



SOUTHLAND CITIES FACE STIFF BEACH POLLUTION FINES

Notices of violations sent to 20 municipalities by regional water board

Santa Monica, CA (Tuesday, March 4, 2008) -- The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board sent strongly worded notices of violation today to 20 Southland cities to clean up their act and stop polluting Santa Monica Bay.

The cities of Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Malibu are among those threatened with fines of up to \$10,000 per day if their beaches continue to fail to meet federal bacterial standards. The notices of violation mark the first time nationally that an oversight body has threatened fines to ensure cities' compliance with beach bacteria limits and clean water standards.

The action follows years of behind-the-scenes work by Heal the Bay to enforce so-called TMDLs, the federally mandated limits on daily discharge of bacteria, trash, metals and other pollutants that make their way into Southland oceans and watersheds.

"The scale of this is unprecedented," said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. "It's the first time anyone's ever done this in the country — to actually pursue enforcement for the protection of beach water quality."

The board may seek civil penalties if it's proven that local governments have shirked their obligations spelled out in the Los Angeles County Municipal Stormwater Permit. As an example, the city of Malibu has exceeded bacteria limits on its beaches for nearly 500 days since September 2006.

Heal the Bay strongly advocated for incorporating beach bacteria limits as part of Los Angeles County's storm water permitting process, which is overseen by the board. It reopened the permit in 2006 and 2007 to include the TMDLs. Because of Heal the Bay's advocacy, the limits became enforceable. HTB tracked all bacteria violations of the permit and submitted this information to the board. Our staff testified at permit hearings and requested strong regulation.

While some cities have made noticeable improvements in identifying and rectifying sources of ocean pollution, measures to fix chronically polluted beaches like Dockweiler and Surfrider have been inadequate. Heal the Bay applauds the board's actions, which will help protect public health on beaches that are visited by millions each year.

The following cities received violation notices and face potential fines: Agoura, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Culver City, Hermosa Beach, El Segundo, Hidden Hills, Inglewood, city and county of Los Angeles, Malibu, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Santa Monica, Torrance, West Hollywood and Westlake Village.

Contact: Kirsten James, Heal the Bay, (310) 451-1500