

DID CALIFORNIA BEACHES & RIVERS MAKE THE GRADE? HEAL THE BAY WATER QUALITY REPORTS DETAIL BEST & WORST AREAS FROM LAST YEAR

Heal the Bay releases scientific reports on annual bacterial-pollution rankings for hundreds of beaches in California and dozens of freshwater recreation areas in Los Angeles County.

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, June 22, 2022) – California beaches had excellent water quality in summer 2021, according to the thirty-second annual Beach Report Card that environmental nonprofit Heal the Bay released today. Heal the Bay assigned “A-to-F” letter grades for 500 California beaches in the 2021-2022 report, based on levels of fecal-indicator bacterial pollution in the ocean measured by County health agencies. In addition, the group ranked water quality at 35 freshwater recreation areas in Los Angeles County for summer 2021 and shared findings from the third annual River Report Card.

Summer is officially here – the peak season for swimming outdoors. **The good news is 94% of the California beaches assessed by Heal the Bay received an A or B grade** during summer 2021, which is on par with the five-year average. Even so, Heal the Bay scientists remain deeply concerned about ocean water quality. Polluted waters pose a significant health risk to millions of people in California. People who come in contact with water with a C grade or lower are at a greater risk of contracting illnesses such as stomach flu, ear infections, upper respiratory infections, and rashes. Beaches and rivers usually have high-risk water quality following a rain event. Less rain typically means that reduced amounts of pollutants, including bacteria, are flushed through storm drains and rivers into the ocean. Last year, rainfall across coastal counties in California was 24 percent lower than the historical average. **Only 66% of California beaches had good or excellent grades during wet weather, which was a little above average, but still very concerning.**

“A day at the beach and the river shouldn’t make anyone sick,” said Tracy Quinn, President and CEO of Heal the Bay. “It is wonderful news that most beaches in California have good water quality for swimming. But there are areas with poor water quality that need improvement and infrastructure upgrades. We can’t forget that our marine ecosystems are still threatened by the climate crisis and other pollution sources, and we need solutions to address these pressing issues as well. We expect people to increasingly seek out ocean shorelines and freshwater swimming holes to cool off as temperatures rise, so safe, clean, and healthy water is needed now more than ever.”

Heal the Bay’s Beach Report Card and River Report Card provide access to the latest water quality information and are a critical part of our science-based advocacy work in support of strong environmental policies that protect public health. **The Beach Report Card and River Report Card are available at healthebay.org/beachreportcard2022**

California’s Beach Bummers List:

Heal the Bay’s Beach Bummers List ranks the most polluted beaches in California based on levels of harmful bacteria in the ocean. The 2021-2022 Beach Bummers List includes beaches in San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Humboldt and Santa Cruz Counties, and for the first-time ever a beach in Baja California, Mexico makes the list (this beach is monitored by San Diego County).

1. Playa Blanca (Baja California, Mexico)
2. Erckenbrack Park (San Mateo County)
3. Marlin Park (San Mateo County)
4. Santa Monica Pier (Los Angeles County)
5. Marina Del Rey Mother’s Beach, at lifeguard tower (Los Angeles County)
6. Moonstone County Park (Humboldt County)
7. Newport Bay, Vaughn’s Launch (Orange County)
8. Lakeshore Park (San Mateo County)
9. Marina del Rey Mother’s Beach, between lifeguard tower and boat dock (Los Angeles County)
10. Tijuana Slough, North of Tijuana River Mouth (San Diego County)

California's Beach Honor Roll List:

Heal the Bay's Honor Roll List includes 51 California beaches that scored perfect water quality grades year-round (compared to 35 beaches in the prior year). Most beaches on the Honor Roll are in Southern California because many counties in Central California and Northern California do not sample frequently enough during the winter months. Orange County had the most beaches on the Honor Roll. Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, and Santa Barbara Counties also had beaches with perfect water quality grades. San Francisco, Ventura, and Alameda Counties had no beaches on the Honor Roll.

- Venice City Beach, at Brooks Ave. drain (Los Angeles County)
- Rancho Palos Verdes, Long Point (Los Angeles County)
- Royal Palms State Beach (Los Angeles County)
- Palos Verdes Estates, at Malaga Cove trail outlet (Los Angeles County)
- Las Tunas County Beach, at Pena Creek (Los Angeles County)
- Nicholas Beach, at San Nicholas Canyon Creek (Los Angeles County)
- Dana Point Harbor Youth Dock (Orange County)
- Dana Point Harbor Guest Dock (Orange County)
- Poche Beach (Orange County)
- Doheny Beach (Orange County)
- Doheny State Beach, end of the park (Orange County)
- Doheny State Beach, at last campground (Orange County)
- Corona Del Mar (Orange County)
- Crystal Cove (Orange County)
- Marine Science Institute Beach (Orange County)
- Dana Point, Capistrano County Beach (Orange County)
- Doheny State Beach, Pedestrian Bridge (Orange County)
- Dana Strands Beach (Orange County)
- Huntington City Beach, at 17th Street (Orange County)
- Bolsa Chica Reserve, at Flood Gates (Orange County)
- Surfside Beach, at Sea Way (Orange County)
- San Clemente, at Avenida Calafia (Orange County)
- Salt Creek Beach (Orange County)
- Laguna Lido (Orange County)
- Treasure Island Beach (Orange County)
- Del Mar, at 15th Street (San Diego County)
- Carlsbad, at Tamarack Ave. (San Diego County)
- Carlsbad, at Poinsettia Lane (San Diego County)
- Carlsbad, at Encina Creek (San Diego County)
- Carlsbad, at Palomar Airport Rd. (San Diego County)
- Carlsbad, at Cerezo Drive (San Diego County)
- Oceanside, at Forster Street (San Diego County)
- Oceanside, Harbor Beach at Harbor Drive (San Diego County)
- Point Loma, Lighthouse (San Diego County)
- Point Loma, Point Loma Treatment Plant (San Diego County)
- Sunset Cliffs, at Ladera Street (San Diego County)
- Mission Beach, Belmont Park (San Diego County)
- La Jolla Shores Beach, 1000 ft south of Scripps Pier (San Diego County)
- La Jolla Shores Beach, 250 feet south of Scripps Pier (San Diego County)
- La Jolla Shores Beach, 500 feet north of Scripps Pier (San Diego County)
- Guadalupe Dunes (Santa Barbara County)
- East Beach, at Sycamore Creek (Santa Barbara County)
- El Capitan State Beach (Santa Barbara County)
- Sands, at Coal Oil Point (Santa Barbara County)

- Cayucos State Beach, downcoast of the pier (San Luis Obispo County)
- Pismo Beach, at Ocean View (San Luis Obispo County)
- Pismo Beach, at Wadsworth Street (San Luis Obispo County)
- San Simeon State Beach, at Pico Ave. (San Luis Obispo County)
- Morro Strand State Beach, at Beachcomber Drive (San Luis Obispo County)
- Pismo State Beach, 571 yards south of Pier Ave. (San Luis Obispo County)
- Pismo State Beach, 330 yards north of Pier Ave. (San Luis Obispo County)

"At the World Surf League, we are passionate about protecting our global ocean and as such, we are a proud partner of Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card. As surfers, we depend on a healthy ocean and it's critical that we all do what we can to preserve the future of the ocean and our sport. Safeguarding the health of the millions that enjoy the California coastline, this Beach Report Card is essential for monitoring water quality and keeping the public informed and we at the WSL are honored to be a part of it." - Emily Hofer, Chief People Officer and Executive Director WSL PURE at World Surf League (WSL)

River Report Card:

Heal the Bay graded 35 freshwater recreation areas in Los Angeles County within the L.A. River, San Gabriel River, and Malibu Creek Watersheds during summer 2021. **59% of the grades across all LA freshwater sites and all dates indicated a low risk of illness**, 17% indicated a moderate risk of illness, and 24% indicated a high risk of illness.

"Our River Report Card identifies a disturbing trend between development and water quality. The natural areas in our watersheds, rivers and streams with muddy bottoms and ample flora, have the best water quality and are the safest for the public. While heavily developed areas, waterways encased with concrete (including within the L.A. River channel), tend to have lower water quality. We recommend checking out the River Report Card before heading out to the L.A. River because bacteria levels are often at unsafe levels and you can find a safer spot for cooling off," said Luke Ginger, Water Quality Scientist and author of the River Report Card and Beach Report Card.

L.A.'s Freshwater Fails List:

Top 10 river recreation sites in Los Angeles County that are high-risk places to contact the water.

- 1-5. L.A. River at Riverfront Park - Lower L.A. River Watershed
- 1-5. L.A. River below the Rio Hondo Confluence - Lower L.A. River Watershed
- 1-5. L.A. River at Hollydale Park - Lower L.A. River Watershed
- 1-5. Compton Creek - Lower L.A. River Watershed
- 1-5. L.A. River below the Compton Creek Confluence - Lower L.A. River Watershed
6. Tujunga Wash at Hansen Dam - Upper L.A. River Watershed
7. L.A. River at Willow Street - Lower L.A. River Watershed
8. L.A. River at Rattlesnake Park - L.A. River Watershed: Recreation Zones
9. Las Virgenes Creek - Malibu Creek Watershed
10. Bull Creek - Upper L.A. River Watershed

L.A.'s Freshwater Honor Roll List:

Top 10 river recreation sites in Los Angeles County that are low-risk places to swim or boat.

- 1-7. San Gabriel River East Fork at Cattle Canyon - San Gabriel River Watershed
- 1-7. San Gabriel River East Fork at Graveyard Canyon - San Gabriel River Watershed
- 1-7. Eaton Canyon - Upper L.A. River Watershed
- 1-7. Hansen Dam Lake - Upper L.A. River Watershed
- 1-7. San Gabriel River Upper East Fork - San Gabriel River Watershed
- 1-7. San Gabriel River Upper West Fork - San Gabriel River Watershed
- 1-7. Mill Creek at Hidden Springs - Upper L.A. River Watershed
8. L.A. River at Balboa Blvd. - L.A. River Watershed: Recreation Zones
- 9-10. San Gabriel River Lower West Fork - San Gabriel River Watershed

9-10. San Gabriel River below North and West Forks - San Gabriel River Watershed

9-10. San Gabriel River at Upper Cattle Canyon - San Gabriel River Watershed

9-10. San Gabriel River Upper North Fork - San Gabriel River Watershed

Tips to stay safe at ocean and freshwater areas:

- View beachreportcard.org and healthebay.org/riverreportcard for the latest water quality info.
- Avoid shallow, enclosed beaches with poor water circulation.
- Swim at least 100 yards away from flowing storm drains, creeks, and piers.
- Stay out of the water for at least 72-hours after a rain event.
- Follow all local health and safety regulations, including all local pandemic-related regulations.
- Check in with the lifeguard or ranger on duty for more information about the best places to swim.

Access to water recreation:

The COVID-19 pandemic, record-setting wildfire seasons, and extreme heat have compounded the already dire need for equity in our recreational waters, and exposed major systemic failures; open spaces, including beaches and rivers, are not equally accessible to all people. Low-income communities of color tend to be the most burdened communities, bearing the brunt of environmental pollution, socioeconomic disparities, and limited access to safe, healthy, and clean water for recreation. Heal the Bay is committed to expanding the user base of our Beach Report Card and River Report Card. We have started by working with local community-based organizations that are taking down barriers to water recreation for communities of color. Through this work, we will amplify what "safe, healthy, and clean access to water recreation" means in the communities where it is needed the most.

About Heal the Bay: Heal the Bay is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1985. They use science, education, community action, and advocacy to fulfill their mission to protect coastal waters and watersheds in Southern California. Heal the Bay Aquarium, located at the Santa Monica Pier, welcomes 100,000 guests annually and hosts a variety of public programs and events that highlight local environmental issues and solutions. Learn more at healthebay.org and follow @healthebay on social media.

About Beach Report Card: Beach Report Card with NowCast, in partnership with World Surf League, is Heal the Bay's flagship scientific water quality monitoring program that started in the 1990s. For thirty years, the Beach Report Card has influenced the improvement of water quality by increasing monitoring efforts and helping to enact strong environmental and public health policies. Learn more at beachreportcard.org and download the free app on Apple and Android devices. The Beach Report Card is made possible through generous support from SIMA Environmental Fund, SONY Pictures Entertainment, and World Surf League.

About River Report Card: Currently, there is no statewide water quality monitoring mandate for rivers and streams in California, like we have for the ocean as a result of the Beach Report Card. Heal the Bay started the River Report Card in 2017 to push for new public health protections for freshwater areas in addition to serving the immediate need for increased public awareness about the risks at popular freshwater recreation areas in Los Angeles County. Learn more at healthebay.org/riverreportcard. The River Report Card is brought to you by Garfield Foundation, Watershed Conservation Authority, Environment Now, and Rivers and Mountains Conservancy.

Contacts:

Talia Walsh, Heal the Bay, (310) 944-5615, twalsh@healthebay.org

Luke Ginger, Heal the Bay, (773) 368-7127, lginger@healthebay.org

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