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News Release

For Immediate Release: June 29, 2018
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DEQ Offers Tips to Keep You Safe at Lakes, Rivers, and Streams

With the Independence Day holiday approaching, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) encourages Oklahomans to visit the state's lakes, rivers, or streams. While recreating at these natural water bodies, DEQ reminds you to follow some simple tips to help keep you and your family safe while swimming, boating, canoeing, or enjoying other water activities.

Natural bodies of water, especially warm and stagnant water, can contain organisms that may cause illness. Bacteria, viruses, and other microorganisms can cause skin, eye, and ear infections, respiratory infections, or gastrointestinal upset. Illness can range from mild to severe. While some microorganisms occur naturally, others are carried into surface waters from a variety of sources.

Please consider the following precautions to protect against water-borne sickness when recreating in natural waters:

Choose swimming areas carefully

- Pay attention to signage about water conditions
- Stay away from any area that has stagnant water, floating debris, scum, an oil sheen, or dead fish
- Avoid swimming near storm drains

Take simple precautions

- Hold nose or wear nose plugs when jumping into the water
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming
- Wear ear plugs to prevent ear infections
- Wear swim goggles or masks to prevent eye infections
- Wash skin with soap and water after swimming

Prevent spread of illness to others

- Take children to the restroom frequently
- Use swim diapers on infants
- Rinse off prior to entering the water
- Avoid swimming if you are ill

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