



# Media Release

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## **Beach Water Quality Testing Focus of State Board Action**

Today the State Water Board took the first step toward a \$506,000 grant intended to pay for water quality testing at California's beaches so swimmers are protected when water is found to be contaminated. The board approved a resolution to request Beach Act grant funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency to develop testing programs to reduce the risk of exposure to disease-causing microorganisms in ocean water.

"If we're successful in getting these funds, we will use them to supplement the state's beach water quality monitoring and public notification programs, which are conducted by local environmental health departments," said Tom Howard, Executive Director of the State Water Board. "The maximum funding would help the program continue to operate through September 30, 2013."

In October, 2011, the Governor signed a bill (SB 242) that provided up to \$1.8 million for the State Water Board to oversee a program to monitor beach water quality. Some funding for monitoring will also come from waste discharge permit fees and from a Cleanup and Abatement Account.

In the past, when state budget program cuts eliminated spending for the monitoring program, the State Water Board has provided emergency funding to test the water at hundreds of beaches from voter-approved environmental bonds including Propositions 13 and 50. The State Water Board has also provided monies for the development of rapid water-quality testing so that beachgoers can get information about their beaches' water quality as soon as possible.

Those beaches deemed to be unhealthy, will continue to be posted with warning signs when bacterial indicators exceed state standards.

"The Beach Monitoring Program is essential for the protection of public health and coastal tourism." Howard said. "Without the information identifying the adverse public health conditions present during that period, millions of visitors to California beaches would have been unknowingly exposed to unsafe levels of bacteria and other pollutants and pathogens."

California has some of the most popular beaches in the country and millions of beach visitors spend over \$10 billion a year in California, according to the National Ocean Economic Project.

For more information on efforts by the State Water Board to keep the state's beaches clean, please visit: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/beaches/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/beaches/)

