



State of Alaska
Department of Environmental Conservation



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DEC Reports Bacteria Levels on Coastal Areas in Ketchikan Have Decreased

(KETCHIKAN, AK) — The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has confirmed enterococci bacteria levels have decreased, but are still above water quality criteria at two coastal areas in Ketchikan.

DEC recently collected water quality samples at nine coastal areas, including: South Refuge Cove Beach, Seaport Beach, Rotary Beach also known as Bugges Beach, Thomas Basin, Beacon Hill, Knudson Cove Marina, South Point Higgins Beach, Sunset Beach, and Shull Beach. Earlier sampling showed seven of these coastal areas as having bacterial levels above what is considered a safe level.

The following locations still exceed water quality criteria:

- Rotary Beach also known as Bugges Beach (located approximately 3.4 miles south of town on South Tongass Highway)
- Thomas Basin (at Creek Street Bridge)

All seven other locations meet water quality criteria. DEC plans to continue weekly sampling until results are within the criteria. Additional sampling at all nine coastal areas is planned for the week of August 21.

Contact with water impacted by enterococci bacteria may cause stomach aches, diarrhea, or ear, eye, and skin infections. Continued precautionary measures are advised. DEC recommends beach users avoid exposure, such as avoiding swimming in the water, washing after contact with the water, and rinsing fish with clean water after they have been harvested from the area. As always, people should cook seafood to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit to destroy pathogens.

The beach sampling program is being funded and implemented by DEC. It is part of a nationwide effort to decrease the incidence of water-borne illness at public beaches under the federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act.

For more information about the Alaska beach monitoring program, visit the Alaska BEACH Grant Program Website: <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/wqs/beachprogram.htm>.

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