

Media Release:

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Algal Blooms present around Darwin Harbour Coastline

With the weather warming up and the rains yet to start, Territorians heading to the beach may notice an increase of naturally occurring algal blooms around the Darwin Harbour coastline.

Algal blooms have been seen around the Rapid Creek, Casuarina Beach, Lee Point and Buffalo Creek areas.

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) advises Territorians not to be alarmed if they come across algal blooms, which generally appear as a build up of discoloured matter with an unpleasant smell.

NRETAS Environmental Operations Manager Cathy Waldron said algal blooms and coral spawning occur across northern Australia between September and November due to warmer weather conditions.

“In global terms, the Timor and Arafura Seas are a “hot spot” for blooms of these algae, and algal blooms are observed on an almost yearly basis on the Northern Territory coastline,” Ms Waldron said.

“The combination of warm water temperatures, calm conditions and northerly currents coming into contact with nutrients in the water can cause marine algae to reproduce so rapidly that the accumulation of algae forms rafts or slicks on the water surface that are then washed ashore on the tides.”

Ms Waldron said research has shown the algae most commonly involved in these blooms is the blue-green algae *Trichodesmium*.

“*Trichodesmium*, in common with other types of blue-green algae, can use nitrogen from the atmosphere and reproduce so rapidly they have been known to reach blooms covering up to 52,000 km²,” Ms Waldron said.

“While blooms can produce neurotoxins that may affect some marine species, *Trichodesmium* blooms are also an important source of food for a variety of invertebrates and fish, including whale sharks and manta rays.”

“Algal blooms are a naturally occurring phenomenon that are a part of the marine ecosystem.”

For more information go to www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Cathy Waldron on 8924 4137

Attachment - NRETAS fact sheet ‘What Slick is That’ contains information about naturally occurring slicks such as algal blooms and coral spawn.

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