



Heal the Bay

For immediate release

ORE. AND WASH. SCORE HIGH IN OCEAN WATER QUALITY

Heal the Bay's Report Card grades local beaches for first time based on pollution

SANTA MONICA, CA (Wednesday, September 29, 2010) – Pacific Northwest ocean users enjoyed very good water quality this summer, according to an inaugural Beach Report Card released by Heal the Bay, a Santa Monica-based environmental group that monitors shorelines along the entire western coast of the United States.

The report analyzed water quality data collected between Memorial Day and Labor Day at 154 monitoring locations in Oregon and Washington, issuing an A-to-F grade to each beach based on levels of bacterial pollution. The lower the grade, the greater the risk of an ocean user contracting an illness from contact with the water.

Oregon beaches were quite clean this summer, with all 13 regularly monitored beaches receiving A grades. Unfortunately, while 60 beaches were monitored throughout the summer, only 13 sites were monitored frequently enough (at least weekly) to be considered for the report.

Washington beaches were also remarkably clean, with 93% of the monitored beaches receiving A and B grades. Three beaches in the state, however, received F grades: Oak Harbor City Beach Park (west) in Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island; Freeland County Park Holmes Harbor (east), also on Whidbey Island; and Pomeroy Park's Manchester Beach (north) in Kitsap County.

Further investigation is warranted to determine the exact causes of the pollution that led to failing summertime marks at these beaches. Heal the Bay has a long history of working with local officials to help identify causes and potential solutions to high bacteria counts.

To learn more about these sites and other favorite beaches in Oregon and Washington, 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 has graded more than 500 California beaches in two decades, helping protect the health of millions of ocean goers each year. Building on that success, program managers this summer expanded reporting to Washington and Oregon beaches.

"We are excited to extend the reach of beach water quality information from the Mexican to the Canadian border now," said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. "It's reassuring to see generally very strong water-quality marks in Oregon and Washington."

High bacteria counts can be due to a number of sources, but frequently are connected to runoff from rainfall. Swimming in polluted water can cause upper respiratory infections, stomach flus, skin rashes and ear infections.

Heal the Bay recommends staying out of the water for 72 hours following any rainstorm, and staying at least 100 yards from any outfall pipe, stream or creek entering the ocean.

About the Beach Report Card

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 compiles the data, analyzes it and assigns easy-to-understand letter grades. Its methodology is the only one endorsed by the State Water Resources Control Board, a government entity.

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is made possible by the generous support of the 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