

# Toxic Rust Tide Hits Long Island's East End At The Height Of Summer Tourist Season

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**NEW YORK (CBSNewYork)** — Just when you thought that it was safe to go in the water, a danger is lurking off of Long Island's east end, and it's the worst that anyone has seen in years.

Algae blooms are causing a toxic rust tide, right at the height of the tourist season, and as CBS 2's Jennifer McLogan reported, fisher families in Sag Harbor are concerned about the health of their bay.

Rust tide has returned to the east end, with fish killing algae blooms infesting sooner and with greater potency.

"You are afraid to even go near the water," Pearl Geffers said.

Geffers is worried about her dog 'dash.'

Rust tide is not toxic to humans, but pets and people have been urged not to swim or swallow the water while the brown-orange hue is prevalent. It could cause rashes and intestinal problems.

Professor Christopher Gobler and his Stony Brook University Students at the School of Marine Sciences detected some of the highest densities in a decade.

"We were sampling in Sag Harbor. It showed a very intense level, over 30,000 cells per milliliter," Gobler said.

Levels that exceed just 500 cells can be harmful to marine life.

Rust tide can kill fin fish within hours, and shellfish within days. The bay scallop industry is especially threatened by rust tide.

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society has blamed man-made nitrogen pollution from sewage and fertilizers.

"We are contaminating our water. It is Long Island's greatest resource. It works for us environmentally and economically," Richard Amper said, "The hope is that seeing this, the government will respond and we will reduce nitrogen that is causing the problem."

Rust tide will likely infest Suffolk County waters until temperatures cool in the fall. Its impact is dependent on duration, coverage, and intensity.

Water loving tourists don't want the tide to return.

Scientists believe the rust tide blooms exploded off the bottom of the bay, and were kicked up by summer storms.

