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Press Release		COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Kenai River beach sampling continues to find elevated levels of bacteria.

(KENAI, AK) – Ongoing Kenai River beach sampling is showing continued high levels of enterococci and fecal coliform bacteria in the water. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is conducting beach monitoring this summer at two Kenai River beaches to determine if the water is safe for recreation. Beach monitoring started in early July and will continue until early August. Some of the samples collected on Wednesday, July 9 and Sunday, July 13 at two beaches located at the mouth of the Kenai River had levels of bacteria several times higher than the state standards for recreational waters.

Contact with water that has high levels of enterococci or fecal coliform bacteria may cause people to have stomach aches, diarrhea, or ear, eye and skin infections. With current levels above water quality standards, DEC is reminding beach users to take precautions to reduce the possibility of getting ill from exposure to the water. Don't drink the water, shower or rinse off after being in contact with the water, rinse any seafood that is cleaned using beach water with fresh tap water, and cook all seafood to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit to destroy pathogens.

Enterococci and fecal coliform bacteria can come from any warm blooded animal including birds, seals, dogs, and humans. The reason for the currently elevated levels of bacteria is unknown, although tests in 2012 indicated that the majority of the bacteria come from birds with a small percentage of bacteria originating from humans and dogs. Potential sources are birds feeding on the beaches and mud flats during low tides, a large bird rookery located upriver from the beach, dogs, and humans.

The beach sampling program is being funded and implemented by DEC with cooperation of the City of Kenai. It is part of a nationwide effort to decrease the incidence of water-borne illness at public beaches under the federal BEACH Act.

For more information about the Alaska beach monitoring program contact the Alaska BEACH Project Manager Timothy Stevens at 907-269-7515 or visit the Alaska BEACH Grant Program Website:

<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/water/wqsar/wqs/beachprogram.htm>.

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