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## **MIXED GRADES FOR BAY AREA BEACH WATER QUALITY**

*93% of beaches get A's in annual report card; but wet weather grades dip sharply*

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.(Thursday, May 23, 2013) – Summer beachgoers on oceanside locations of the greater San Francisco Bay Area continue to enjoy near-perfect water quality, according to the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Beach Report Card®, which was released today by environmental group Heal the Bay.

From Marin to San Mateo, 43 out of 44 ocean-side beaches received an A or B summer grade in the report, which analyzed weekly bacterial pollution levels at beaches statewide for three distinct time periods. Swimmers at bayside beaches could take comfort in overall good summer water quality, but faced pockets of pollution in San Mateo and San Francisco.

Heal the Bay analysts assigned A-to-F grades to beaches in San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa and Marin counties as part of its annual statewide report. Some 93 % of Bay Area sites received A grades for the summer in the report. Those marks are a marked improvement from last year's report, when only 78% of Bay Areas beaches earned A grades for the summer time period.

For comparison's sake, 85% of the 445 California beaches graded overall received A grades for the reported time period.

Farther south, only 77% of Santa Cruz beaches scored an A summer grade. Two separate sites at Cowell Beach received F grades, placing the chronically-troubled site on Heal the Bay's annual Beach Bummer list, which ranks the 10 most polluted beaches in the state.

San Mateo's Marina Lagoon and San Francisco's Windsurfer Circle also earned the dubious distinction of being placed on this year's Beach Bummer List, based on year-round levels of bacterial pollution.

On a more positive note, San Mateo County's Montara State Beach and Sharp Park Beach were placed on Heal the Bay's annual Honor Roll, a highly selective list of 35 beaches statewide that were monitored year-round and scored perfect A-plus grades for all three reporting periods.

The Beach Report Card is a comprehensive evaluation of coastal water quality based on 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.

Heal the Bay urges beachgoers to check the latest water quality grades based on the latest samples each week at [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org). Before heading to the shoreline, visitors can also access the latest grades on the go by downloading Heal the Bay's free app for mobile devices.

Despite the overall positive news, several Bay Area beaches remain bacterial hot-spots in the busy summer season. San Mateo notched very poor summer grades at Aquatic Park (F) and at Lakeshore Park (D), both of which suffer from limited circulation in Marina Lagoon. San Francisco's Baker Beach at Lobos Creek and Candlestick Point's Windsurfer Circle also lagged in the summer reporting period.

Up north, beaches in Sonoma, and Mendocino counties earned perfect 100% A grades during the summer.

“We are encouraged by the excellent beach water quality in the Bay Area specifically during the peak summer season,” said Amanda Griesbach, a water quality scientist and lead author of the report.

“However, it’s hard to overlook the vast discrepancy between wet and dry weather grades, making it important for local agencies to implement more wet weather water quality improvement projects.”

Meanwhile, year-round wet-weather water quality at Bay Area beaches fell sharply from last year’s report and was well below the state average. Only 43% of beaches received A or B marks during rainy weather, compared to 74% in last year’s report and this year’s state average of 69%. Wet-weather water quality in Santa Cruz was the worst in the state with only 25% A and B grades, 36% below the county’s five-year average.

Highly urbanized areas throughout the state continue to grapple with stormwater runoff and the harmful effects it has on year-round surfers and other ocean users. If it has rained more than one-tenth of an inch, Heal the Bay recommends that people wait 72 hours before entering the ocean.

**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 [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org).**

### **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 during the summer season. Many California counties monitor heavily-used beaches year-round. Heal the Bay compiles the complex shoreline data, analyzes it and assigns an easy-to-understand letter grade.

The summary includes an analysis of water quality for three time periods: summer dry season (April through October 2012), winter dry weather (November 2012 through March 2013) and year-round wet weather conditions. The grading methodology is endorsed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Heal the Bay’s interactive microsite contains an FAQ section, methodology, weekly grade updates as well as historical grades at [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org). Heal the Bay’s Beach Report Card is made possible through the generous support of simplehuman, LAcarGUY, SIMA, and the Grousbeck Family Foundation

### **About Heal the Bay**

Now in its 28th 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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