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## **Woodward Reservoir Update**

*Stanislaus County* - Stanislaus County Parks and Recreation remains committed to providing safe areas for recreation. There have been several news reports over the past 24-hours and some online discussion of a gentleman from San Joaquin County who became ill after a recent camping trip to Woodward Reservoir. We sympathize with him and his two family members who reportedly also became ill but have since recovered. The gentleman reported to the media he was diagnosed with Campylobacter. Parks and Recreation staff are working closely with the San Joaquin Public Health Department in their investigation of his illness to see if the source of the illness can be determined.

As there has been some interest in this story, we want to be very clear on what the facts are at this time:

- The safety of water in County parks is a high priority.
- San Joaquin Department of Public Health is doing an investigation of the illness of Mr. Lopez, the San Joaquin County man who stated he was diagnosed with Campylobacter.
- Hospital laboratory testing like Mr. Lopez had, does **not** reveal the source of contact for a Campylobacter infection.
- The source of a Campylobacter infection can only be identified (if it is possible to identify) through an investigation. Most commonly, it's a food-borne illness, but it can be spread through non-chlorinated water and we are hoping the source can quickly be identified.
- Total Coliform bacteria counts at Woodward Reservoir have been high since the Memorial Day time period. Campylobacter is not a Coliform bacteria.

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- Surface water that is in lakes, rivers and canals all have naturally occurring bacteria as the environment contributes to these water bodies as they flow down from the mountains.
- Bacteria counts in surface water can go up and down based on various factors.
- People swimming in surface water who enjoy the benefit of being in the wild, natural environment need to exercise caution as these water bodies are not the same as a man-made, chlorinated swimming pool that has closely filtered and treated water.
- It is not uncommon for people with sensitivities to have a skin reaction (such as a rash) when in untreated water. There have been some recent social media comments from people who say they got a rash from a lake and they were concerned the water was not safe.
- Agencies involved at the Woodward Reservoir do their best to create a safe environment for the public, but it's important to remember, this always has been, and will continue to be, a lake that is fed by natural surface water, not filtered and treated water.
- Extra water testing is being conducted out of an abundance of caution. It is important to note this water testing is for E.Coli and for Total Coliform Bacteria and this testing will not contain results for Campylobacter. Again, the San Joaquin Public Health Department is investigating the Campylobacter case. If any additional action is warranted based on the water testing, appropriate action will be taken.

**Campylobacter:** Campylobacter is one of the most common infectious diseases. According to the Center for Disease Control, an estimated 1.3 million Americans contract it annually and symptoms can vary from mild to severe. It is most commonly a food-borne illness associated with undercooked poultry, raw milk products, or cross contamination of foods including the raw juices from chicken and meat. Non-chlorinated water can also be a source and that is why we want to quickly and definitively determine what the source is, but it is too soon to know. It is also possible an investigation might not clearly identify the source.

**Water Testing:** Separately from the recent Campylobacter infection case, signs were posted at Woodward Reservoir on May 23, 2014, as a result of routine testing showing high total coliform bacteria levels. Officials were not required to post the signs showing bacteria counts were high, but did so as a courtesy to the public. Testing in the public swimming areas is periodically done by the South San Joaquin Irrigation District, most typically after high-use holidays.

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Testing is done for two specific categories – E. Coli bacteria (originating from the wastes of animals or humans) and Total Coliform bacteria (bacteria that live in large numbers in the intestines of humans and warm and cold blooded animals). Fish, waterfowl, wildlife, soils, and people all contribute to the bacteria content in a body of surface water from the habitat. Bacteria are naturally occurring in all canal, stream, lake, river and reservoir-type sources of surface water (meaning water that has not been treated to be suitable for drinking). *Therefore, for general public health reasons untreated sources of surface water should not be consumed and the water in Woodward Reservoir is no exception.*

We are hopeful the investigation being conducted by San Joaquin Public Health Department will be concluded soon and that more information will be available. We remain committed to the health and safety of those who enjoy the recreation at Woodward Reservoir.

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