

WHAT IS THAT ORANGE SLIME?

It might be **Iron Bacteria**

What is it?

Iron bacteria occur naturally and “feed” on iron in water and soil. Iron is a common element in water and soil, creating potential for iron bacteria.

When the dissolved iron reacts with oxygen in the air, it forms rust-colored iron oxides. These deposits often occur on hot, dry days when the water is sluggish. You may notice an unpleasant odor.

What does it look like?

Iron bacteria form rust-colored, slimy or stringy deposits in or on the surface of puddles or slow-moving water.

You may also see an oily sheen on the water’s surface. It is different from sheens caused by petroleum products. When disturbed, the iron bacteria sheen breaks apart and doesn’t come back together.

Poke the surface of a sheen with a stick or throw a pebble – if it breaks apart (as seen in the photo), it is probably iron bacteria.



Iron bacteria with natural sheen

Is iron bacteria harmful?

Although water with iron bacteria looks strange, these bacteria are natural and are not dangerous to people or our waterways.

Can we get rid of it?

Sometimes you can replace iron-rich soils with fill that has lower iron content. This may be costly and have other environmental impacts.

Because iron bacteria are not harmful, the best thing to do is wait for the water to clear. Dissipation often occurs after a rainstorm.

If you see water pollution, call Kirkland’s 24/7 pollution hotline at 425-587-3900.

