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MEDIA RELEASE

TO: CHIEF REPORTER

FROM: Nick Harrison, Environmental Services Manager and Gary Boot, Utilities Manager

For release Thursday 9th March 2007.

Caution needed when bathing in the Ashley River

People using the lower reaches of the Ashley River should be careful about where they swim or exercise their dogs.

Environment Canterbury has discovered a rare toxic algae in the lower reaches of the River, that has the potential to be harmful.

There is a risk that people and animals that swim in the water could develop an allergic reaction such as skin irritation and gastric infection.

Dogs seem to be particularly susceptible as it appears the algal blooms appeal to their natural curiosity.

The algae are thought to bloom in areas of low flow and warm water.

The Medical Officer of Health suggests people should avoid the slow moving ponds on the side flows of the river and that using the main channel with flowing water is likely to be of lower risk.

The Rivers condition will correct naturally once lower temperatures and higher water flows occur. Monitoring will continue and the public will be advised when the risk has abated.

The Council is satisfied, following advice from public health and water quality experts, that the public water supplies are not currently at risk. This includes the Rangiora, Garrymere, and Summerhill supplies.

The toxins tend not to be present in harmful concentrations in the flowing water.

Council staff have also today inspected the sites where water for these supplies is taken and there is no sign of the toxic algae in these areas.

As an added precaution, the Council has taken additional samples from the Ashley River adjacent to the intakes and has also sampled the treated water supplies. The results from these samples will be available early next week.

The Council will continue to monitor the water supplies and advise if any further precautions are necessary.

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