

# OREGON'S MOST POLLUTED BEACHES

Twenty-three beaches experience unsafe levels of fecal pollution

Since the fall of 2002, the Oregon Department of Health has been measuring pollution at more than 50 beaches from Fort Stevens State Park near Astoria to Mill Beach in Brookings.

Results show that pollution at 23 of these beaches has exceeded state water quality standards for enterococcus, a bacteria that indicates the presence of fecal matter, potentially including *e. coli*. The program is funded through grants from the U.S. EPA.

In September 2003, the Health Department began issuing health advisories based on the monitoring results. Ingesting water containing high levels of fecal contamination can cause health problems, including gastrointestinal illness, skin irritation and respiratory problems. Children, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems are most at risk.

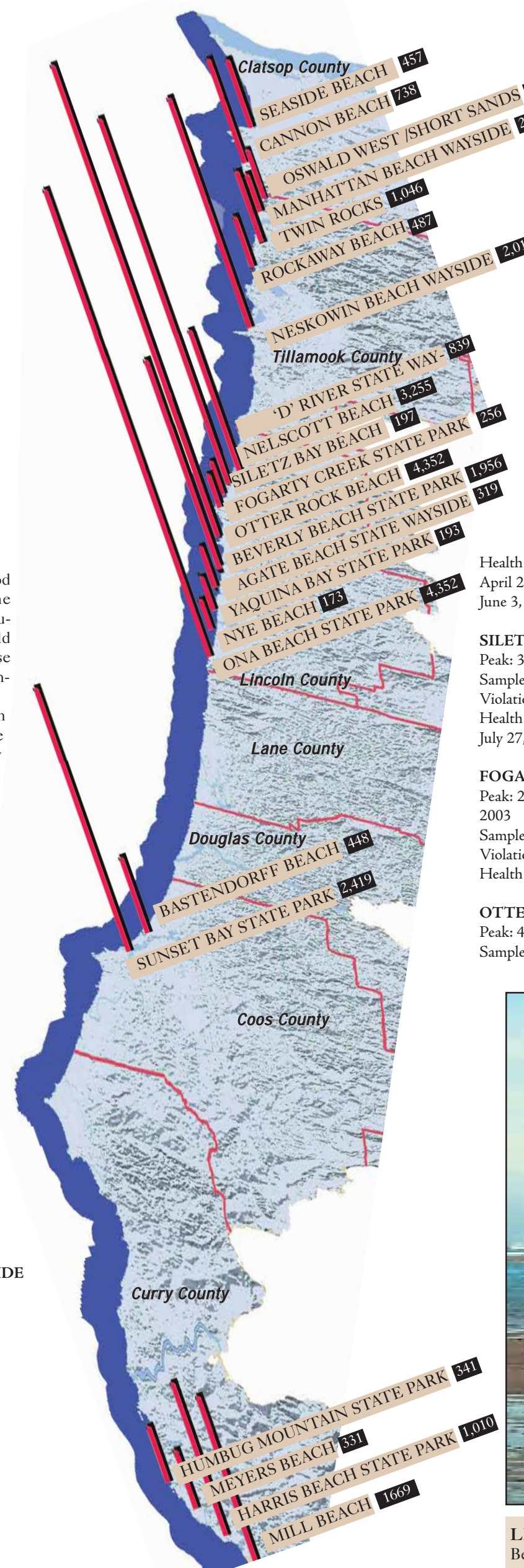
In June 2005, the state agency posted permanent signs at 12 high-use beaches. Visitors are greeted with a notice that periodic water monitoring is underway. However, not all signs are easy to find. At the D River State Wayside in Lincoln City, for example, the sign is posted at the far end of the parking lot, away from the stairs leading down to the sand.

If a water test shows high bacteria levels, the sign will warn beach-goers that a health advisory is in effect. Water contact is discouraged, but other beach activities are encouraged. The beaches are not closed when fecal contamination is high.

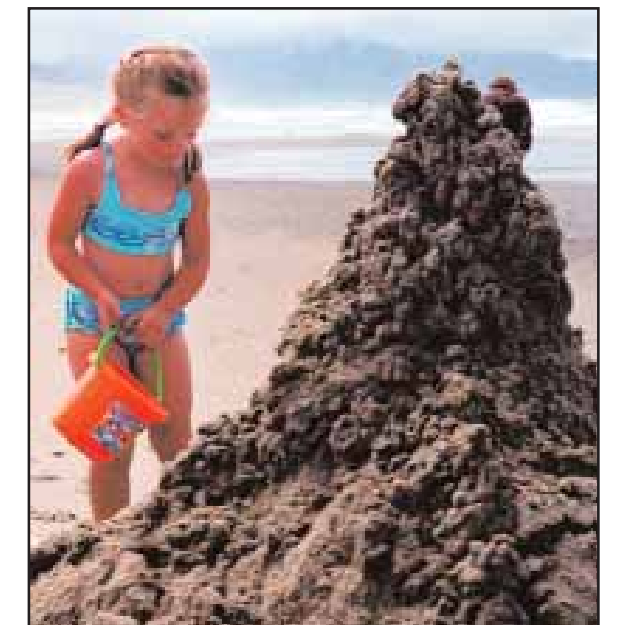
“We want visitors to have a good time walking and playing on the beach,” Shannon Levitt, a health educator with the agency, “But they should avoid any activities that might cause them to swallow water, such as swimming, diving and kayaking.” Levitt said the Oregon Health Division does not speculate as to the cause of the pollution, but others say the likely sources include septic tanks and polluted runoff from agricultural land. Unfortunately, the public cannot rely on the signs to prevent them from making contact with polluted water. The signs are typically posted a day or two after the sample is taken. Health officials advise beach-goers to stay out of the water within 48 hours of rainfall.

## MAP: How dirty are Oregon's beaches?

The map at right compares peak measurements of enterococcus at Oregon beaches that have violated water quality standards for the bacteria at least once since 2002. All measurements are number of enterococcus colonies per 100 milli-liters of water. See table below for detailed monitoring results, violations and health advisories for each of the beaches. Sources: Oregon Department of Health; Oregon Coastal Atlas



**WHAT'S IN THE WATER?** — Two boys play in the surf at D River State Wayside on a hot July day. The day this picture was taken, water on the beach was posted unsafe for human contact by the Oregon Department of Health. Photo by Paul Koberstein



**WHAT'S IN THE SAND?** — A girl builds a sand castle on the beach at Cape Kiwanda, one of Oregon's cleaner beaches. Photo by Lisa Skube



**NYE BEACH** — One of the cleaner beaches in populated areas in Oregon, Newport's Nye Beach has violated water quality standards just once. Photo by Paul Koberstein

### THE LIST: OREGON'S MOST POLLUTED BEACHES

The following chart shows which beaches have recorded violations of state water quality standards for enterococcus, an indicator of fecal matter in water. For each beach, the chart lists the number of enterococcus colonies per milliliters of water. A measurement of greater than 158 colonies of enterococcus per 100 milli-liters of water is a violation of the standard. Densities greater than 158 colonies are considered unsafe for human contact.

**CLATSOP COUNTY**  
**SEASIDE BEACH**  
Peak: 457 colonies, measured on June 27, 2003.  
Samples: 205

Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**CANNON BEACH**  
Peak: 738 colonies on May 9, 2005.  
Samples: 284  
Violations: 7  
Health advisories: 2  
October 1, 2004  
October 20, 2004

**TILLAMOOK COUNTY**  
**OSWALD WEST/ SHORT SANDS**  
Peak: 329 colonies on October 19, 2004.  
Samples: 279  
Violations: 5  
Health advisories: 2  
October 1, 2004  
October 22, 2004

**MANHATTAN BEACH WAYSIDE**  
Peak: 246 colonies on Jan 16,

2004  
Samples: 30  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 1  
January 20, 2004

**TWIN ROCKS**  
Peak: 1,046 colonies on October 22, 2003  
Samples: 48  
Violations: 3  
Health advisories: 3  
October 23, 2003  
January 20, 2004  
June 15, 2005

**ROCKAWAY BEACH**  
Peak: 487 colonies on May 16, 2005  
Samples: 91  
Violations: 4  
Health advisories: 2  
May 18, 2005  
June 15, 2005

**NESKOWIN BEACH WAYSIDE**  
Peak: 2,014 colonies on June 1, 2005  
Samples: 33  
Violations: 2  
Health advisories: 1  
June 3, 2005

**LINCOLN COUNTY**  
**D RIVER STATE WAYSIDE**  
Peak: 547 colonies on September 11, 2003  
Samples: 131  
Violations: 13  
Health advisories: 3  
September 12, 2003  
July 13, 2005  
July 27, 2005

**NELSCOTT BEACH**  
Peak: 3,255 colonies on October 21, 2002  
Samples: 138  
Violations: 3

Health advisories: 2  
April 28, 2005  
June 3, 2005

**SILETZ BAY BEACH**  
Peak: 3,255 colonies on July 27, 2005  
Samples: 99  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 1  
July 27, 2005

**FOGARTY CREEK STATE PARK**  
Peak: 256 colonies on September 17, 2003  
Samples: 59  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**OTTER ROCK BEACH**  
Peak: 4,352 colonies on October 3, 2002  
Samples: 94

Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**BEVERLY BEACH STATE PARK**  
Peak: 1,956 colonies on August 24, 2004  
Samples: 118  
Violations: 11  
Health advisories: 2  
September 12, 2003  
August 26, 2004

**AGATE BEACH STATE WAYSIDE**  
Peak: 319 colonies on October 19, 2004  
Samples: 102  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 1  
October 22, 2004

**NYE BEACH**  
Peak: 173 colonies on May 17, 2005

Samples: 102  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**YAQUINA BAY STATE PARK BEACH**  
Peak: 193 colonies on September 3, 2003  
Samples: 58  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**ONA BEACH STATE PARK**  
Peak: 4,352 colonies on May 21, 2003  
Samples: 105  
Violations: 6  
Health advisories: 1  
November 21, 2003

**COOS COUNTY**  
**BASTENDORFF BEACH**  
Peak: 448 colonies on August 18, 2003

Samples: 207  
Violations: 4  
Health advisories: 1  
November 21, 2003

**SUNSET BAY STATE PARK**  
Peak: 2,419 colonies on August 24, 2004  
Samples: 234  
Violations: 37  
Health advisories: 6  
November 21, 2003  
April 16, 2004  
August 26, 2004  
December 2, 2004  
February 17, 2005  
March 31, 2005

**CURRY COUNTY**  
**HUMBUG MOUNTAIN STATE PARK/HUBBARD CREEK BEACH**  
Peak: 341 colonies on May 4, 2005  
Samples: 28  
Violations: 3  
Health advisories: 1  
May 6, 2005

**MEYERS BEACH**  
Peak: 331 colonies on July 23, 2003  
Samples: 15  
Violations: 1  
Health advisories: 0

**HARRIS BEACH STATE PARK**  
Peak: 1,010 colonies on January 29, 2004  
Samples: 102  
Violations: 8  
Health advisories: 2  
February 2, 2004  
April 16, 2004

**MILL BEACH:**  
Peak: 1,669 colonies on December 3, 2003  
Samples: 93  
Violations: 15  
Health advisories: 2  
November 12, 2003  
April 16, 2004



**LINCOLN CITY BEACH** — Testing has found fecal coliform levels far in excess of safe levels at Nelscott Beach on the south end of Lincoln City. The beach has recorded three violations. Photo by Paul Koberstein