



## RHODE ISLAND

### 18th in Beachwater Quality

8% of samples exceeded national standards in 2010

Polluted urban and suburban runoff is a major threat to water quality at the nation's coastal beaches. Runoff from storms and irrigation carries pollution from parking lots, yards, and streets directly to waterways. In some parts of the country, stormwater routinely causes overflows from sewage systems. Innovative solutions known as green infrastructure enable communities to naturally absorb or use runoff before it causes problems. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is modernizing its national rules for sources of runoff pollution and should develop strong, green infrastructure-based requirements.

Rhode Island has identified 236 public beach access points along about 400 miles of Atlantic Ocean and Narragansett Bay waters. The Rhode Island Department of Health is responsible for beachwater monitoring and water quality notifications.

Bristol Town Beach in Colt State Park is using green infrastructure to improve beachwater quality. Six catch basins have been installed to intercept runoff from the park before it reaches the beach. Rainwater is filtered mechanically in the catch basins, then further filtered by vegetation in the bioswales. The bioswales also significantly slow down the flow of rainwater, preventing surges of stormwater that may carry bacteria and other contamination. Other water quality projects are planned at this beach: The storm drain will be opened and restored so it functions like a winding creek, which will help clean the water it carries to the beach; the parking lot will be replaced by an ecofriendly parking lot with bioretention swales and specialized vegetation to further absorb and filter stormwater; and storage tanks for rainwater will reduce combined-sewer overflows from the nearest sewage treatment plant during periods of heavy rain.<sup>1</sup>

Fewer bacterial exceedances in 2010 than in 2009 at Rhode Island's beaches may be partly attributable to less rain in 2010 than in 2009, but Rhode Island and many municipalities have worked to address the sources of contamination affecting the state's beaches. Rhode Island's commitment to improving its beachwater quality is illustrated by the State Tunnel Project, which was the biggest, longest-running public works project in state history, initiated in order to address beachwater contamination caused by combined-sewer overflows. During combined-sewer overflows, untreated or partially treated sewage is discharged to surface waters during rains that overwhelm the sewage treatment plants. The \$359 million project, completed in 2008, consists of a tunnel under downtown Providence. The tunnel can capture up to 1.5 inches of the precipitation from a rainstorm, holding it so it can be treated when treatment capacity is available. Beaches whose water was impacted by the combined-sewer overflows were also being affected by leaky septic tanks, and in 2009 the city of Warwick continued efforts to connect Greenwich Bay homes with septic tanks to municipal sewer systems. Approximately 8,000 homes have been connected to municipal sewage treatment since the beginning of the project.<sup>1</sup> The fraction of samples exceeding water quality standards at City Park Beach in Warwick has dropped from 19% in 2005 to 10% in 2007, 9% in 2008, 4% in 2009, and 2% in 2010.

A \$5.8 million ultraviolet treatment system to reduce bacteria levels from stormwater that discharges at the beach in the city of Newport is expected to begin operating prior to the start of the 2011 beach season.<sup>1</sup> Also in 2011, the Rhode Island beach monitoring program will conduct a study with approximately 20 volunteers who regularly swim in the ocean. Each volunteer will document his or her ocean swimming events along with water conditions, weather conditions, and health effects. These data will help the beach program understand statewide year-round water recreation and associated health risks.<sup>1</sup>

#### KEY FINDINGS IN RHODE ISLAND

##### Beachwater Contamination

(% of samples exceeding state standards in 2010)

- Easton's Beach in Newport County (35%)
- Third Beach in Newport County (23%)
- Atlantic Beach Club in Newport County (22%)
- Conimicut Point Beach in Kent County (20%)

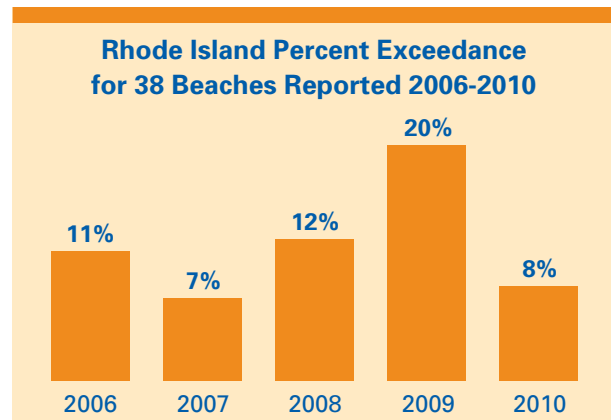
##### Reported Sources of Beachwater Contamination Statewide (number of closing/advisory days)

- 71 (100%) unknown sources of contamination

Now that the city of Newport has made improvements to the combined-sewage overflow system at Wellington Avenue, the Rhode Island beach monitoring program is working with Newport to reopen King Park Beach for the 2011 swimming season. This beach has been closed since 2006. Water quality testing at the beach will be conducted to ensure healthy swimming conditions.<sup>1</sup>

## Monitoring Results

In 2010, Rhode Island reported 236 coastal beaches, 15 (6%) of which were monitored more than once a week, 7 (3%) were monitored once a week, 13 (5%) every other week, 41 (17%) once a month, 1 (<1%) less than once a month, and 160 (68%) were not monitored. For this section of the report, NRDC looked at the percent of monitoring samples that exceeded the state's daily maximum bacterial standards (all reported samples were used to calculate the 2010 percent exceedance rates, including duplicate samples and samples taken outside the official beach season, if any). In 2010, 8% of all reported beach monitoring samples exceeded the state's daily maximum bacterial standards. The beaches with the highest percent exceedance rates in 2010 were Atlantic Beach Club in Newport County (22%), Conimicut Point Beach in Kent County (20%), and Easton's Beach (20%) and Grinnells Beach (17%) in Newport County. Although NRDC's lists of beaches with high exceedance rates elsewhere in this report exclude beaches sampled less than 12 times a year, it is worth noting here that Hazard's Beach in Newport county has a 20% exceedance rate. Newport County had the highest exceedance rate (13%) in 2010 followed by Kent (11%), Bristol (9%), and Washington (4%) counties. No beaches in Providence County were monitored.



**Sampling Practices:** The regular monitoring season runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day. In 2010, the city of Newport teamed with a local Aquidneck Island volunteer organization, Clean Ocean Access, to continue sampling Easton's Beach during the off season, when surfers use the beach area. Clean Ocean Access provides volunteers who collect samples year-round, and Newport pays for analysis.<sup>1</sup> Additional volunteer groups including the Surfrider Foundation assist with sampling efforts throughout the year as well.<sup>2</sup>

The Department of Health determines sampling practices, locations, standards, and notification protocols and practices throughout the state. Samples are collected in water that is approximately 3 feet deep, just below the surface. High priority for more frequent monitoring is given to beaches with direct known sources of pollution (e.g. stormwater outfalls, septic/sewer connections, population density, nearby sewer plants) and high usage, and to facilities that have exhibited poor water quality in the past.

Monitoring efforts are focused on areas of greatest concern, and samples are collected at times when high bacteria counts are most likely to be present. The number of samples collected on a beach is dependent on the length of coastline and the presence of physical barriers to circulation (jetties, groins, etc.) that can trap bacterial contaminants near the shore. If a beach is closed or placed under advisory, sampling is conducted daily until the water quality meets standards, after which the beach is reopened. Extensive wet-weather sampling is conducted to determine the reopening schedule for beaches under preemptive rainfall advisories.<sup>2</sup> States that monitor more frequently after an exceedance is found or after heavy rainfall will tend to have higher percent exceedance rates and lower total closing/advisory days than they would if their sampling schedule did not increase after an exceedance or after heavy rainfall.

## Closings and Advisories

Total closing/advisory days for 45 events lasting six consecutive weeks or less decreased 60% to 71 days in 2010, from 178 days in 2009. For prior years, there were 124 days in 2008, 86 days in 2007, 256 days in 2006, and 57 days in 2005. There were no extended or permanent events in 2010. Extended events are those in effect more than six weeks but not more than 13 consecutive weeks; permanent events are in effect for more than 13 consecutive weeks. All closing and advisory days in 2010 were due to monitoring that revealed elevated bacteria levels.

**Standards and Procedures:** Rhode Island issues both beach closings (for bacterial contamination) and advisories (due to rain). Rhode Island's coastal bathing water standard is a single-sample maximum of 104 cfu/100 ml of enterococcus.<sup>1</sup> No geometric-mean standard is applied when determining whether to issue a beach closing.

Typically, if sampling results exceed the standard, a beach is closed. However, the Department of Health considers several environmental factors before deciding whether to close a beach, including the presence of wildlife, seaweed, how many tides have occurred since the sample was collected, the history of sample results for that beach, and rainfall.<sup>2</sup> On rare occasions, if environmental factors do not suggest fecal contamination, the beach may remain open while its water is resampled.

If a known sewage discharge occurs in close proximity to a beach, officials close the beach immediately, without waiting for sampling results to confirm contamination. Two beaches have preemptive rainfall standards: Scarborough Beach and Easton's Beach are closed when there is more than one inch of rainfall in a 24-hour period. Easton's Beach reopens within 12 hours of cessation of heavy rain. The beach monitoring program generally recommends no water contact within three days of heavy rainfall.<sup>2</sup>

The public is advised to avoid water contact at beaches north of Conimicut Point in Warwick and at Nayatt Point in Barrington because of ongoing water quality issues. A study of water quality at three urban beaches north of Conimicut Point is under way to determine whether licensing for water recreation should be allowed.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Rhode Island 2010 Monitoring Results and Closing or Advisory Days</b>					
<b>Beach</b>	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Assigned Monitoring Frequency</b>	<b>Total Samples</b>	<b>% of Samples Exceeding State Standards</b>	<b>Closing or Advisory Days</b>
<b>Bristol County</b>					
Warren Town Beach	1	2 or 3/wk	41	10%	4 (4)*
Camp St. Dorothy	1	1/wk	5	20%	5 (1)*
Bristol Town Beach	1	3/wk	69	10%	5 (3)*
Barrington Beach	1	2 or 3/wk	65	8%	2 (2)*
<b>Beaches in Bristol County that were not monitored and that had no closing or advisory days in 2010:</b>					
Annawamscutt Beach	Barrington Unnamed #3	Camp Crosby	Rumstick Point		
Baia Beach	Barrington Unnamed #4	Hopeworth Beach	Touisset Beach		
Barrington Unnamed #1	Bristol Unnamed #1	Juniper Beach	Warren Unnamed #1		
Barrington Unnamed #2	Bristol Unnamed #2	Latham Park	Warren Unnamed #2		
<b>Kent County</b>					
City Park Beach	1	3/wk	48	2%	2 (1)*
Conimicut Point Beach	1	3/wk	80	20%	8 (4)*
Goddard Memorial State Park	1	3/wk	137	12%	5 (4)*
Oakland Beach	1	3/wk	119	7%	5 (2)*
<b>Beaches in Kent County that were not monitored and that had no closing or advisory days in 2010:</b>					
Buttonwoods Beach	Cole Farm Beach	Mill Cove Beach	Warwick Unnamed #1		
Cedar Tree Point	Gaspee Point	Potowomut	Warwick Unnamed #2		
Chepiwanoxet	Longmeadow	Rocky Point			
<b>Newport County</b>					
Atlantic Beach Club	1	4/wk	55	22%	8 (6)*
Briggs Beach	3	1/mo	10	0%	0
Easton's Beach	1	2/wk	111	20%	5 (4)*
Fogland Beach	2	2/mo	27	7%	0

Beach	Tier	Assigned Monitoring Frequency	Total Samples	% of Samples Exceeding State Standards	Closing or Advisory Days
<b>Newport County</b>					
Fort Adams State Park	1	3/wk	48	4%	2 (1)*
Gooseberry Beach	3	1/mo	11	0%	0
Goosewing Beach	3	1/mo	16	0%	0
Grinells Beach	3	2/mo	18	17%	0
Hazard's Beach	3	1/mo	10	20%	2 (1)*
King Park Swim Area	3	None	69	14%	0
Mackerel Cove Beach	2	1/mo	18	0%	0
Peabodys Beach	2	2/mo	33	15%	3 (2)*
Sachuest Beach	2	2/mo	23	0%	0
Sandy Point Beach	3	2/mo	22	9%	1 (1)*
South Shore Beach	3	1/mo	12	0%	0
Spouting Rock Beach Association	3	1/mo	17	0%	0
Third Beach	1	3/wk	84	10%	3 (2)*
Warrens Point Beach Club	3	1/mo	6	0%	0
<b>Beaches in Newport County that were not monitored and that had no closing or advisory days in 2010:</b>					
Collins Beach	Little Compton	Portsmouth Unnamed #12	Teddys Beach		
Easton's Point	Unnamed #9	Portsmouth Unnamed #13	Tiverton Unnamed #1		
Elm Street Pier	Little Compton	Portsmouth Unnamed #14	Tiverton Unnamed #2		
Fort Getty	Unnamed #10	Prudence Island	Tiverton Unnamed #3		
Fort Weatherill	Little Compton	Unnamed #1	Tiverton Unnamed #4		
Island Park	Unnamed #11	Prudence Island	Tiverton Unnamed #5		
Jamestown Unnamed #1	Marine Avenue Beach	Unnamed #2	Tiverton Unnamed #6		
Jamestown Unnamed #2	Mccorrie Point	Prudence Island	Tiverton Unnamed #7		
Jamestown Unnamed #3	Middletown Unnamed #1	Unnamed #3	Tiverton Unnamed #8		
Jamestown Unnamed #4	Middletown Unnamed #2	Prudence Island	Tiverton Unnamed #9		
Kings Beach	Newport Unnamed #1	Unnamed #4	Tiverton Unnamed #10		
Little Compton Unnamed #1	Newport Unnamed #2	Prudence Island	Tiverton Unnamed #11		
Little Compton Unnamed #2	Ochre Point (Ruggles)	Unnamed #5	Tiverton Unnamed #12		
Little Compton Unnamed #3	Patience Island	Prudence Island	Vanzandt Pier		
Little Compton Unnamed #4	Unnamed #1	Unnamed #6	West Beach		
Little Compton Unnamed #5	Portsmouth Unnamed #1	Prudence Island	Bold Point		
Little Compton Unnamed #6	Portsmouth Unnamed #2	Unnamed #7	Bullocks Neck		
Little Compton Unnamed #7	Portsmouth Unnamed #3	Prudence Island	Cranston Unnamed #1		
Little Compton Unnamed #8	Portsmouth Unnamed #4	Unnamed #8	Cranston Unnamed #2		
Little Compton Unnamed #9	Portsmouth Unnamed #5	Prudence Island	Crescent Beach		
Little Compton Unnamed #10	Portsmouth Unnamed #6	Unnamed #9	East Providence Unnamed #1		
Little Compton Unnamed #11	Portsmouth Unnamed #7	Prudence Island	East Providence Unnamed #2		
Little Compton Unnamed #12	Portsmouth Unnamed #8	Unnamed #10	Sabins Point		
Little Compton Unnamed #13	Portsmouth Unnamed #9	Prudence Island			
Little Compton Unnamed #14	Portsmouth Unnamed #10	Unnamed #11			
Little Compton Unnamed #15	Portsmouth Unnamed #11	Prudence Island			
Little Compton Unnamed #16	Portsmouth Unnamed #12	Rocky Beach			
Little Compton Unnamed #17	Portsmouth Unnamed #13	Sapowet Beach			
Little Compton Unnamed #18	Portsmouth Unnamed #14	Seaside Beach			
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Beach	Tier	Assigned Monitoring Frequency	Total Samples	% of Samples Exceeding State Standards	Closing or Advisory Days
<b>Washington County</b>					
Andrea Hotel	3	1/mo	5	0%	0
Atlantic Beach Casino Resort	3	1/mo	7	0%	0
Atlantic Beach Park	3	1/mo	6	0%	0
Atlantic Pizza And Grill	3	1/mo	6	0%	0
Blue Shutters Beach	3	1/mo	14	7%	0
Bonnet Shores Beach Club	2	2/mo	23	4%	0
Breezeway Inn	2	1/mo	3	0%	0
Camp Fuller-YMCA Beach	2	2/mo	6	17%	3 (1)*
Camp Grosvenor	1	3/wk	29	10%	4 (2)*
Capt Roger Wheeler	1	1/wk	36	0%	0
Charlestown Breachway	3	1/mo	9	0%	0
Charlestown Town Beach	2	1/mo	14	0%	0
Dunes Club	3	2/mo	26	0%	0
Dunes Park	3	1/mo	7	0%	0
East Beach	3	1/mo	16	0%	0
East Matunuck State Beach	3	1/mo	9	0%	0
Fred Benson Town Beach	3	1/mo	6	0%	0
Galilee Beach Club Association	3	1/mo	3	0%	0
Greenhill	3	1/mo	3	0%	0
Jims Trailer Park	2	1/mo	7	0%	0
Matunuck Town Beach	3	1/mo	15	0%	0
Misquamicut Club	3	1/mo	16	0%	0
Misquamicut Fire District Beach	3	1/mo	12	0%	0
Misquamicut State Beach	1	2/mo	7	0%	0
Narragansett Town Beach	1	3/mo	22	0%	0
North Kingstown Town Beach	1	2 or 3/wk	70	0%	0
Ocean House	3	2/yr	7	0%	0
Paddy's Beach	3	1/mo	5	0%	0
Pleasant View Inn	3	1/mo	5	0%	0
Plum Beach Club	2	2/mo	11	0%	0
Roy Carpenter's Beach	3	1/mo	8	0%	0
Salty Brine Beach	3	1/mo	3	0%	0
Sam's Beach	3	1/mo	6	0%	0
Sandy Shore Motel	3	1/mo	5	0%	0
Scarborough State Beach North	1	2/wk	122	10%	2 (2)*
Scarborough State Beach South	1	2/wk	80	11%	2 (2)*
Seaside Beach Club	3	1/mo	7	0%	0
Surf Hotel	3	1/mo	2	0%	0
Watch Hill Carousel	2	1/mo	1	0%	0
Weekapaug Fire District	3	1/mo	28	0%	0

Beach	Tier	Assigned Monitoring Frequency	Total Samples	% of Samples Exceeding State Standards	Closing or Advisory Days
<b>Washington County</b>					
Westerly Town Beach-New	3	1/mo	7	0%	0
Westerly Town Beach-Old	3	1/mo	18	0%	0
Willow Dell Beach Club	3	1/mo	4	0%	0
<b>Beaches in Washington County that were not monitored and that had no closing or advisory days in 2010:</b>					
Ballards Inn	Green Hill Beach	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	North Kingstown
Block Island Unnamed #1	Kelly Beach	Unnamed #3	Unnamed #3	Unnamed #13	Unnamed #13
Block Island Unnamed #2	Moonstone Beach	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	Quonochotaug Beach	Quonochotaug Beach
Block Island Unnamed #3	Napa Tree Point Beach	Unnamed #4	Unnamed #4	Saunderstown Yacht Club	Saunderstown Yacht Club
Block Island Unnamed #4	Narragansett Unnamed #1	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown	South Kingstown
Block Island Unnamed #5	Narragansett Unnamed #2	Unnamed #5	Unnamed #5	Unnamed #1	Unnamed #1
Block Island Unnamed #6	Narragansett Unnamed #3	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown	South Kingstown
Block Island Unnamed #7	Narragansett Unnamed #4	Unnamed #6	Unnamed #6	Unnamed #2	Unnamed #2
Block Island Unnamed #8	Narragansett Unnamed #5	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown	South Kingstown
Block Island Unnamed #9	Narragansett Unnamed #6	Unnamed #7	Unnamed #7	Unnamed #3	Unnamed #3
Block Island Unnamed #10	Narragansett Unnamed #7	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown	South Kingstown
Block Island Unnamed #11	Narragansett Unnamed #8	Unnamed #8	Unnamed #8	Unnamed #4	Unnamed #4
Block Island Unnamed #12	Narragansett Unnamed #9	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	South Kingstown	South Kingstown
Cafe Pasture Beach	Narragansett Unnamed #10	Unnamed #9	Unnamed #9	Trustom Beach	Trustom Beach
Charlestown Beach	Narragansett Unnamed #11	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	Westerly Unnamed #1	Westerly Unnamed #1
Charlestown Unnamed #1	North Kingstown	Unnamed #11	Unnamed #11	Westerly Unnamed #2	Westerly Unnamed #2
Charlestown Unnamed #2	Unnamed #1	North Kingstown	North Kingstown	Westerly Unnamed #3	Westerly Unnamed #3
Deep Hole Beach	North Kingstown	Unnamed #12	Unnamed #12	Westerly Unnamed #4	Westerly Unnamed #4
	Unnamed #2			Westquage Beach	Westquage Beach

\*Reported closing or advisory days are for events lasting six consecutive weeks or less. Number of days in parentheses are for events lasting more than six consecutive weeks.

## NOTES

1 Rhode Island Department of Health. Beach Program 2010 Season Report. March 2010.

2 Amie Parris, Rhode Island Department of Health. Personal communication. June 2011.

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*Testing the Waters 2011 reflects data as of June 27, 2011.*