



Winston H. Hickox
Secretary for
Environmental
Protection

California Environmental Protection Agency

NEWS RELEASE

State Water Resources Control Board

Office of Legislative and Public Affairs
901 P Street • Sacramento, California 95814 • (916) 657-1247
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100 • Sacramento, California • 95812-0100
FAX (916) 657-1258 • Internet Address: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov>



Gray Davis
Governor

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Contact:
Rachel Noble (SCCWRP) (714) 894-2222
Robert Miller (SWRCB) (916) 657-1247

(A copy of the report can be previewed by the media before the April 9, 1999 embargo.
The web site address where the report is posted is: <ftp://ftp.ni.net/cust/sccwrp/download/pdf/sum.pdf>)

LARGEST-EVER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SHORELINE MICROBIOLOGY STUDY RELEASED

SACRAMENTO -- The State Water Resources Control Board and the United States Environmental Protection Agency today released the results of the largest shoreline microbiology study ever conducted along the Southern California coast.

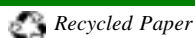
The study, which examined the bacterial water quality of shoreline waters from Point Conception, California to Punta Banda, Mexico, was a cooperative effort by 36 organizations including government agencies, environmental groups, and volunteer monitoring groups. Shoreline waters were sampled weekly for five weeks beginning in August 1998. In general, the study found the quality of southern California nearshore waters to be good, and California beaches to be among the most intensively monitored in the nation.

The Shoreline Microbiology Study is the first of its kind to both combine the resources of 22 different organizations which regularly conduct microbiological monitoring, and conduct an integrated survey of the shoreline health of the entire Southern California coast. Shoreline health was measured in shoreline mile-days, a standardized means of measuring the size and duration of beach closures.

Key findings of this study include:

- Water quality was consistently good along the Southern California shoreline during the study period in 1998, with 95 percent of shoreline mile-days meeting California's bacterial standards;
- Of those cases where a bacterial standard was exceeded, 98 percent exceeded only one of the three bacterial indicators used to measure water quality;
- Freshwater outlets, including storm drains, repeatedly failed to meet bacteriological water quality standards for multiple indicators;

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- Sample analysis conducted by the 22 participating laboratories, were found to be in close agreement with a high degree of comparability between laboratories;
- The study found that Southern California's beach monitoring programs were highly effective in identifying "hot spots", or areas of special concern. No previously unknown "hot spots" were discovered.

"This Nearshore Microbiology study is extraordinary in bringing together so many diverse agencies with varied missions to take a baseline snapshot of California's nearshore water quality," said Winston Hickox, Secretary for CalEPA. "The study shows how productive our coastal monitoring efforts can be when all parties—regulators, dischargers, researchers and volunteer organizations alike-- pool their resources to measure how our coastal resources are responding to land-based practices. We all have a stake in protecting our coastal water quality and resources."

This study was coordinated by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, a public agency focusing on marine environmental research. The microbiological study is a component of the Southern California Bight 1998 Regional Monitoring Program (Bight '98). Bight '98 is an unprecedented effort in that it has brought together 60 public agencies and interest groups to assess the condition of Southern California's coastal waters, sediments, and marine communities by examining bays and harbors, estuaries, beaches, nearshore waters and waters surrounding coastal islands. The Shoreline Microbiology study is the first part of the Bight '98 monitoring effort to be completed.

A copy of the Executive Summary and the SCCWRP report titled "Southern California Bight 1998 Regional Monitoring Program: I. Shoreline Microbiology" will be available beginning April 9, 1999 on the SCCWRP Internet web site at www.sccwrp.org/regional/98docs.htm.

Bight '98 builds upon the success of a similar SCCWRP-coordinated regional monitoring project conducted in 1994. Copies of this and previous SCCWRP reports may also be downloaded from the SCCWRP web site.

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