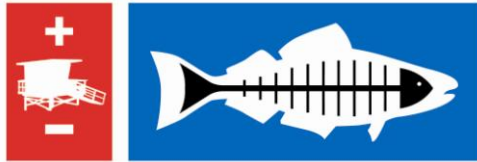


BEACH REPORT CARD



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L.A. BEACH WATER QUALITY RISES SHARPLY

Ventura, Orange counties also excel in Heal the Bay study for 2009-10

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, May 26, 2010) – In an encouraging sign, Los Angeles County showed significant improvement in overall beach water quality in 2009-10, according to Heal the Bay’s 20th annual Beach Report Card, which the environmental group released today.

Heal the Bay analysts assigned A-to-F letter grades to 86 beaches in the county for the dry-weather period from March 2009 through April 2010, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution. Some 79% of sites earned A or B grades, compared to a 70% tally in last year’s report and a 73% six-year average.

Storm-drain enhancements that treated or diverted polluted urban runoff during prime beachgoing season played a major role in the rising grades. Nearly two dozen projects, funded under the state’s Clean Beach Initiative and other local programs, kept potentially illness-inducing bacteria from reaching the ocean.

“After all these years of poor water quality in the summer, it is great to see that state and local funding for clean beach projects is resulting in better protection of public health,” said Mark Gold, president of Santa Monica-based Heal the Bay.

Nonetheless, the county’s water quality remains the worst in the state, scoring well below the statewide average. A handful of chronically polluted beaches in Malibu, Santa Monica, Avalon and Long Beach helped drag down the county’s overall grades.

Seven beaches in the county received year-round F grades, a notable improvement from 2008-09, when 15 beaches earned failing marks. Still, Los Angeles County leads Heal the Bay’s annual Beach Bummer List, with five locations in the ranking of the state’s most polluted beaches.

Avalon Beach in Catalina continues its reign as the most polluted beach in the state, but a much-needed wide-scale sewer replacement project is nowhere on the horizon. Heal the Bay recommends that the county work with Avalon and federal legislators to get American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or state revolving funds to pay for needed repairs and protect public health at the popular tourist destination. The county should also be monitoring Avalon on a year-round basis.

Other county sites on the Beach Bummer list: Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro, Santa Monica Municipal Pier, Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach and Sunset Beach in Pacific Palisades.

The Beach Report Card is a comprehensive evaluation of coastal water quality based on daily and weekly samples taken from sites along the entire coast of California. A poor grade means beachgoers face a higher risk of contracting illnesses such as stomach flu, ear infections, upper respiratory infections and skin rashes than swimmers at cleaner beaches.

Meanwhile, Orange County beaches recorded outstanding water quality grades, well above the state average. Some 97% of 78 locations monitored year-round during dry weather received an A or B during the summer, a modest improvement from last year’s report.

The county's Poche Beach continues to struggle with poor water quality and joins the Beach Bummer List for the third year in a row. A dry weather filtration plant completed last year has yet to meet performance specifications.

Ventura County also enjoyed excellent water quality in 2009-10. All of the 19 beaches monitored year-round during dry weather received A grades.

One of the reasons that Los Angeles County lags in water quality is the fact that its monitoring agencies – unlike most others in the state -- collect samples directly in front of flowing stormdrains and creeks. Monitoring at these “point zero” locations, where polluted runoff often pools, is the best way to ensure that health risks to swimmers are captured in water quality data.

Dry-weather water quality in Long Beach improved again for the third year in a row. Some 53% of its beaches received A or B grades during the period, which still significantly lags behind L.A. County's 85% A or B total.

Long Beach's water quality overall is poor because it sits at the terminus of the pollution-choked L.A. River. The city is to be commended for investigating and fixing leaking or disconnected sewage pump lines and improperly working diversions.

In other good news, water quality in Santa Monica Bay (from Leo Carillo to Palos Verdes) was excellent during the high-traffic summer beachgoing season, with 91% of beaches receiving A or B grades. The figure is well above the six-year summer average.

Wet weather water quality in L.A. County in 2009-10 was also well above the historical average, but 31 beaches still received F marks during storm season. Cities continue to grapple with stormwater runoff and the harmful effects it has on year-round ocean users. Heal the Bay recommends that no one swim in the ocean during, and for at least three days after, a significant rainstorm.

Looking statewide, most California beaches had very good to excellent water quality this past year during year-round dry weather, with 294 of 326 (90%) locations receiving A and B grades. That marks a 5% improvement from the previous report. Overall, only 20 of the beaches (6%) monitored statewide received D or F grades during year-round dry weather.

The Top 10 Beach Bummers

Eighteen beaches statewide received an overall F grade during the busy summer beachgoing season for the 2009-2010 Beach Report Card. The 10 most polluted beaches in California (starting with the worst):

1. *Avalon Harbor Beach on Catalina Island (Los Angeles County)*
2. *Cowell Beach – at the wharf (Santa Cruz County)*
3. *Cabrillo Beach harborside (Los Angeles County)*
4. *Poche Beach (Orange County)*
5. *Santa Monica Municipal Pier (Los Angeles County)*
6. *Colorado Lagoon (Los Angeles County)*
7. *Baker Beach at Lobos Creek (San Francisco County)*
8. *Capitola Beach -- west of the jetty (Santa Cruz County)*
9. *Vacation Isle North Cove Beach in Mission Bay (San Diego County)*
10. *Sunset Blvd. and PCH at Santa Ynez Drain (Los Angeles County)*

Honor Roll

Some 76 of the 326 (23%) beaches statewide with year-round dry weather grades this year scored a perfect A+. These beaches had zero exceedances of state bacterial standards for ocean water quality throughout the entire time frame of this report. Heal the Bay proudly places these beaches on our inaugural Beach Report Card Honor Roll. A list of these locations can be found in the full report.

Uncertain Funding for Continued Water Testing

County monitoring agencies continue to feel the effects of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2008 line-item veto of state beach monitoring funds. The governor axed \$1 million in funds that supported the collection and processing of ocean water samples as well as the posting of signs to notify swimmers of risks.

Many coastal counties have been forced to divert local general funds to pay for reduced testing or rely on volunteer organizations to gather samples. The State Water Resources Control Board also provided major stop-gap funding through 2010.

But beginning next year, there is no secured state funding for ongoing testing of ocean water quality, placing public health at risk. If the situation does not improve, over half of the beach monitoring in the state will stop. Heal the Bay will continue to work with state and local governments to ensure that ongoing funding is secured.

For a detailed look at beach results for each county and report methodology, please refer to our complete report. A PDF version is available at healthebay.org/2010BRC

About the Beach Report Card

All county health departments are required to test beach water quality samples for three types of indicator bacteria at least once a week. Heal the Bay compiles the complex shoreline data, analyzes it and assigns an easy-to-understand letter grade. We analyzed 456 beaches, from San Diego to Humboldt counties, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution reported from April 2009 through March 2010.

The summary includes an analysis of water quality during four time periods: summer dry season (April through October), year-round dry weather, winter dry weather, and year-round wet weather. The grading methodology is endorsed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

An FAQ about the Beach Report Card is available at www.healthebay.org/brc/FAQs. Heal the Bay's interactive microsite contains weekly updates as well as historical grades. www.healthebay.org/brc

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is made possible through the generous support of The Diller – von Furstenberg Family Foundation, simplehuman, SIMA, Grousbeck Family Foundation, and Carlson Family Foundation.

About Heal the Bay

Now in its 25th year, Heal the Bay is dedicated to making Santa Monica Bay and Southern California watersheds and coastal waters safe and healthy for people and marine life. It is one of the largest nonprofit environmental organizations in Los Angeles County, with more than 13,000 members.

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