2022 ALASKA RECREATIONAL BEACH MONITORING BEGINS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — June 1, 2022

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JUNEAU, AK — The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has started bacteria monitoring at selected Alaska beaches for the summer season. Water quality samples will be collected at recreational beaches in Ketchikan, Hoonah, and Kenai.

The Beach Program is a statewide program which monitors bacteria levels in marine water samples from June to September. The program evaluates potential health risks as indicated by fecal coliform and enterococci bacteria and notifies the public when levels exceed state standards. Past years of bacteria monitoring have shown elevated levels of bacteria along the Ketchikan coastline and the Kenai River mouth from several potential sources, including seagulls and other wildlife, humans, and dogs. This will be the second summer of monitoring Hoonah beaches. The Beach Program will also be pilot testing EPA’s bacteria prediction software Virtual Beach for six Ketchikan beaches and two Kenai River beaches.

Visit beaches.alaska.gov for:

* up-to-date information on beach monitoring, which beaches have elevated bacteria levels, and sample collection dates
* advisories for beaches where test results show bacteria levels exceed guidelines
* Virtual Beach frequently asked questions
* interactive maps showing beach monitoring locations
* a link where you can sign up to receive emailed beach updates
* historical beach testing data

If advisories are issued for beaches where test results show bacteria levels exceed guidelines, they will also be posted on DEC’s Facebook and Twitter pages.

There are many ways we can all help keep Alaska’s beaches clean and Alaskans healthy. Check out the DEC beach website for what you can do to help.

Protect yourself by washing or sanitizing your hands after coming in contact with water and cooking your catch to an internal temperature of 145 °F

The DEC BEACH Program is part of a nationwide effort to decrease the incidence of water-borne illnesses at public beaches under the federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act. This project has been funded in part by the United States EPA.