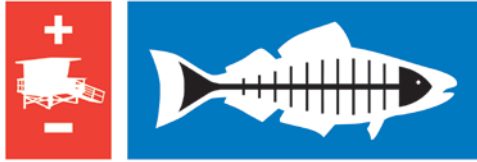


BEACH REPORT CARD



1444 9th Street
Santa Monica CA 90401
Phone: (310) 451-1500
Facsimile: (310) 496-1902
www.healthebay.org

STATE'S BEACH WATER-QUALITY SCORES HIGH MARKS

Nearly 9 out of 10 beaches get A or B grade in Heal the Bay's annual report

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, May 25, 2011) – California beachgoers once again enjoyed very good-to-excellent water quality in 2010-11 during dry weather, according to the 21st annual Beach Report Card, which was released today by environmental group Heal the Bay.

Heal the Bay analysts assigned A-to-F letter grades to 445 beaches along the California coast, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution reported from April 2010 through March 2011. Some 400 beaches, or 90%, received A or B grades. That figure marks a 2% dip from the last reporting period in 2009-10, due to slightly lagging grades in Los Angeles County.

Overall, only 31 of the beaches (7%) monitored statewide received D or F grades during summer dry weather, when most beachgoers typically use the ocean. High bacteria counts at these sites are linked to such potential illnesses as stomach flu, ear infections and major skin rashes.

Los Angeles County leads Heal the Bay's annual Beach Bummer List, with four locations in the ranking of the state's most polluted beaches. Cowell Beach in Santa Cruz, a historical bacterial hotzone, has the dubious distinction of knocking Avalon Beach on Catalina Island off the No. 1 spot.

On the positive side, San Diego, Orange and Ventura counties once again had superb water quality.. Central and Northern California ocean beaches continued their trend of outstanding water quality in dry weather, save for some troubled spots in Santa Cruz and San Francisco counties.

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.

(Oceangoers can check updated grades for their local beach each Friday at beachreportcard.org. Later this summer, Heal the Bay will launch an application for mobile devices that will allow beachgoers to access the latest-water grades instantly.)

The disparity between dry and wet weather water quality in California continues to be dramatic, underscoring many municipalities' inability to significantly reduce stormwater runoff pollution. Nearly half of the 324 locations monitored all year long during wet weather received fair to poor marks, e.g. C, D or F grades. Some 70 beaches, or 22%, received failing grades, posing significant health risks to year-round ocean users, such as the state's sizable surfing community.

On a positive note, 68 of the 324 (21%) beaches monitored year-round scored a perfect A+ during dry weather, thereby demonstrating that clean beaches can meet health standards all of the time. 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 Beach Report Card Honor Roll. A list of these locations can be found in the full report.

High marks provide optimism, but looming uncertainty about ongoing funding of weekly beach water quality testing statewide raises concerns. 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 potential health 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 2011. But next year, there is no secured state funding for ongoing testing of ocean water quality, placing public health at risk. Heal the Bay will continue to work with state and local governments to ensure that ongoing funding is secured.

Given that the state's ocean-dependent economy has been valued at \$43 billion, the decision to eliminate all state funding of water quality monitoring strikes many observers as being penny wise and pound foolish.

"California needs to invest in public health protection and coastal tourism by providing sustainable beach monitoring funds," said Dr. Mark Gold, the president of Heal the Bay. "These funds are need to expand year-round monitoring and change the protocol at polluted beaches to rapid methods to better inform beachgoers of potential risks."

Overall, 28 of the beaches (9%) monitored year-round received D or F grades during dry weather. Eighteen beaches statewide received an overall F grade during the busy summer beachgoing season for the 2010-11 Beach Report Card.

Numerous California beaches vied for the monitoring location with the consistently poorest dry-weather water quality.

Here are the Top 10 "Beach Bummers" in California (starting with the worst):

The Top 10 Beach Bummers

1. *Cowell Beach – at the wharf (Santa Cruz County)*
2. *Avalon Harbor Beach on Catalina Island (L.A. County)*
3. *Cabrillo Beach harborside (Los Angeles County)*
4. *Topanga State Beach at creek mouth (L.A. County)*
5. *Poche Beach (Orange County)*
6. *North Beach/Doheny (Orange County)*
7. *Arroyo Burro Beach (Santa Barbara County)*
8. *Baker Beach at Lobos Creek (San Francisco County)*
9. *Colorado Lagoon (Los Angeles County)*
10. *Capitola Beach -- west of the jetty (Santa Cruz County)*

L.A. County continues to have the greatest number of polluted beaches of any county in the state, falling well below the statewide average. Only 75% of its beaches scored A or B grades during year-round dry

weather, a 5% decrease from 2009-10. A handful of chronically polluted beaches in Malibu, Avalon and Long Beach helped drag down the county's overall grades.

However, most of the California coastline earned A grades throughout the year in dry weather. Beaches in Orange County earned annual dry grades of A or B at nearly 96% of locations. San Diego County also scored well, with 96% of its monitored sites earning top marks. However, troubling sewage plumes closed four beaches near the Tijuana border for hundreds of days last year.

Moving up the coast, 87% of Santa Barbara, 100% of Ventura and 95% of San Luis Obispo beaches earned A or B grades during year-round dry weather.

Further north, 87% of Bay Area locations received A or B grades for the summer in the report, slightly below the state average of 90%. Oceanside beaches in San Mateo and San Francisco Bay beaches had excellent water quality, while bayside beaches in Alameda and Contra Costa were generally good.

Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino and Humboldt counties all earned perfect 100% A grades during their summer testing period.

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 www.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. Heal the Bay compiles the complex shoreline data, analyzes it and assigns an easy-to-understand letter grade. We analyzed 445 beaches, from San Diego to Humboldt counties, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution reported from April 2010 through March 2011.

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.beachreportcard.org

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

About Heal the Bay

Now in its 26th 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.

Contacts: Matthew King, Heal the Bay, (310) 463-6266
Mike Grimmer, Heal the Bay, (310) 451-1500 x111