



HEAL THE BAY'S 10TH ANNUAL YEAR IN REVIEW 1999 – 2000

Executive Summary

Heal the Bay's 10th Annual Year in Review provides essential water quality information to the millions of people who swim, surf, or dive in Southern California coastal waters. Essential reading for ocean users, the report card grades over 250 locations on an A–F scale based on the risk of adverse health effects to humans. The grades are based on daily and weekly bacterial pollution levels in the surf zone. The program has developed from an annual review to weekly updates of Los Angeles County beaches to weekly updates of beaches in three additional counties — all available in print and at our web site (www.healthebay.org).

The 1999-2000 Year in Review demonstrates that most beaches had very good dry weather water quality with 174 of 263 (66%) locations receiving “A” grades. Also, there were 41 “B’s,” 16 “C’s,” 17 “D’s” and 15 “F’s.” A number of Southern California beaches vied for the “Beach Bummer” crown this year (the monitoring location with the poorest dry weather water quality). The top 10 finalists were: Surfriider Beach in Los Angeles County (10th), Jalama Beach in Santa Barbara County (9th), East Beach at Mission Creek in Santa Barbara County (8th), North Doheny Beach at Dana Point in South Orange County (7th), Doheny Beach (south of San Juan Creek) at Dana Point in South Orange County (6th), the San Juan Creek ocean interface at Dana Point in South Orange County (5th), Avalon Beach at

the Pier on Catalina Island (4th), Arroyo Quemada in Santa Barbara County (3rd) and Cabrillo Beach-harbor-side at the lifeguard tower in Los Angeles County (2nd). And the winner of the dubious Southern California “Beach Bummer” crown is Channel Islands Harbor Beach Park (Kiddie Beach) in Ventura County. Kiddie Beach won the crown over Cabrillo Beach and Arroyo Quemada because 71% of the monitoring days exceeded at least one fecal bacteria indicator, compared to 61% and 55% respectively for the other two locations.

As for wet weather water quality, there was a tremendous disparity between the sunny (dry) and rainy (wet) season grades, demonstrating that beachgoers need to be wary when entering the water during the rainy season. Very few beach locations in Southern California escaped the influence of polluted stormwater runoff. For example, of the 263 locations monitored, only 66, or 25%, received good-to-excellent water quality marks (42 “A’s” and 24 “B’s”) during wet weather, considerably lower than the dry weather marks. There were 196 locations that received fair-to-poor water quality marks (18 “C’s,” 16 “D’s” and 162 “F’s”). Overall, 62% of the monitoring locations received a grade of “F” during wet weather compared to only 6% during dry weather.





Heal the Bay strongly commends the many agencies that continued their monitoring programs beyond Assembly Bill 411's (Wayne — San Diego) required dates of April through October. (California coastal counties that have 50,000 annual visitors or more to storm drain-contaminated local beaches are required to maintain a comprehensive ocean water quality monitoring program for bacteria indicators. Hence, those counties affected will be required to have similar monitoring programs subjected to statewide bathing water standards.) This action provided approximately 20 additional weeks of water sampling, which meant beachgoers (namely surfers going out for the winter swells) could continue receiving information about water quality and have the ability to make better health decisions about which beaches to visit.

This year, Heal the Bay is proud to announce the addition of San Diego County's water quality monitoring data to the Beach Report Card. Beginning in June 2000, the Southern California Beach Report Card will now cover over 350 beaches from Santa Barbara County to the Mexican border. Designed to educate the public on water quality information obtained from the various counties, the enhanced report card is easily available via Heal the Bay's web site (featuring an interactive Southern California map), fax or phone.

With the continued expansion of the Beach Report Card, Heal the Bay hopes that Southern California beachgoers will use the information like the SPF in sunblock: They should decide what they are most comfortable with in terms of relative risk, and then make the necessary decisions to protect their health. The public has the right to know the water quality at their favorite beaches, and Heal the Bay is proud to provide

Southern Californians this information in an easy-to-understand format.

The Beach Report Card is based on the routine monitoring of beaches completed by local agencies. Water samples were analyzed for bacteria that indicate pollution from numerous sources, including fecal waste. The higher the grade a beach receives, the lower the risk of illness to ocean users. The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at Southern California beaches.

Beach users should not swim or surf within 100 yards of any flowing storm drain or in any coastal water during and for three days after a rainstorm. Storm drain runoff — one of the largest sources of pollution to local beaches — flows untreated to the coast and is often contaminated with motor oil, animal waste, pesticides, yard waste and trash. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts usually far exceed health criteria in the California Department of Health Services' beach bathing water quality regulations.

For more information, please our web site at www.healthebay.org, or call 800 HEAL BAY.

A special thank you to the Ford Motor Company for their generous support in funding the Beach Report Card program and the publication of this report.

