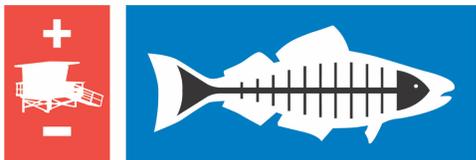


BEACH REPORT CARD



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ARID WEATHER LIFTS WATER QUALITY AT SO. CAL BEACHES

Lack of rain dramatically improves grades in Heal the Bay's 2017-18 annual survey

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

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, June 6, 2018) – There's one silver lining in Southern California's recent swing back to drought-like conditions – improved beach water quality.

With less rain, bacterial pollution at our local beaches dipped dramatically in 2017-18, according to Heal the Bay's 28th annual Beach Report Card, which the nonprofit released today. Some 95% of the beaches monitored in Southern California earned A grades during the busy summer season, a 5% uptick from the reporting period's five-year average.

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.

Despite the good news for beachgoers, Heal the Bay scientists remain concerned about the long-range prognosis for beach water quality – given our state's boom-and-bust rain cycles.

In the previous reporting period, heavy winter rains washed billions of gallons of bacteria-laden runoff onto Southern California shorelines. That slurry – containing trash, fertilizer, pet waste, metal and automotive fluids – flows into storm drains and out to the ocean.

Runoff poses significant health risks to the tens of thousands of year-round ocean users in Southern California, who can contract a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness from one morning swim or surf session in polluted waters. Gastrointestinal illnesses caused by recreating in L.A. and Orange County ocean waters lead to at least \$20 million in economic losses each year, according to UCLA researchers.

In response, Heal the Bay is supporting an effort to place a public funding measure on the November ballot in L.A. County to build infrastructure for increased stormwater capture. By harnessing the intense rains that are sure to come again, we can increase local water supply and reduce harmful pollution.

In **L.A. County**, Heal the Bay scientists assigned A-to-F letter grades to 94 beaches for three reporting periods in the 2017-18 report, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution measured by county health agencies. Some 97% of beaches received A or B grades for the high-traffic summer period (April-October 2017), a 6% uptick from the five-year average.

The news for summer beachgoers is equally encouraging in Ventura and Orange counties. Some 94% of **Orange County's** 121 monitored beaches notched A grades in summer dry weather in this year's report, while **Ventura's** 40 monitored beaches scored a perfect 100% for the eighth consecutive year.

San Diego County also scored top summer marks, with 100% of 69 monitored sites receiving A or B grades. But its wet-weather grades fell significantly below the five-year average. **Santa Barbara County's** 16 monitored beaches also earned 100% A or B grades in the summer, but half of them earned D or F grades in the winter rainy season.

Despite the encouraging news overall in dry weather, stubborn pockets of chronic pollution still plague several popular beaches locally. Southern California accounted for three sites listed on Heal the Bay's infamous **Beach Bummer List**, which ranks the 10 most polluted beaches in the state:

No. 1- Poche Beach at ocean outlet, San Clemente This O.C. site is the single most polluted beach in the state, according to the report. It's a "point zero" site, meaning weekly samples are taken directly where a stream, creek or stormdrain discharges to the sea. Elevated pollution from Poche Creek is no doubt leading to bacterial exceedances.

No. 7 – Santa Monica Pier Moist conditions, flocks of birds and stormdrain runoff are likely culprits. Construction has begun on a 1.6-million gallon stormwater storage tank that should help.

No. 9 – Cabrillo Beach, harbor side, San Pedro This site returns to the Bummer List after a two-year absence. Lack of circulation means unsafe levels of bacteria. The County continues to fine-tune a circulation device and bird deterrents.

Several other Southern California beaches received annual grades of C for bacterial exceedances, warranting caution. These hot spots include **Monarch Beach** in Orange County, **San Clemente Pier** in Orange County and **Topanga State Beach** in Los Angeles County.

On the positive side, several SoCal beaches named as 2016-17 Beach Bumpers fell off this year's list of the most-polluted beaches in the state. Among those showing marked improvement: **La Jolla Cove** in San Diego and historically troubled **Mother's Beach** in Marina Del Rey.

"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, but there are no guarantees. Anyone headed to the beach 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.

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

How to stay safe at the beach

- Check the newly redesigned 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

Heal the Bay to NowCast water quality

This summer Heal the Bay, Stanford University, and UCLA are expanding their predictive beach water-quality NowCasting 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 computer modeling 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. 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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