



Heal the Bay

For immediate release

BEACH WATER QUALITY UP, BUT TESTING THREATENED *Monitoring of Calif. beaches may cease next year because of ongoing budget crisis*

SANTA MONICA, CA (Wednesday, September 29, 2010) – Marking an encouraging trend, California beachgoers basked in a fourth consecutive summer of excellent water quality, according to the 2010 End of Summer Beach Report Card® released today by environmental group Heal the Bay.

But in a very troubling twist, state funding for routine water quality testing along California beaches may be eliminated next January due to the statewide budget crisis.

If regional ocean-testing agencies can not secure the necessary funds, they will be forced to end water quality monitoring and the associated warning signs and public notification systems. Any cutbacks in testing pose a significant health risk for the millions of beachgoers who enter California oceans each year.

In its latest survey, Heal the Bay assigned an A-to-F letter grade to 453 beaches along the California coast, based on levels of bacterial pollution reported from Memorial Day through Labor Day. This summer, 92% of sites received A or B grades, which is similar to last year.

The Beach Report Card is based on the routine monitoring of beaches by local health agencies and dischargers. Water samples are analyzed for bacteria that indicate pollution from numerous sources. Heal the Bay analyzes the data and assigns easy-to-understand grades to each beach. The better the grade a beach receives, the lower the risk of illness to ocean users.

“We continue to see water quality improvements at California beaches,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “However without a sustainable source of beach monitoring funding, the public health of millions of ocean users will be jeopardized.”

In another development, Heal the Bay this year expanded the reach of its popular Report Card to the Pacific Northwest. Working with local monitoring agencies, the organization issued its first set of summertime water-quality grades for 154 beaches in Washington and Oregon.

Los Angeles County beaches were relatively clean this summer, with 79% of beaches receiving an A or B grade (similar to last year). Some of the beaches of most concern in L.A. this summer: Avalon Beach on Catalina, Long Beach’s Colorado Lagoon, Will Rogers at Temescal Canyon and Cabrillo Beach.

The perennially polluted Santa Monica Pier showed dramatic improvement this season, most likely from a number of water quality improvement projects over the past year. Santa Monica Pier received an A grade for the reporting period, which is a marked improvement from previous D and F grades.

Orange County once again enjoyed great water quality this summer, with 97% of beaches receiving an A or B grade. Poche Beach and Newport Bay at Garnet Avenue received F grades, while perennially

polluted Doheny Beach received a D grade. All historically poor beaches in Dana Point (Baby beach) received A grades.

San Diego County had excellent water quality, with all 77 monitored beaches winning an A or B grade (76 As and 1 B).

Overall water quality at beaches throughout Ventura County was excellent again this summer and among the best in the state. All 40 monitoring locations received A grades. Unfortunately, that figure is down from the 54 historically monitored locations, due to budget cuts.

Water quality at beaches in Santa Barbara County was fairly good this summer, with 88% of monitored beaches receiving an A or B grade. Goleta Beach (C) and Arroyo Burro (F) were the only locations that did not earn an A or B grade.

In Central and Northern California, beach water quality was generally speaking very good. The beaches that received D or F grades include: Cowell Beach and Capitola Beach in Santa Cruz, Aquatic Park and Lakeshore Park in San Mateo County, and Baker Beach at Lobos Creek in San Francisco.

About Water Testing

In the wake of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2008 line-item veto of funding to support beach water quality monitoring statewide, local agencies had to scramble to pay for this critical public health program this year. The State Water Resources Control Board approved 604(b) stimulus funds to extend monitoring through 2010. However, there is no secured funding in 2011. Heal the Bay will continue to work with state and local governments to ensure funding for this critical program.

About the Beach Report Card

Users can check updated weekly grades at www.beachreportcard.org. Heal the Bay offers the searchable online database as a free public service. Users can find out which beaches are safe and unsafe, check recent water quality history and look up details on beach closures.

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is made possible by the generous support of The Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation, simplehuman, Grousbeck Family Foundation, Carlson Family Foundation, Inc., and Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA). Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is in its 20th year.

For a PDF version of this year's detailed report card please visit www.healthebay.org.

About Heal the Bay

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.

Contact: Matthew King, Heal the Bay, (310) 451-1500, x137; mobile 310-850-1145