



# RECREATIONAL WATER NEWSLETTER

Learn more at [smchealth.org/beaches](http://smchealth.org/beaches)

September 16, 2021

## WATER SAMPLING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

San Mateo County Environmental Health Services staff and volunteers collect water samples from recreational waters around the County along the oceanside and bayside each Monday.

Samples are analyzed for fecal-indicator bacteria including Total Coliforms, *E. coli*, and Enterococci by the San Mateo County Public Health Laboratory.

The results are then used by Environmental Health Services to evaluate the need to post locations with warning signs. Additionally, other agencies such as the State Water Resources Control Board, local Parks Departments, local city departments, and other interested local parties use these findings in their investigations of potential sources of pollution.

## SAFETY POSTINGS & WHAT THEY MEAN



Data is received typically two days after sampling and evaluated by Environmental Health Services staff. The results of that evaluation are then sent by e-mail to the interested public (those who have signed up for our email updates) on Wednesdays with the beaches that exceeded the State thresholds for bacteria.

Signs are posted by Environmental Health Services staff at the beaches which exceeded the State/Federal threshold levels and the beach map is updated on our web page on Thursday mornings.

## STATE THRESHOLD LEVELS FOR BACTERIA

Indicator Bacteria	Single Sample Maximum*	5-week Geometric Mean Maximum*
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	400	200
Enterococci	104	35

\*Units are most-probable-number of colony-forming-units per 100 milliliters (mpn/100mL)

*Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and Enterococci are considered fecal indicator bacteria as they can indicate the possible presence of other specific bacteria, viruses, and protozoans that can cause disease in humans. Recreational waters are also tested for the concentrations of Total Coliforms for additional information, but postings are not typically made based on their results.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP REDUCE CONTAMINATION OF RECREATIONAL WATERS?

- Pick up pet waste during walks and in your own yard, especially before a storm.
- If you have a septic system, ensure that you pump your tank every 3-5 years and check on your leachfields to ensure they are working properly.
- Do not put anything into storm drains and call your city's Public Works if you see illegal dumping.
- Limit your use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers as they can leach into the watershed and pollute recreational waters.

For more information on how you can help visit [smchealth.org/beaches](http://smchealth.org/beaches)

## WHAT WATERS SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Waters with warning signs posted

Waters that look unhealthy:

- stagnant water
- frothy black or brown water
- cloudy white, or off-white colored water
- water with an offensive odor
- an oily slick or sheen may indicate gasoline or oil products in water
- dead birds or fish present
- abundant presence of algae and algal mats



When swimming at ocean beaches with creeks that cross the beach, it is best practice to:

- Avoid recreating in creeks, and in the zone where they meet the ocean, as these areas typically have higher bacterium counts.
- Steer clear of recreational waters during rainstorms, especially areas close to urban streams and storm drain outlets. Runoff can increase the levels of bacterium in recreational waters during and up to three days after a rainfall event.

## BEACH SPOTLIGHT

Looking to have a beach day somewhere new? South of Half Moon Bay lie San Gregorio State Beach, Pomponio State Beach, and Pescadero State Beach.



### San Gregorio State Beach

San Gregorio Beach is only 10 miles south of Half Moon Bay. This expansive beach has plenty of space to enjoy a day with family and friends. Be aware that sometimes the

creek forms a pond across the beach which can make the beach inaccessible, so look out for signs placed by the State Parks Department.

### Pomponio State Beach

Another beautiful spacious beach on the south coast is Pomponio Beach, less than two miles south of San Gregorio Beach and easily accessible from the parking lot.



### Pescadero State Beach

Pescadero Beach is another 3 miles south of Pomponio Beach with three parking lots at different access points. We



collect our water sample where Pescadero Creek meets the Pacific Ocean under the bridge; in 2021, anadromous Steelhead trout and Coho salmon were observed spawning in the creek! You can also take a walk along the marsh on

the east side of Highway 1 and do some birdwatching.

For more beach location ideas visit

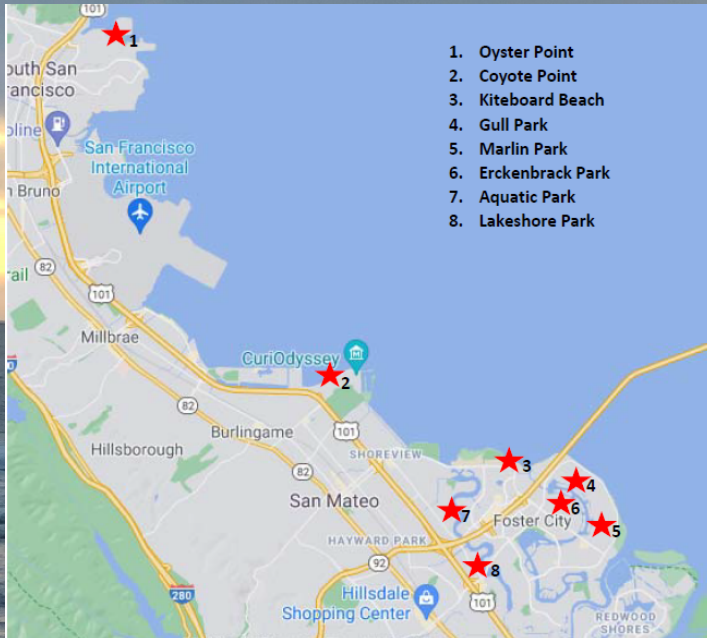
[smchealth.org/beaches](http://smchealth.org/beaches)



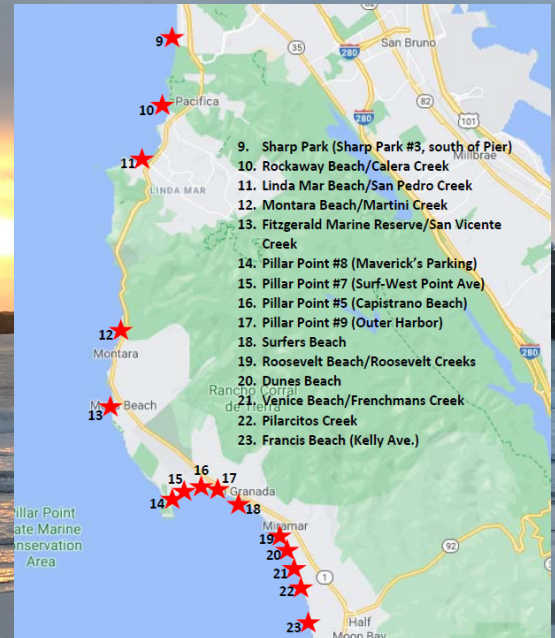
# RECREATIONAL WATER SAMPLING LOCATIONS

Interact with these maps at [smchealth.org/beaches](http://smchealth.org/beaches)

## Bayside Sampling Locations



## North Coast Sampling Locations



## South Coast Sampling Locations



## GET INVOLVED WITH COASTAL CLEANUP DAY



**SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES**

### Coastal Cleanup Day

# PROTECT YOUR HAPPY PLACE

By Jeff Bennett

**Sept.  
18<sup>th</sup>**

**9 a.m.  
to  
noon**

[smchealth.org/ccd](http://smchealth.org/ccd)