**Chico advises no swimming at Sycamore Pool – High bacteria levels reported**

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CHICO — The public is being asked to avoid using the Sycamore Pool after heightened levels of bacteria were discovered upon testing.

Signs have been placed around the Sycamore Pool at One-Mile Recreation Area warning of bacteria and advising people not to swim, though some people still found their way into the water on Tuesday.

The warning comes after a child was taken to the intensive care unit at UC Davis and diagnosed with E. coli, a lawyer who said they represent the family told this newspaper. The family believes the child contracted the disease from the pool.

Butte County Public Health and the city of Chico issued a joint press release Monday asking that the public not swim in the pool and advising that pets be kept out of the water as well. Along with the release, Chico’s Park and Natural Resources Manager Shane Romain issued a statement.

“Sycamore Pool is a Chico treasure that has been enjoyed by residents and visitors for decades,” Romain said in the statement. “Right now the water in Sycamore Pool has increased levels of bacteria. Swimming is not recommended. We are working closely with Butte County Public Health to monitor the situation.”

Lisa Almaguer, public information officer for Butte County Public Health, said the city of Chico is handling the testing for the pool.

“Water testing levels are submitted to the Regional Water Board and (the California Environmental Protection Agency),” Almaguer said. “Both agencies have authority over the water in the pool. The Facility itself is run by the city of Chico so they’re the ones who coordinate the water testing weekly.”

Almaguer said those who believe they have a waterborne illness should contact their health provider immediately. They can also contact Public Health’s disease control line at 530-552-3929 to report their illness, which can aid in tracking.

“We still can’t definitely say that the Sycamore Pool is the cause of the illness,” Almaguer said.

Both the city and Public Health advise that the public, when swimming in local waterways, avoid swallowing water, rinse off with clean water after swimming and wash hands with soap before eating food.

**Uncertain future**

The situation with the pool has grabbed broader attention, including a Change.org petition to shut the Sycamore Pool down.

Bill Marler, a Seattle-based attorney who specializes in foodborne illness, said he is representing the family of the child who was hospitalized and that there was one additional child who was reportedly in the hospital with E. coli after coming in contact with the pool water.

“This thing that you guys have is not some random lake in the middle of nowhere,” Marler said. “It’s a pool that people go to because they think of it as a pool. I think that’s probably where the city is going to have issues because they are inviting people to come to a facility that is not chlorinated but is more of a pool so the expectations are that you are going to swim and not wind up in the ICU.”

Marler said more testing will be needed to come to any determinations just yet, but said legal action is possible.

“Just because you find (E. coli) doesn’t mean there’s a pathogenic form,” Marler said. “That comes more rarely from human feces where someone washed a diaper or did their business in the water. More likely it’s runoff from cattle that are probably upstream somewhere.”

For now, the pool has not been closed off to the public. The city and Public Health are continuing to monitor the water.

“Butte County Public Health supports the city of Chico’s decision to issue a swim advisory for Sycamore Pool following the discovery of elevated bacteria levels,” Butte County Public Health Officer Jarett Beaudoin said in a statement. “Protecting the health of our community is a top priority, and we will continue to work closely with the city to monitor conditions and help ensure the safety of this valued recreational space. We remind residents to respect any swimming advisory signs posted in the area and to always take steps to prevent waterborne illness when enjoying natural waterways. These environments are dynamic and can change quickly, so it’s important to stay aware and protect yourself and your family when swimming or recreating.”