Beach Report Gives 3 Washington Beaches "F"

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : August 31, 2012 at 6:40 am

Olympia, WA - Pacific Northwest ocean users enjoyed very good water quality this summer, according to the third annual End-of-Summer Beach Report Card® released today by Heal the Bay, a California-based environmental group that monitors shorelines along the entire western coast of the United States.The report analyzed water quality data collected this summer by state agencies between Memorial Day and August 22 at 188 monitoring locations in Oregon and Washington, issuing an A-to-F grade to each beach based on levels of bacterial pollution. The lower the grade, the greater the risk of an ocean user contracting an illness from contact with the water.Washington beaches scored high marks generally, with 96% of 177 beach monitoring locations receiving A and B grades. That figure marks steady improvement from last year, when 89% of locations earned A or B grades. The following counties all received all A or B grades for the third consecutive year: Clallam, Grays Harbor, Pierce and Thurston. However, seven monitoring locations in the state received fair to poor water quality grades (3 Cs, 1 D, and 3 Fs). The locations that received failing marks are at Holmes Harbor’s (Freeland County Park in Island County), Larrabee State Park (Whatcom County) and Mukileto Lighthouse Park (Snohomish County). State agencies investigating high bacteria counts have identified problems with thick beach wrack, animal waste and polluted stormwater discharge, respectively, at these beach monitoring locations.

Swimming in polluted water can cause upper respiratory infections, stomach flus, skin rashes and ear infections.Oregon beaches were quite clean this summer, with all 11 regularly monitored beaches in Clatsop and Tillamook counties receiving A grades for the third straight year. Unfortunately, while 41 beaches in Oregon were monitored throughout the summer, only the 11 sites were monitored frequently enough (at least weekly) to be considered for the report.Despite the generally upbeat news about beach water quality in the Northwest, beachgoers should be concerned about proposed federal funding cuts that jeopardize ongoing monitoring of sites in Washington, and other sites throughout the United States.The federal Administration’s proposed budget for 2013 eliminates all funding for the development and implementation of beach monitoring and notification programs. Washington’s Department of Ecology & Health and Oregon’s Department of Health Services rely heavily on these funds to monitor beaches. If federal support is slashed, strapped local agencies face the daunting task of securing alternative funding.To learn more about specific beaches in Oregon and Washington, users can check updated weekly grades at www.beachreportcard.org. Heal the Bay offers the searchable online database as a free public service. Users can find out which beaches are safe and unsafe, check recent water quality history and look up details on beach closures.A free Beach Report Card app for IPhone and Android users allows ocean lovers to check A through F grades, weather conditions and users tips for more than 650 beaches along the Pacific Coast. Links to the app can be found at www.beachreportcard.org Heal the Bay has graded more than 500 California beaches for two decades, helping protect the health of millions of ocean goers each year. Building on that success, program managers expanded reporting to Washington and Oregon beaches in 2010.**About the Beach Report Card**
The Beach Report Card is based on the routine monitoring of beaches by Oregon’s Department of Health Services and Washington’s Department of Ecology, and would not be

possible without their cooperation. These agencies collect and analyze marine water samples for bacteria that indicate pollution from numerous sources, including fecal waste. Heal the Bay compiles the data, analyzes it and assigns easy-to-understand letter grades. Its methodology is the only one endorsed by California’s State Water Resources Control Board, a government entity.Heal the Bay’s Beach Report Card is made possible by the generous support of the The Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation, simplehuman, LACarGuy, the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (SIMA) and the Grousbeck Family Foundation.For a PDF version of this year’s detailed report card please visit healthebay.org/BRCsummer2012.