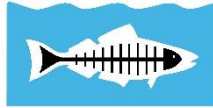


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Alison Simard, [ASimard@healthebay.org](mailto:ASimard@healthebay.org), 323-445-8402

Jillian Marshall, [JMarshall@healthebay.org](mailto:JMarshall@healthebay.org), 703-537-6950



Heal the Bay

**HEAL THE BAY ANNOUNCES RANKING OF BEST AND WORST  
WATER QUALITY GRADES  
IN 2022-2023 ANNUAL BEACH AND RIVER REPORTS**

*Heal the Bay releases 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Beach and 5<sup>th</sup> Annual River Report Cards - 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. (June 14, 2023)** According to environmental non-profit Heal the Bay's 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Beach Report Card released today, California beaches were impacted by 50% more precipitation than the last 10 years during recent winter months, along with an alarming 45 million gallons of sewage spilled, negatively affecting water quality along coastal waterways. While overall quality remains very good in dry weather, Bean Hollow State Beach in San Mateo County and the Point Loma Lighthouse in San Diego County were the only two beaches listed on the 2022-2023 Honor Roll (down from 50 in 2021). Because of the significant amounts of rainfall, the Honor Roll was the shortest this past year than it has ever been.

For more than 30 years, Heal the Bay has assigned annual "A-to-F" letter grades for 700 beaches from Washington State to Tijuana, Mexico including 500 California beaches in the 2022-2023 report, based on levels of fecal-indicator bacterial pollution in the ocean measured by County health agencies. In addition, since 2017, the organization has ranked freshwater quality, releasing report grades for 35 freshwater recreation areas in Los Angeles County for summer 2022 in its fifth annual River Report Card. The public can check out the updated water quality of their local freshwater recreation areas at [healthebay.org/riverreportcard](http://healthebay.org/riverreportcard) and ocean beaches at [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org) or by downloading the app on their smartphone.

The good news is **95% of the California beaches assessed by Heal the Bay received an A or B grade** during the summer of 2022 which is on par with the 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 poor 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. Sewage spills

pose increased health risks and trigger immediate beach closures, which should be heeded until public officials clear the area.

“As climate change continues to bring weather whiplash, our water woes will swing from scarcity to pollution. This year, record precipitation produced major impacts on water quality across Coastal California,” said **Tracy Quinn, President and CEO of Heal the Bay**. “Now more than ever, we must prioritize multi-benefit projects to manage stormwater as both a water quality and supply solution, all while ensuring that the public is kept informed of risks to public health.”

California’s Beach Bummer List:

*Heal the Bay’s Beach Bummer List ranks the most polluted beaches in California based on levels of harmful bacteria in the ocean. The 2022-2023 Beach Bummer list includes beaches in Los Angeles, San Mateo, San Diego, and Orange Counties as well as the Tijuana Area.*

This year, Santa Monica Pier and Playa Blanca in Tijuana tied for the top spot as both faced significant water quality challenges. The City of Santa Monica is actively addressing the water quality issues at the pier, and they suspect that bird fecal matter is a major contributing factor to the poor water quality; however, the jury is still out. Playa Blanca, along with the nearby Tijuana River mouth which ranked as the 6th most polluted beach, are affected by sewage-contaminated runoff from the Tijuana area, which lacks sufficient sewage infrastructure in certain regions. Mother’s Beach in Marina del Rey, a perennial Bummer due to its poor circulation, made the list at number 8 this year. And in Orange County, Poche Beach in Dana Point received runoff from a storm drain located directly on the beach, contributing to its poor water quality. San Mateo County is unfortunately home to 5 out of the 10 Beach Bumpers this year, including Erckenbrack Park’s ongoing water quality challenges that need to be addressed.

- 1-2. Playa Blanca, Tijuana Area
- 1-2. Santa Monica Pier, LA County
3. Linda Mar Beach, San Mateo County
4. Marlin Park, San Mateo County
5. Erckenbrack Park, San Mateo County
6. Tijuana River Mouth, San Diego County
7. Pillar Point Harbor, San Mateo County
8. Marina del Rey Mother’s Beach, LA County
9. Poche Beach, Orange County
10. Gull Park, San Mateo County

River Report Card

Heal the Bay’s Summer 2022 River Report Card is a complementary guide to the Beach Report Card measuring 35 fresh water recreation sites in LA County. 65% of the grades calculated for summer 2022 were Green (which is similar to an A or B). While it is encouraging to see that freshwater recreation, sites have clean water quality a majority of the time, there is still a long way to go considering that ocean beaches have good water quality 95% of the time.

The River Report Card weekly grades will look different yet familiar starting this summer. Heal the Bay recently updated the grading methodology with the help of a team of water quality experts to use the same letter grading system (A-F) as the Beach Report Card.

L.A.'s Freshwater Fails: *Top 10 freshwater recreation sites in Los Angeles County that are high-risk places to contact the water.* Please note that most of them are in developed areas and receive high amounts of urban runoff, which our Honor Roll beaches do not experience because they're in more natural locations in the mountains.

Six of the 10 Freshwater Fails are in the lower reaches of the LA River (south of Downtown LA). The Sepulveda Basin is home to two Freshwater Fails including the boat ramp on Lake Balboa. And finally, Las Virgenes Creek in Malibu Creek State Park is one of LA County's most polluted swimming holes despite its idyllic setting.

Note: Three sites are tied for number 1 Freshwater Fails.

- 1-3. L.A. River at Riverfront Park
- 1-3. Compton Creek
- 1-3. Tujunga Wash at Hansen Dam
4. L.A. River below the Rio Hondo Confluence
5. L.A. River at Willow St.
6. L.A. River at Hollydale Park
7. L.A. River below the Compton Creek Confluence
8. Bull Creek
9. Lake Balboa Boat Ramp
10. Las Virgenes Creek

L.A.'s Freshwater Honor Roll: *Top 10 river recreation sites in Los Angeles County that are low-risk places to swim or boat.*

Six of the 10 Honor Roll sites are in the upper San Gabriel River in Angeles National Forest - which is also home to Big Tujunga Creek and Eaton Canyon, which made the Honor Roll as well. Hansen Dam Lake was the only Honor Roll site not located in the mountains. An astounding eight sites tied for number 1 with 100% Green grades all summer.

- 1-8. San Gabriel River East Fork at Graveyard Canyon
- 1-8. San Gabriel River Upper Cattle Canyon
- 1-8. Hansen Dam Lake
- 1-8. San Gabriel River Upper East Fork
- 1-8. San Gabriel River Upper West Fork
- 1-8. Big Tujunga Creek at Vogel Flats
- 1-8. Big Tujunga Creek at Delta Flats
- 1-8. San Gabriel River Lower West Fork
9. Eaton Canyon
10. San Gabriel River Upper North Fork

Tips to stay safe at ocean and freshwater areas:

- View [beachreportcard.org](http://beachreportcard.org) and [healthebay.org/riverreportcard](http://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
- Check in with the lifeguard or ranger on duty for more information about the best places to swim.

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 with a particular focus on public health, climate change, biodiversity, and environmental justice. 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](http://healthebay.org) and follow @healthebay on social media or watch this short [video](#).*

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 more than 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](http://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 exists 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](http://healthebay.org/riverreportcard). The River Report Card is supported by Environment Now.