

Brown water spotted off Hull is algae, not sewage, scientists say



A photo of the algae near the Boston Harbor islands on Wednesday, July 5, 2017.

BOSTON - Save the Harbor, Save the Bay is reaching out to calm residents' concerns about what appears to be sewage discharge reported from Nahant to Nantasket. Instead, the nonprofit conservation group said the brown surface substance is a harmless algae bloom.

The organization said final lab results are not yet in, but that the algae appears to be a harmless, diatom bloom. While some algae

can lead to shellfish poisoning or bad smells where it blooms, Bruce Berman from Save the Harbor said in a statement that this algae "smells quite sweet."

Blooms like the one seen in the harbor are fairly common, triggered by wet weather followed by sunny days and will likely end soon, the group said.

"Often times diatoms exude excess

carbon during unbalanced growth in which there is plenty of nutrient and light for photosynthesis, but not enough silicon to divide and make new cells," David Borkman of Battelle, a research organization, said in a statement. "The 'excess' carbon is dumped out of the cells as long-chained carbon molecules, mucilage like material, that can result in 'Mare sporco' or 'dirty sea' in which the mucilage accumulates and fouls beaches."