

Executive Summary

HEAL THE BAY'S 12TH ANNUAL Beach Report CardSM provides essential water quality information to the millions of people who swim, surf, or dive in California coastal waters. Essential reading for ocean users, the report card grades 394 locations year-round (more than 420 locations in dry weather) 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 surfzone. The program has developed from an annual review of beaches in Santa Monica Bay to weekly updates of beaches throughout California. All this information is available in print and at www.healthebay.org.

The 2001-2002 Annual Beach Report Card demonstrated that most beaches had very good water quality with 275 of 394 (70%) locations receiving "A" grades. Also, there were 53 (13%) "B"s, 24 (6%) "C"s, 16 (4%) "D"s and 26 (7%) "F"s. Numerous California beaches vied for the "Beach Bummer" crown this year (the monitoring location with the poorest dry weather water quality). The bottom 10 finalists were: Surfriider Beach at Malibu in Los Angeles County, (10th), Shelter Island (Shoreline Beach Park) at San

Diego Bay in San Diego County, (9th), Campbell Cove State Park Beach at Bodega Bay in Sonoma County, (8th), East Beach at Mission Creek in Santa Barbara County, (7th), Channel Island Harbor Beach Park (Hobie & Kiddie Beach) in Ventura County, (6th), Baby Beach at Dana Point Harbor in Orange County, (5th), Pacific Beach at P.B. Point (downcoast of Linda Way) in San Diego County, (4th), and the Visitor's Center (projection of Clairemont Drive) at Mission Bay in San Diego County, (3rd). This year there were co-winners of the dubious California "Beach Bummer" crown: Doheny Beach at Dana Point in Orange County (T-1st), and Arroyo Quemada in Santa Barbara County (T-1st). Arroyo Quemada once again laid claim to the crown because 75% of the monitoring days exceeded at least one fecal bacteria indicator. Doheny Beach (North Doheny Beach to 5,000 feet south of San Juan Creek) was awarded the co-crown based on the beach area degraded (a one mile stretch of beach) by poor water quality and the number of annual visitors to the beach.

This year's relatively dry rainy season accounted for better-than-average wet

weather water quality. However, a great disparity in water quality still remains between dry and wet weather conditions. Many counties (predominantly those north of Santa Barbara County) do not maintain their water quality monitoring program throughout the year, severely reducing or completely discontinuing the program between November and March. Of the 268 locations that are monitored, 107, or 40%, received very-good-to-excellent water quality marks during wet weather, while 161 locations received fair-to-poor water quality marks. Overall, 40% of the monitoring locations received a grade of "F" during wet weather compared to only 7% during dry weather.

Once again, Heal the Bay completed an analysis of Southern California data (Santa Barbara County to San Diego County) to determine if there were significant differences in water quality based on beach type. From our analysis, water quality at open-ocean beaches was dramatically better than those beaches impacted by storm drains or located within enclosed bays or harbors. Approximately 93% of open ocean beaches received an "A" grade during dry weather compared to 73% at

beaches impacted by a storm drain and 43% at beaches found within an enclosed bay, harbor or marina.

Despite the state's recent economic slowdown, Governor Davis and voters continue to make beach water quality a priority for California by investing in the protection of this resource. Last year the Governor proposed in the state budget \$34 million for a Clean Beach Initiative to protect and restore the health of California's beaches. This is the first significant allocation of funds to protect the health of the 100 million people who visit California's beaches each year. Following the Governor's lead, voters passed Proposition 40, a \$2.6 billion program to provide clean, safe drinking water, clean beaches and coastal waters, improve state and neighborhood parks, protect wildlife and open space, and achieve better air quality. Specifically, \$375 million is set aside

for watershed protection, clean beaches, rivers and streams.

The Beach Report Card is based on the routine monitoring of beaches conducted by local health agencies and dischargers. Water samples are 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 California beaches.

The Beach Report Card would not be possible without the cooperation of all of the shoreline monitoring agencies in the state.

Heal the Bay believes the public has the right to know the water quality at their favorite beaches, and is proud to provide Californians this information in an easy-to-understand format.

We hope that California beachgoers will use the information to decide what they are most comfortable with in terms of relative risk, and then make the necessary decisions to protect their health.

County health officials and Heal the Bay recommend that beach users should never 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 can be the greatest source of pollution to local beaches, flowing untreated to the coast and often contaminated with motor oil, animal waste, pesticides, yard waste and trash. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts usually far exceed state health criteria for recreational water use.

For more information, please log on to www.healthebay.org, or call 1-800-HEAL BAY.



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