



Heal the Bay

For immediate release

CALIF. SUMMER BEACH WATER QUALITY HOLDS STEADY *New mobile app provides instant access to grades for 650 beaches on Pacific coast*

SANTA MONICA, CA (Tuesday, September 27, 2011) – California beachgoers enjoyed a fifth consecutive summer of excellent water quality, according to the 2011 End of Summer Beach Report Card® released today by environmental group Heal the Bay.

In its latest survey, Heal the Bay assigned an A-to-F letter grade to 447 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 statewide, the same total as in last year’s report.

Los Angeles County, which consistently has the worst water quality in the state, showed marked improvement this summer. Some 85% of beaches received A or B grades, up from last year’s 79%, thanks in large part to historically troubled Long Beach scoring its best summer water quality grades to date.

In another encouraging sign for improving L.A. County water quality, the city of Avalon has budgeted more than \$5 million to repair a deteriorating sewer system. Leaky pipes have led to two decades of extremely poor water quality at Catalina Island’s Avalon Beach, a high-traffic summer tourist destination.

Avalon frequently heads Heal the Bay’s “Beach Bummer” list, which ranks the 10 most polluted beaches annually throughout California. Unfortunately, this trend continued this summer, with all five Avalon monitoring locations scoring either D or F grades. Despite the poor marks, Heal the Bay commends the city for finally addressing its long-standing ocean pollution issues.

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, including fecal waste. 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 serious gastro-intestinal and respiratory illness to ocean users.

“We continue to see water quality improvements at California beaches,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “A sustainable source of beach monitoring funding is critical to ensure that we continue to capitalize on these gains and safeguard the public health of millions of ocean users statewide.”

Ongoing state funding for routine water quality testing along California beaches had been cut in 2008 from the California Department of Public Health due to the statewide budget crisis. Nearly \$1 million in annual patchwork funding from the State Water Resources Control Board has now been exhausted.

Fortunately, the California Assembly and Senate have approved SB 482, a bill introduced by Sen. Christine Kehoe that would funnel permit fees collected by the State Water Board to fund beach water quality monitoring on a consistent basis. The bill is now awaiting the Governor's signature.

Back in **Los Angeles County**, 100% of sites monitored in Long Beach received A or B grades this summer, an impressive improvement over last year (73% A or B grades). Long Beach, which is heavily impacted by upstream pollution flowing down the Los Angeles River, has shown determination to improving beach water quality. It has conducted numerous source tracking studies and implemented several successful mitigation projects, most notably at the heavily impaired Colorado Lagoon.

On the downside, poor water quality persists at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro. The harborside beach near the restrooms has earned F grades the past eight summers. The city of Los Angeles has completed several improvement projects totaling \$15 million without much luck.

Other beaches in L.A. County earning F grades this summer: Marie Canyon at Puerco Beach, Escondido Creek, Solstice Canyon at Dan Blocker County Beach, Surfrider Beach, Malibu Pier, Carbon Beach at Sweetwater Canyon and Topanga State Beach.

Orange County once again enjoyed great water quality this summer, with 94% of beaches receiving an A grade, slightly lower than last summer. Poche Beach once again received an F grade, but Dana Point's perennially troubled Doheny Beach jumped to an A grade from last season's C grade.

San Diego and **Ventura** counties once again rose to the head of the water quality class and exhibited uniformly excellent marks. All of San Diego's 73 monitored beaches earned an A or B grade (72 A's and one B). In Ventura, All 40 monitoring locations received A grades.

Water quality at beaches in **Santa Barbara** County was fairly good this summer, with 87% of monitored beaches scoring an A or B grade. Gaviota Beach (C) and Arroyo Burro (F) were the only locations that did not earn an A or B grade.

In Central and Northern California, water quality was generally speaking very good this past summer.

In **San Luis Obispo** County, 95% of beaches received A or B grades, the same as last year. An F grade at the Pismo Beach Pier is the county's lone trouble spot. Despite numerous studies and abatement efforts, pollution lingers at the tourist destination.

Monterey County can take pride in improved summer ocean water quality, with 88% of beaches notching an A or B grade, up from last year's 75%. Stillwater Cove earned the county's lowest grade, a C.

Santa Cruz County, famed for its surf breaks, also showed improvement this summer. Some 77% of its beaches received A or B grades, compared to last year's 71%. However, poor water quality at Cowell Beach persists, with two out of three monitoring locations earning failing marks. County officials believe decaying kelp on the beach to be the major source of bacteria, but urban runoff may also play a role.

In the San Francisco Bay area: 82% of **San Mateo** beaches earned A or B grades, down from last year's 90%; **Alameda** County and **Marin** counties showed 100% A and B grades for the fifth year in a row; **San Francisco** County improved to 93% A and B grades, led by very marked improvement at historically

troubled Baker Beach at Lobos Creek. Keller Beach locations in **Contra Costa** earned two C grades and one B grade.

Sonoma County showed superb water quality, with its seven monitored locations earning A+ grades, while all five beaches graded in **Mendocino** getting A+ marks. Grades in Humboldt dipped compared to previous summers, with only 40% of beaches earning A grades. Trinidad State Beach, Clam County Beach Park and Luffenholtz Beach park scored either C or D grades in **Humboldt**.

About our new Water Quality Mobile App

Beachgoers can view Heal the Bay's Beach Report from any computer, or download a Beach Report Card mobile app for their iPhone or Android, at www.beachreportcard.org

The new, free Beach Report Card app provides the only access anytime and anywhere to a comprehensive, weekly analysis of coastline water quality. The mobile app provides A through F grades, weather conditions and user tips for more than 650 beach locations in California, Oregon and Washington at the fingertips of those who swim, surf and play at the beach.

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

About the Beach Report Card

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is made possible by the generous support of the Diller-vonFurstenberg Family Foundation, simplehuman[®], LAcaraGuy, Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA), and the Grousbeck Family Foundation. Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is in its 21st year.

For a PDF version of this year's detailed report card please visit <http://brc.healththebay.org/>

About Heal the Bay

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. We use science, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.

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