



Heal the Bay

Heal the Bay's 2009
California End of Summer Beach Report Card

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Heal the Bay's End of Summer Beach Report Card provides beachgoers with essential water quality information by grading nearly 460 monitoring locations from Humboldt County through San Diego County. The grades are based on dry weather water quality data provided by over 20 different entities throughout California. The data presented in this report was collected from Memorial Day through Labor Day, 2009. This report is intended to give an overview of California's beach water quality during the summer of 2009.

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

California: In September 2008, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's line-item veto of state beach monitoring funds severely impacted public health protection throughout the state. Nearly \$1 million in funding was axed from the critical beach water quality monitoring programs used by counties to fund the collection and processing of ocean water samples as well as posting of signage at beaches to notify the public of potential health risks. Monitoring efforts were at risk in San Diego, Ventura, and Santa Barbara for this summer due to the state budget mess. Fortunately, local monies were acquired in time to provide this invaluable service to the beachgoing public. The State Water Resources Control Board directed Prop 13 Clean Beach Initiative grant funds to backfill the beach monitoring funds from July 1, 2008 through June 30 2010. The Board recently approved 604(b) stimulus funds to extend the monitoring season to include the rest of 2010. However beginning in 2011, there is no secured source of funding. Heal the Bay will continue working with the State and local governments to ensure that funding is secured.

Water Quality data collected at California beaches this past summer showed that this was one of the cleanest summers on record. Southern California's third summer of drought likely contributed to the third consecutive year of excellent overall summer grades. Long Beach's overall water quality showed statistically significant improvement from last year although they monitored fewer beaches this summer. Santa Cruz's Cowell Beach had extensive periods of high bacteria counts this summer. This stretch of beach has been posted with advisories since May 13, 2009. Despite a few problem areas, statewide water quality was very good (and slightly better than last summer) with 92% A and B grades. Santa Monica Bay monitoring locations fared significantly better than last summer, exhibiting water quality of 91% As and Bs. There were only 37 locations (8%) throughout the state that received fair-to-poor water quality grades (10 Cs, 5 Ds and 22 Fs).

San Diego County: Due to state budget cuts, the number of monitoring locations in San Diego County dropped from 92 last year to 79 this summer. Heal the Bay is grateful for the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health's tenacity in keeping their program alive.

Over the last few years, San Diego has completed multiple projects to improve its beach water quality, including numerous storm drain diversions into their sewage systems during the summer months. A few years ago, Mission Bay was experiencing such high indicator bacteria concentrations that it was used as the site for a health effects epidemiology study. However, these diversions and other source abatement actions appear to have greatly reduced these problems and there has been a steady trend of A grades over the last several years during summer. Every monitoring location in San Diego County received A or B grades this summer except for the historically problematic Pacific Beach Point (F grade).

There were two known sewage spills in San Diego County that led to beach closures this summer. From Dog Beach to Stub Jetty in Ocean Beach was closed for 2 days in late June due to an estimated 14,850 gallon spill that fed into the San Diego River. The other spill of approximately 3,120 gallons at the Oceanside Pier closed the beach there from August 10th till August 12th.

Orange County: Overall water quality at beaches in Orange County this past summer was excellent and slightly better than last year. Of the 103 water quality monitoring locations covered by the Beach Report Card, 102 (99%) received A or B grades. The notorious hot spots of the past at Huntington Beach at Magnolia Street and Brookhurst Street both received B grades. Despite the installation of a new UV treatment facility at the mouth of Poche Creek, Poche Beach (F) earned Orange County's only poor grade for this summer. San Juan Creek at Doheny Beach scored an F grade last year but this year was an A grade for the summer. All historically poor beaches in Dana Point received A grades (all of the Baby beaches).

There were no known sewage spills in Orange County during the summer of 2009. This is great news, especially compared to seven spills during the 2008 summer.

Los Angeles County: Overall, Los Angeles beach water quality grades were good and moderately improved from last year. Avalon beaches again exhibited extremely poor water quality. Santa Monica Bay beaches showed a significant improvement from last summer with far more beaches receiving A or B grades.

Long Beach's water quality has improved from last summer, although the total number of monitoring locations decreased this summer. This summer there were 60% A and B grades in Long Beach while last summer the percentage was 52%. The City of Long Beach conducted an extensive source tracking study to determine the cause of their continual beach postings and closures. Results have shown that while some storm drains may have a small secondary impact, the vast majority of the contamination at ocean beaches is due to the Los Angeles River. This river stretches over 40 miles inland, with numerous sources creating high bacteria concentrations. This is especially detrimental to the city's beaches following a rain event, which can impact water quality for a number of days. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board is currently developing a Los Angeles River Bacteria Dry Weather Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). However, once adopted, the implementation of this TMDL will likely take many years to complete. In general, the San Pedro Bay facing beaches south of Belmont Pier had excellent water quality while those beaches north of the pier had fair water quality. The only poor grade in Long Beach this summer was at Colorado Lagoon south (F).

Avalon Beach continues to suffer from poor water quality. None of the five monitoring locations have received good grades (A or B) for the last five summers. Both research and sewer infrastructure improvements components of the CBI funded Avalon Bay Water Quality Improvement Project have been underway since October 2008. This projects' goal is to inspect and repair and/or replace

approximately 370 residential sewer laterals and to use new technologies to immediately reduce fecal indicator bacteria concentrations in ankle-depth waters. The sewer component of the project was completed in June 2009. The City of Avalon plans to continue to inspect and repair more sewer lines and laterals throughout the town.

Overall, Santa Monica Bay beaches fared better than last summer, with 60 (91%) of 66 monitoring locations receiving A or B grades compared to 86% last year. Projects at Marie Canyon in Malibu (A), Temescal (A+), and Santa Monica Canyon (A) continue to be successful during these summers with extremely low dry weather runoff flows. Beaches receiving poor to failing grades this summer are Castlerock and Santa Ynez storm drains at Castle Rock Beach (both F grades), Santa Monica Pier (F), and Dockweiler Beach at Ballona Creek Mouth (D).

Chronic Exceeders

For many years, Paradise Cove has received poor grades during the summer months. The long overdue completion of the wastewater treatment facility and sewer at Paradise Cove Mobilehome Park in conjunction with dry weather and low runoff flows have led to an improved grade of B this summer.

The Santa Monica Pier is a historic landmark, attracting over 3 million tourists each year but has been plagued by poor water quality. In 2006, a study was conducted to determine the source of the chronic bacteria issues experienced on the south side of the pier. Consultants to Santa Monica determined that a stormdrain rehabilitation project was required to alleviate these water quality problems. The City completed the stormdrain project before Memorial Day 2009. Some engineering and maintenance problems have occurred over this summer leading to periods of improved and declining water quality. Santa Monica is continuing work with UCLA and Heal the Bay to determine additional pollution sources and potential maintenance modifications.

Cabrillo Beach has been funded by the CBI and Proposition O to create ways to increase circulation in the Cabrillo section of San Pedro Bay and thus lower indicator bacteria concentrations. Two years ago, two pumps were installed in the bay for a pilot study on enhancing water circulation but due to a number of factors, including insufficient pump size, and incomplete submersion of the pump, the desired increase in circulation was not achieved. This summer the Ports removed a rock jetty to help improve circulation and they completed a large beach sand replacement project. Plans are also in the works to install bird excluders. Cabrillo Beach must meet fecal bacteria water quality standards 100 percent of the time during summer dry weather starting in April 2010 under a TMDL deadline imposed in 2005 by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Despite receiving generally positive grades this summer, many Santa Monica beaches remain in exceedance of the Santa Monica Bay Beach Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (SMBBB TMDL). Santa Monica beaches are not allowed to exceed state water quality standards for fecal indicator bacteria during summer dry weather. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board issued Notices of Violation (NOVs) and 13383 Orders in March 2008 to those municipalities not in compliance with the TMDL requirements. Unfortunately, we have seen no enforcement action follow-up to date. As seen below, responsible parties continue to be out of compliance with TMDL limits. Of note, the State Water Resources Control Board denied the petition of the County of Los Angeles to set-aside the SMBBB TMDL in August of this year. However a few days later, the County sued the state asking the courts to set aside the stormwater permit incorporating the TMDL. Public funds are being wasted on legal pursuits instead of better water quality protection measures. Below is a table of SM Bay beaches water quality exceedances between 4/1/09 and 9/7/09. (Those dates mark this year's TMDL dry weather compliance time-frame through Labor Day weekend)

SM Bay Beach TMDL Exceedance Count 4/1/2009 -- 9/7/2009	
Exceedances	Location
103	Santa Monica Municipal Pier
64	Dockweiler State Beach at Ballona Creek mouth
62	Surfrider Beach daily
39	Topanga State Beach at creek mouth
34	Redondo Municipal Pier south side
12	Santa Monica Beach at Pico/Kenter storm drain
11	Solstice Canyon at Dan Blocker County Beach
10	Santa Ynez Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach
9	Castlerock Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach
9	Marina del Rey, Mothers' Beach Playground area
9	Will Rogers State Beach at Santa Monica Canyon drain
8	Malibu Pier 50 yards east
8	Paradise Cove Pier at Ramirez Canyon Creek mouth
7	Will Rogers State Beach at Pulga Canyon storm drain
7	Marie Canyon storm drain at Puerco Beach, at 24572 Malibu Rd.
6	Will Rogers State Beach at Bel Air Bay Club drain near fence
5	Marina del Rey, Mothers' Beach lifeguard tower
4	Malibu Point
3	Ocean Park Beach at Ashland Ave. drain
3	Santa Monica Beach at Wilshire Blvd. drain
3	Escondido beach at creek mouth
2	Hermosa Beach Pier 50 yards south
1	Zuma Beach at Zuma Creek mouth
1	Puerco State Beach at creek mouth
1	Will Rogers State Beach at 17200 PCH
1	Santa Monica Beach at Montana Ave. drain
1	Dockweiler State Beach at Culver Blvd. drain
1	Manhattan Beach Pier drain
1	Herondo Street storm drain
1	Malaga Cove, Palos Verdes Estates daily
1	Santa Monica Beach at Strand St.
1	Big Rock Beach at 19948 PCH stairs

There was one sewage spill in LA County that resulted in beach closures this summer. Approximately 1000 gallons of sewage spilled near the Los Cerritos Channel. As a result, health officials in Long Beach closed Mother's Beach, Marine Stadium, and Colorado Lagoon for about 36 hours.

Ventura County: Due to state budget cuts, the number of monitoring locations in Ventura County dropped from 54 last year to 40 this summer. Also, beach monitoring did not begin in Ventura this year until late June. Overall water quality at beaches throughout Ventura County was excellent this summer and among the best in the state. The 39 monitoring locations monitored frequently enough to be included in this report all received A grades.

There were no known sewage spills in Ventura County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Santa Barbara County: Water quality at beaches in Santa Barbara County was some of the best on record this summer. 94% of Santa Barbara monitoring locations received an A or B grade. (Last year this percentage was 90%). Arroyo Burro (C) was the only location that did not earn an A or B grade this summer.

There were no known sewage spills in Santa Barbara County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

San Luis Obispo County: Overall water quality at beaches in San Luis Obispo County was excellent again this past summer, with only one monitoring location receiving lower than an A or B grade. Pismo Beach Pier (D) again received the county's only poor grade. The pier is currently undergoing an extensive CBI funded study, using DNA to identify the sources of high indicator bacteria in the ocean. This is a multiyear study, and results will not be seen for some time.

There were no known sewage spills in San Luis Obispo County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Monterey County: Beach water quality in Monterey County was good this year. Seven of eight (88%) monitoring locations received A or B grades. Monterey Municipal Beach at the commercial wharf (C) was the county's lowest grade (down from a B grade last summer).

There were no known sewage spills in Monterey County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Santa Cruz County: Santa Cruz's Cowell Beach had extensive periods of high bacteria counts this summer. This stretch of beach between the Dream Inn and just east of the wharf has been posted with advisories since May 13 2009 and received F grades for the summer. Santa Cruz EHS has been tracking the problem extensively all summer and are fairly certain that quantities of decaying kelp on the beach are the source of high bacteria scores in the area. Capitola Beach west of the jetty received the county's only other F grade. All other Santa Cruz county beaches scored good grades (A or B).

There were no known sewage spills in Santa Cruz County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

San Mateo County: This year marks the first summer that San Mateo County beach grades were available on a weekly basis on the Heal the Bay website. Heal the Bay would like to thank San Mateo County Environmental Health for making their data available to us in a timely ongoing manner. Overall, San Mateo's ocean water quality was excellent. The lowest grades in the county were found at bayside locations. Of the 20 regularly monitored locations, 17 (85%) received A or B grades. Aquatic Park (F) and Lakeshore Park (F) earned the county's only poor grades.

There were no known sewage spills in San Mateo County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Alameda County: Alameda County beaches are now a staple of excellent summertime water quality in this report. For the third year in a row (as long as they have been in the report) all seven monitoring locations (100%) received A grades.

There were no known sewage spills in Alameda County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

San Francisco County: Overall beach water quality in San Francisco County was excellent this summer. Out of 14 monitoring locations that were sampled regularly over the summer, 12 received A grades. Aquatic Park Beach 211 station received a B grade and Baker Beach Lobos Creek once again received the county's only F grade.

There were no known sewage spills in San Francisco reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Contra Costa County: For the second summer in a row, locations at Keller Beach have received fair to poor grades. This year all three Keller Beach locations received D grades for repeated exceedances of the geometric mean standard for total coliforms. Although total coliform exceedances occurred at Keller Beach, these were not concurrent or simultaneous with exceedances of fecal coliform or enterococcus

standards. The total coliform exceedances, therefore, are generally not associated with human source contamination (sewage) or increased human health risk and are more indicative of decomposing marine vegetation (eel grass, seaweed, etc.) that tends to be routinely deposited at the Keller Beach site due to San Francisco Bay tidal action.

There was one precautionary beach closure event for Keller Beach due to a sewage spill in mid June. It was determined that the spill did not reach the beach.

Marin County: Overall water quality at beaches throughout Marin County was excellent again this summer and among the best in the state. All 24 monitoring locations received A grades.

There were no known sewage spills in Marin County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Sonoma County: With similar excellent water quality as last summer, of the seven monitoring locations that were sampled in Sonoma County over this summer, all locations (100%) received A grades. The historically polluted Campbell Cove seems to have avoided its late summer water quality problems and scored zero exceedances of state standards during the timeframe of this report.

There were no known sewage spills in Sonoma County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Mendocino: Six locations were monitored in Mendocino County frequently enough to earn grades in this report. Only one of these locations scored poorly. Samples taken in Pudding Creek Lagoon earned an F grade for that location (although this is not an ocean beach). MacKerricher State Park at Mill Creek scored a B grade for this summer. All other monitoring locations in Mendocino County scored A grades.

There were no known sewage spills in Mendocino County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Humboldt County: Similar to last summer, and following the pattern of excellent water quality in most northern counties this summer, Humboldt County received 100% A and B grades in this report. All monitored beaches received A grades except for Clam Beach at Strawberry Creek (B).

There were no known sewage spills in Humboldt County reported to Heal the Bay this summer.

Del Norte County: Heal the Bay was unable to obtain the data from Del Norte County in time for this analysis.

There were no known sewage spills in this county that led to beach closures.

Standardized Monitoring

While some beaches have seen dramatic improvement in water quality over the years, others still have a long way to go. Vital beach water quality issues that still need to be tackled include improving coordinated monitoring between counties, guaranteeing that beaches are monitored year-round in a standardized fashion, and ensuring that chronically polluted beaches receive the necessary funding for remediation and are able to use this funding to complete projects in a timely manner.

Each year, Heal the Bay issues our weekly, annual and end of summer beach report cards, grading almost 500 beaches along California's coast. Most counties and cities monitor for fecal indicator bacteria using monitoring plans that have been developed without collaboration with other regions. Approximately five years ago, Heal the Bay partnered with the Southern California Beach Water Quality Workgroup to formulate a standardized monitoring plan. This plan would require counties to each monitor at a certain depth and distance from a storm drain and ensure the appropriate posting of

warning signs to the public. A number of these measures were incorporated into health department monitoring plans. But there are still disparities among counties with regards to the distance at which their samples are taken from a storm drain. Some counties, such as Los Angeles, measure at point zero, while other counties are measuring at 25, 50 or even 83 yards from the storm drain. This discrepancy makes it difficult to compare results from county to county or even beach to beach, and is not adequately protective of the public health. Further efforts will be made in the coming year to unite all stakeholders in a standardized monitoring process. Heal the Bay will work to implement a standardized monitoring plan that can be applied statewide to allow more accurate comparison of beach water quality and improve public health protection.

About the Beach Report Card

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card website healthebay.org/brc is updated every Friday with weekly Beach Report Card grades for all sampled locations. Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is based on weekly water quality monitoring data provided by dischargers and health agencies. Data is analyzed as soon as it is made available by these agencies. The report is a comprehensive examination of coastal water quality throughout California. Beaches are graded using an A-F scale based on the risk of ocean users becoming ill. Samples are analyzed for three indicator bacteria. A fact sheet detailing the exact methodology used in determining grades for each location is available from the Heal the Bay office or online at www.healthebay.org/brc/methodology.

The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at local beaches. Heal the Bay reminds you not to swim or surf within 100 yards of any flowing storm drain or for three days after a rainstorm. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts at beaches throughout California usually *far exceed* health criteria stipulated in the state's Beach Closure and Health Warning Protocol.

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Table 1

California Summer Beach Water Quality 2009							
Summary	A	B	C	D	F	A-B%	C-F%
Humboldt	4	1	0	0	0	100%	0%
Mendocino	4	1	0	0	1	83%	17%
Sonoma	7	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Marin	24	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Contra Costa	0	0	0	3	0	0%	100%
San Francisco	12	1	0	0	1	93%	7%
Alameda	7	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
San Mateo	16	1	1	0	2	85%	15%
Santa Cruz	9	2	0	0	5	69%	31%
Monterey	6	1	1	0	0	88%	13%
San Luis Obispo	19	0	0	1	0	95%	5%
Santa Barbara	14	1	1	0	0	94%	6%
Ventura	39	0	0	0	0	100%	0%
Los Angeles	66	7	7	1	10	80%	20%
LA without Long Beach	58	6	2	1	9	84%	16%
Long Beach only	8	1	5	0	1	60%	40%
SM Bay beaches	54	6	2	1	3	91%	9%
Orange County	99	3	0	0	1	99%	1%
San Diego	76	2	0	0	1	99%	1%
State	402	20	10	5	21	92%	8%
State without LA County	336	13	3	4	11	95%	5%

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