

Rationale for Confirmation before Posting

The Beach Water Quality Workgroup of the California State Water Resources Control Board charged its Monitoring and Reporting Subcommittee with: 1) evaluating the existing monitoring program mandated by State law (AB 411), 2) reviewing the latest scientific findings regarding effectiveness and reliability of that program, and 3) recommending changes to increase public health protection and public notification for those engaged in ocean water contact activities.

Although the beach water quality monitoring program conducted in San Francisco by SFPUC and SFDPH is not regulated by AB411, implementing the recommendations of the Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) Subcommittee provides optimal information delivery to the public and will also assure that San Francisco's program is consistent with other programs throughout the State, to the extent practical.

The Guidance Document prepared by the M&R Subcommittee and adopted by the Beach Water Quality Workgroup recognizes three types of beaches, each with distinct water quality issues:

1. Open Coastal Beaches with tidal flushing and unimpeded swell energy, with no known sources of contamination affecting water quality and a history of good water quality.

The M&R Subcommittee recommends employing a confirmation approach to posting this type of beach when a single sample standard is exceeded. Routine beach monitoring data have shown that many recreational beaches in San Francisco have a history of good water quality, with no known source of contamination, and with sufficient circulation that the confirmation approach is appropriate. Specific exceptions are indicated below. In contrast to routine monitoring, Combined Sewer System discharges at these beaches are discrete events that require a separate response not involving confirmation.

2. Beaches with storm drain, creek, or river discharges during the summer.

The M&R Subcommittee recommends permanent posting for beaches within this category. In San Francisco, Baker Beach at Lobos Creek and storm drains at two areas outside of the combined sewer system (Crissy Field Beach within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Windsurfer Circle within the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area), represent potential sources of dry weather contamination. Confirmation is not required at these sites. Permanent information signs are posted at these locations.

3. Beaches in an enclosed harbor, bay, or estuary.

The M&R Subcommittee recommends an approach requiring "best professional judgment" for these beaches. In San Francisco, Aquatic Park is a semi-enclosed body of water within a bay. Monitoring data indicate that a confirmation approach is appropriate at Aquatic Park.

Definitions

Confirmation: For stations that, during routine monitoring require confirmation before being posted, confirmation is provided when one or more of the following occur:

- More than one indicator exceeds their respective single sample maximum at a single station on the same date.
- One or more indicators exceed their respective single sample maximum at each of two linked stations on the same date.
- One or more indicators exceed their respective single sample maximum in a repeat sample.

Linked Stations: Stations that are hydrologically connected such that, during routine monitoring, single indicator exceedences at both stations provide the necessary confirmation for posting.

Beaches that don't require confirmation before posting:

Baker Beach at Lobos Creek, Crissy Field Beach, and Candlestick Point State Recreation Area at Windsurfer Circle.

Stations in this category are posted with “No Swimming” signs when one or more of the bacteria indicators are above the California state standards for water contact recreation. Stations remain posted and are re-sampled daily until all three indicators are below State standards:

- Total Coliform \geq 10,000 MPN/100 mL
- Escherichia coli \geq 400 MPN/100 mL (a type of fecal coliform)
- Enterococcus \geq 104 MPN/100mL

Units = MPN (Most Probable Number of bacteria organisms) per 100 mL (milliliters of sample)

Beaches that do require confirmation before posting:

Ocean Beach, China Beach, Baker Beach, Aquatic Park, and Candlestick Point State Recreation Area.

Stations in this category are only posted with “No Swimming” signs when one or more of the following confirmation criteria are met:

1. More than one indicator exceeds its respective single sample maximum at a single station on the same date.
2. One or more indicator exceeds its respective single sample maximum at each of two linked stations on the same date.
3. One or more indicator exceeds its respective single sample maximum in a repeat sample.

If a single indicator exceeds State standards and confirmation criterion #1 or criterion #2 is not met, the station is re-sampled and evaluated using criterion #3. Once posted, stations remain posted and are re-sampled daily until all three indicators are below State standards for water contact recreation.