



Heal the Bay

Heal the Bay's 2006 California Summer Beach Report CardSM

Heal the Bay's 2006 California Summer Beach Report CardTM provides beachgoers with essential water quality information by grading over 450 monitoring locations from Humboldt County to San Diego County. The grades are based on dry weather water quality data provided by over 20 different entities throughout California. The data presented in this report was collected between Memorial Day (5/29/06) and September 30, 2006. This report is intended to give an overview of California's beach water quality for the summer of 2006.

The Beach Report Card is based on the routine monitoring of beaches conducted by local health agencies and dischargers. Water samples are analyzed for bacteria that indicate pollution from numerous sources, including fecal waste. The better the grade a beach receives, the lower the risk of illness to ocean users. The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at beaches. The Beach Report Card would not be possible without the cooperation of all of the shoreline monitoring agencies in the state.

California: Overall statewide water quality at California beaches this past summer was good. Excluding Long Beach and a number of beaches in the northern part of Los Angeles County, statewide water quality was very good and quite similar to last year with 91% A and B grades. However, with Long Beach and the rest of Los Angeles County included in the tally, 379 locations (only 83% in 2006 vs. 90% in 2005) received very good-to-excellent water quality marks (359 As and 20 Bs). There were 76 locations (17%) that received fair-to-poor water quality grades (21 Cs, 15 Ds and 40 Fs).

San Diego County: Water quality at beaches in San Diego County was very good this summer. Of the 94 locations monitored, 83 (88%) sites received either an A or B grade. There were eleven locations that received fair-to-poor water quality marks: eight of them were located in either San Diego Bay (2 Fs) or Mission Bay (4 Cs, 2 Ds, 1F). P.B. Point in Pacific Beach (D), and the Tijuana Slough at the Tijuana Rivermouth (D) were the only other beach monitoring locations in San Diego County to receive lower than an A or B grade.

There were four sewage spills this summer that led to San Diego County beach closures. The farthest reaching spill closures were in Mission Bay (7/25/06), and sewage contaminated runoff at the Tijuana River (7/17/06), both of which resulted in the closure of eleven different beaches.

Orange County: Overall water quality at beaches in Orange County this past summer was excellent. Of the 102 water quality monitoring locations covered by the Beach Report Card, 96 (94%) received A or B grades. In fact, 92 (90%) of the monitored beaches in Orange County received an A grade. Usually one of the most polluted beaches in the state, Doheny Beach had excellent water quality at multiple locations this past summer.

There were only six locations that received a grade of C or lower. These locations were: Huntington State Beach at Brookhurst St. (D), Doheny Beach 3000 feet south of the SERRA outfall (C), Poche Creek Beach in San Clemente (F), and three of the four monitoring locations at Baby Beach in Dana Point Harbor (West End [D], Buoy Line [D], Swim Area [C]).

There were six sewage spills that led to beach closures throughout the summer, discharging a known volume of approximately 667 gallons sewage. Two of the six spills were of unknown quantities and 5 of the 6 were caused by private property owners.

Los Angeles County: Once again, Los Angeles has the dubious distinction of having the worst beach water quality grades in the state. This past summer, Long Beach and Avalon beaches had extremely poor water quality. A number of Santa Monica Bay beaches subject to bacteria pollution limits (TMDL) also fared rather poorly. Heal the Bay calculated two separate grades for Santa Monica Bay TMDL beaches in this report. The first being an overall summer grade, and the second being based on samples taken on or after the July 15th 2006 beach bacteria TMDL enforcement deadline. A number of beaches had improved water quality in the months and weeks leading up to the TMDL deadline, resulting in marked improvement in Santa Monica Bay beaches' grades for the time period after July 15th.

The worst water quality in Los Angeles County this summer was found in Long Beach. Only 3 of the 25 monitoring locations (12%) received A or B grades. Last year, for the same time period, 21 of 23 monitoring locations (91%) received A or B grades.

Avalon beaches continue to suffer from poor water quality. None of the 5 monitoring locations received good grades (A or B) either this summer or last summer.

Overall, Santa Monica Bay beaches fared slightly better than last summer with 49 (75%) of 65 monitoring locations received A or B grades. Most of the beaches with poor water quality were in the north bay, with the exception of Santa Monica Pier (F), Dockweiler State Beach at Ballona Creek mouth (D), Manhattan Beach at 28th Street drain (D), and Redondo Municipal Pier (F).

Heal the Bay completed a five week study on fecal bacteria at the beach adjacent to the Santa Monica Pier. Heal the Bay found that the source of the fecal bacteria was coming from on shore, and likely to be from a leaky stormdrain that ponds underneath the pier. Sand analysis by Dr. Jenny Jay of UCLA showed that the polluted pond was the likely source of high fecal bacteria densities in the water. Heal the Bay provided extensive recommendations to the city of Santa Monica to clean up the beaches and Santa Monica has started to implement those recommendations. The city pumped the polluted water out of the pond and filled in the pond with clean sand. Also, they will soon hire a contractor to complete a thorough investigation of the stormdrain infrastructure, the runoff diversions and the Santa Monica Urban Runoff Reuse Facility to identify problems and solutions to the water quality problems.

The Santa Monica Bay beach grades for the time period after the beach bacteria TMDL enforcement deadline showed a marked improvement. 52 (79%) of the 65 monitoring locations received A or B grades. For example, Escondido Beach at the creek mouth scored an F for the summer, but an A+ for samples taken after July 15th. Escondido Beach received one of the worst grades in the state on our Annual Beach Report Card this spring, yet shortly after the publicity generated by the annual report, did not have one single-sample exceedance after 6/22/06.

There were five sewage spills in Los Angeles County reported to Heal the Bay this past summer. Two miles of beaches were closed on August 8th for three days after an approximately 20,000 gallon spill into Ballona Creek. On September 16th, 1345 gallons of sewage spilled into a tributary of Ballona Creek, but no beaches were closed. All other spills this summer were deemed by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services to not necessitate any beach closures.

Ventura County: Overall water quality at beaches throughout Ventura County was down slightly from last summer, but still excellent. 52 (93%) of the 56 monitoring locations received A or B grades. The four monitoring locations with fair-to-poor grades were Rincon Beach - 25 yards south of the creek mouth (F), Peninsula Beach (D), and 2 of the 3 sampling locations at Kiddie Beach in Channel Islands Harbor Beach Park (C and F).

There was one sewage spill in Ventura County on July 18th when approximately 900 gallons of sewage entered the Ventura Marina through the Harbor Blvd. storm drain. A few locations in the Ventura Harbor were closed for 3 days.

Santa Barbara County: Water quality at beaches in Santa Barbara County saw a marked downturn from the summer of 2005. This past summer, 6 of the 20 water quality monitoring locations (30%) received fair-to-poor grades. These locations with problematic water quality were: Jalama Beach (D), Refugio State Beach (F), Haskell's Beach (C), Hope Ranch Beach (C), Arroyo Burro Beach (F), and East Beach at Mission Creek (C). There were no known sewage spills in Santa Barbara County that led to beach closures.

San Luis Obispo County: Water quality at beaches in San Luis Obispo County was excellent again this past summer, with only one monitoring location receiving lower than a A grade. In fact, 19 (95%) of the 20 monitored locations received As. Pismo Beach Pier (F) received the county's only poor grade. There were no known sewage spills that led to beach closures.

Monterey County: Beach water quality in Monterey County was good. All but 1 of the 8 monitoring locations received A grades (88%). Stillwater Cove at the Beach and Tennis Club, received the county's only F grade. No known sewage spills led to beach closures in Monterey County this summer.

Santa Cruz County: Overall water quality in Santa Cruz this past summer was very good. Of the 13 weekly sampled locations, 12 (92%) received A grades. The only location not to receive an A grade was Capitola Beach west of the jetty which received a grade of D. There were water quality problems at Santa Cruz Main Beach at the Wharf this past summer as well. This location was posted for 51 days and sampled extensively to determine the cause of elevated bacteria levels. After examining the wharf sewer lines and other possible sources, rotting kelp washed up from a large swell was determined to be the culprit. This location was not sampled consistently enough to warrant a grade for the summer. There were no known sewage spills in Santa Cruz County that led to beach closures this summer.

San Mateo County: This summer, San Mateo's overall water quality was very good. Of the 19 monitored locations, 18 (94.7%) received As. Venice Beach at Frenchman's Creek received the county's only failing grade for the summer dry season. The perpetually problematic Pillar Point Harbor at Capistrano Avenue beach was not sampled this summer because the County has determined that the number of visitors to that beach doesn't warrant continued sampling.

There was one known sewage spill that led to a beach closure in San Mateo County this past summer. On 8/18/06 an unknown quantity of sewage was spilled near Aquatic Park at the Marina Lagoon in the city of San Mateo. The beach was closed until water samples met state standards for indicator bacteria.

San Francisco County: Overall beach water quality in San Francisco County was excellent. All 14 monitoring locations that were sampled regularly over the summer received A grades. Monitoring locations at Baker Beach East, China Beach, Ocean Beach, and Sunnydale Cove at Candlestick Point all received excellent marks this past summer. The County's raw data is made available to the public on the website <http://beaches.sfwater.org>. There were no sewage spills or combined sewage overflows that resulted in beach closures this past summer.

Sonoma County: Of the seven monitoring locations that were sampled over the summer, six locations (86%) received A grades. Campbell Cove State Park beach in Bodega Bay received the county's only C grade. Once again, water quality at Campbell Cove was very good from May into August, but began its typical seasonal decline in water quality the last week in August. This drove the overall summer grade down to a C. No known sewage spills during this summer were reported to Heal the Bay.

Humboldt County: Beach water quality in Humboldt County was excellent, with all five water quality monitoring locations receiving As. There were no known sewage spills that led to beach closures this summer.

Marin, Mendocino, and Del Norte Counties: Heal the Bay is working with these Northern California counties to provide water quality data to the public on a more regular basis. Marin and Mendocino monitoring locations are included in Heal the Bay's Annual Beach Report Card. The seven monitoring locations sampled this summer in Mendocino County were not sampled frequently enough to warrant a grade in this report and Heal the Bay was unable to obtain the data from Marin or Del Norte Counties in time for this analysis. There were no known sewage spills in these counties that led to beach closures.

Notable Good and Bad: Poor Long Beach water quality was probably the biggest surprise this summer. Usually scoring fairly well during the summer months, we've only seen water quality this poor in Long Beach after a major rain. Both Refugio State Beach and Hope Ranch Beach in Santa Barbara received uncharacteristically lower grades this summer. Water quality at Huntington State Beach at Brookhurst Street in Orange County was significantly lower than last summer. Also, Santa Cruz Main Beach at the wharf saw terrible water quality during a one month sampling period in July.

Surprisingly good water quality was seen at multiple Doheny Beach locations this summer. Monarch Beach, also in Orange County, improved from a grade of F last summer to a B this year. Newport Bay once again received excellent grades for the summer. The Tijuana Rivermouth was the only one of many beaches from Coronado south to score poorly. In Los Angeles County, Will Rogers State Beach had notably excellent water quality this past summer. Both the Pulga drain and the Santa Monica Canyon drain (at Chautauqua) improved from F to A grades this summer.

Heal the Bay's website, www.healthebay.org, is updated every Friday with weekly Beach Report Card grades for all sampled locations. Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is based on weekly water quality monitoring data provided by dischargers and health agencies. Data is analyzed as

soon as it is made available by these agencies. The report is a comprehensive examination of coastal water quality throughout California. Beaches are graded using an A-F scale based on the risk of ocean users becoming ill. Samples are analyzed for three indicator bacteria. A fact sheet detailing the exact methodology used in determining grades for each location is available from the Heal the Bay office or in the 2005-2006 Annual Report Appendix A which can be found at http://www.healthebay.org/brc/annual/2006/appendix_a.asp.

The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at local beaches. Heal the Bay reminds you not to swim or surf within 100 yards of any flowing storm drain or for three days after a rainstorm. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts at beaches throughout California usually *far exceed* health criteria stipulated in the state's Beach Closure and Health Warning Protocol.

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.

CALIFORNIA SUMMER BEACH WATER QUALITY

Table 1 Heal the Bay's 2006 California End of Summer Beach Report Card Overall Grades by County						
County	A	B	C	D	F	Total
Humboldt	5	0	0	0	0	5
Sonoma	6	0	1	0	0	7
San Francisco	14	0	0	0	0	14
San Mateo	18	0	0	0	1	19
Santa Cruz	12	0	0	1	0	13
Monterey	7	0	0	0	1	8
San Luis Obispo	19	0	0	0	1	20
Santa Barbara	14	0	3	1	2	20
Ventura	46	6	1	1	2	56
Los Angeles	46	7	10	5	29	97
Orange County	92	4	2	3	1	102
San Diego	80	3	4	4	3	94
Southern California	278	20	20	14	37	369
Total	359	20	21	15	40	455

Table 2 Heal the Bay's 2006 California End of Summer Beach Report Card Grades by Percentage for each County						
County	A	B	C	D	F	Total %
Humboldt	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Sonoma	85.7%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
San Francisco	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
San Mateo	94.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	100%
Santa Cruz	92.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	100%
Monterey	87.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100%
San Luis Obispo	95.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	100%
Santa Barbara	70.0%	0.0%	15.0%	5.0%	10.0%	100%
Ventura	82.1%	10.7%	1.8%	1.8%	3.6%	100%
Los Angeles	47.4%	7.2%	10.3%	5.2%	29.9%	100%
Orange County	90.2%	3.9%	2.0%	2.9%	1.0%	100%
San Diego	85.1%	3.2%	4.3%	4.3%	3.2%	100%
Southern California	75.3%	5.4%	5.4%	3.8%	10.0%	100%
Total	78.9%	4.4%	4.6%	3.3%	8.8%	100%