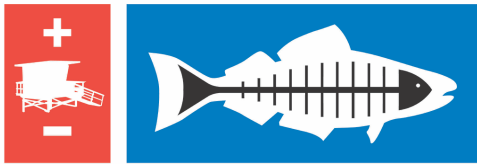


## BEACH REPORT CARD



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## BEACH WATER-QUALITY GRADES DIP IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Heal the Bay bacteria report: Region home to 7 of state's 10 most-polluted beaches*

*Retooled website offers real-time data to public; NowCast predictions expanded*

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, June 6, 2018) – Northern California beach-water quality sagged slightly in 2017-18, driven in large part by troubled beaches in San Mateo County and Humboldt County.

Some 88% of the 96 Northern California beaches monitored by Heal the Bay received an A or B grade for the busy summer season, according to the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Beach Report Card, which the Santa Monica-based nonprofit released today.

That figure marks a 3% dip from the region's five-year summer average. Only 68% of beaches received an A or B for the winter dry season as well, a 16% drop from its seasonal five-year average.

Heal the Bay scientists assigned A-to-F letter grades to 118 Northern California beaches across three reporting periods in the 2017-18 report, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution measured by county health agencies. Northern California beaches include those in Santa Cruz, San Mateo, Alameda, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Overall, Northern California is home to seven beaches on Heal the Bay's dreaded Beach Bummer List, which ranks the 10 most polluted beaches in the state based on levels of harmful bacteria.

**No. 2 – Lakeshore Park, Marina Lagoon, San Mateo County** This enclosed beach hits the list for the second year in a row, troubled by poor circulation and high bacteria counts.

**No. 3 – Linda Mar Beach, San Mateo County** This Pacific-side beach is impacted by polluted runoff from nearby San Pedro Creek.

**No. 4 – Clam Beach County Park, Humboldt County** This beach is impacted by runoff from Patrick Creek and Strawberry Creek. Private septic systems located nearby are also potential sources of bacterial pollution.

**No. 5 – Roosevelt Beach, San Mateo County** This Half Moon Bay site suffers from high bacterial exceedances related to nearby stormdrain runoff.

**No. 6 – Luffenholtz Beach, Humboldt County** This beach is impacted by runoff from Luffenholtz Creek. Beach sites near freshwater creeks often have elevated bacteria levels due to animal and human pollution sources along streams.

**No. 8 – Cowell Beach, west of wharf, Santa Cruz County** This historically troubled spot makes the list for the ninth straight year, but it’s making steady improvement. The city of Santa Cruz has taken steps to improve stormdrain flows and reduce bird-related bacteria by installing netting under the wharf.

**No. 10 – Surfer’s Beach, San Mateo County** Stormdrain outflow also troubles this Half Moon Bay spot, carrying harmful bacteria into the lineup.

Polluted ocean waters pose a significant health risk to millions of ocean users in Northern California, who can contract a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness from one morning swim or surf session in polluted waters.

- **San Francisco County** outperformed its five-year summer average, with 100% of its 15 monitored beaches getting A or B grades.
- Seven out of 8 monitored beaches in **Alameda** and **Contra Costa** counties received A or B grades for the summer.
- **Santa Cruz County’s** 13 beaches notched grades well above average, with 92% A’s or B’s in summer and 88% A’s or B’s in wet weather (a boon to the region’s sizable year-round surfing population).
- **Sonoma** and **Mendocino** counties boasted stellar water quality, with their seven and five beaches recording 100% A grades in summer and winter, respectively.
- **Marin County** also fared well, with all of its 23 monitored beaches scoring an A or B.

In another positive sign, a record 37 beaches in California made the Heal the Bay Honor Roll this year – meaning they are monitored year-round and score perfect A-plus grades each week during all seasons and weather conditions. (A full list of Honor Roll beaches can be found on pg. 20 of the report.)

“A day at the beach shouldn’t make anyone sick,” said Dr. Shelley Luce, president and CEO of Heal the Bay. “We are glad to see water quality improving at most beaches, but there are no guarantees. Anyone headed to the shoreline should visit Heal the Bay’s new website to get the latest grades and predictions.”

Swimming at a beach with a water quality grade of C or lower greatly increases the risk of contracting illnesses such as stomach flu, ear infections, upper respiratory infections and rashes.

### How to stay safe at the beach

- Check [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org) for latest water quality grades
- Avoid shallow, enclosed beaches with poor circulation
- Swim at least 100 yards away from flowing storm drains, creeks and piers

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.healthebay.org/beach-report-card-2018](http://www.healthebay.org/beach-report-card-2018)

### How to stem the tide of bacterial pollution

California often swings from extended dry periods to shorter periods of intense, wet weather. When rains do come, our state needs to do a better job of capturing runoff before it hits shorelines. Heal the Bay advocates for sinking that water back into our aquifers rather than letting it flow uselessly to the sea.

If Southern California and San Francisco Bay Area municipalities installed infrastructure to capture and reuse stormwater, the state could augment water supplies by as much as 630,000 acre-feet each year, according to a 2014 NRDC study. That's roughly equal to the amount of water used by the entire City of Los Angeles annually.

### **Heal the Bay to NowCast water quality**

This summer Heal the Bay, Stanford University, and UCLA are expanding their predictive beach water-quality NowCast program. Using sophisticated statistical models, environmental data, and past bacteria samples, the scientific team can accurately predict each morning when beaches should be posted with warning or open signs because of potential bacterial pollution.

Promising results from the past three summers demonstrated that the public can be notified immediately at pollution-impacted beaches based on predictions rather than waiting days for test results. These new models will protect public health by providing more advanced water quality information to public health officials. This summer, Heal the Bay will run models for 20 beaches – 10 of them new -- from San Diego to San Francisco counties. Scientists will post predictions each morning on the Beach Report Card website and mobile app.

### **About the Beach Report Card**

All county health departments in California are required to test beach water quality samples for three types of indicator bacteria at least once a week during the summer season. Many counties also monitor heavily used beaches year-round. Heal the Bay compiles the complex shoreline data, analyzes it and assigns an easy-to-understand letter grade.

The summary includes an analysis of water quality for three time periods: summer dry season (April through October 2017), winter dry weather (November 2017 through March 2018) and year-round wet weather conditions. The grading methodology is endorsed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

A FAQ section, methodology, and weekly grade updates can be found at [www.beachreportcard.org](http://www.beachreportcard.org).

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card is made possible through the generous support of SIMA and the Swain Barber Foundation.

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