



FRESHWATER BEACHES MONITORING PROGRAM

What is it?

Sections of the Russian River watershed, including Santa Rosa Creek, have been listed under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) for impairment due to elevated concentrations of indicator bacteria. Elevated bacteria concentrations pose a human health risk to water contact recreationists in the community.



Healdsburg Memorial Beach, Healdsburg, CA

Previous to 2010, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) worked under a cooperative program with the Sonoma County Health Department to monitor bacteria concentrations (Coliforms and Enterococcus) at six swimming beaches on the Russian River. Due to financial constraints, the Sonoma County Health Department is no longer able to fund the analysis of samples collected for this program. In 2010, the Regional Board began to fully fund the ongoing beach monitoring program.

In 2011, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board acquired Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) certification from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). This accreditation has allowed the Regional Board to extend the beach sampling program beyond the initial six recreational beaches to include additional mainstem river and tributary recreational locations. This accreditation has also permitted the program to expand and provide the data necessary for the development of the Russian River Bacteria total maximum daily load (TMDL).



Russian River below Duncan Mills

In 2012, the North Coast Region expanded this effort to include recreational beaches in the South Fork Eel watershed. These beaches had never been sampled, and some exceedances of health standards were noted.

In 2013, the North Coast Region will once again monitor the freshwater recreational beaches in the Russian and South Fork Eel Rivers. The North Coast Region will also monitor locations in the Santa Rosa Creek watershed to provide additional information for the future development of an indicator bacteria TMDL.

Why is it important?

This monitoring effort provides valuable information on human and environmental health, and river beach area pollution issues that concern everyone. This beach monitoring was in fact designed to directly address local watershed concerns, including impacts to recreation, aquatic life, habitat, and drinking water beneficial uses. This monitoring program also provides information to the public regarding any potential human health risks associated with recreation activities.

How will this information be used?

The North Coast watersheds support multiple beneficial uses (e.g., drinking water, aquatic life, habitat, water supply, and recreation). Data collected as part of this study provides background water quality information which is used in combination with other available data to assess water quality impairment for the Clean Water Act Sections 305(b) and 303(d) Integrated Report. This report assesses overall water quality within the North Coast watersheds and identifies impaired waterbodies, which are those not meeting their beneficial use designations. The findings within this report can help determine future beach monitoring program design by focusing resources toward identified human and environmental health concerns.

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