointestinal upset.

DEQ recommends the following precautions when swimming in any body of untreated water to reduce exposure to waterborne microorganisms:

- **Hold nose or wear nose plugs when jumping into the water**
- **Wash open skin cuts and scrapes with clean soap and water immediately after swimming**
- **Avoid swallowing water when swimming**
- **Wear ear plugs to prevent ear infections**
- **Wear swim goggles or masks to prevent eye infections**
- **Avoid swimming near storm drains (pipes that drain polluted water from streets)**
- **Take children to the restroom frequently/Use swim diapers on infants**
- **Stay away from any area that has floating debris, stagnant water, oil sheens or dead fish**

For more information, please visit www.deq.state.ok.us.

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