

What is the Status of Swimming Beach Monitoring in Casco Bay?

Answer: Two Casco Bay beaches are routinely monitored for water quality.



Willard Beach, South Portland

Which Casco Bay Beaches are Routinely Monitored?

There are two areas in Casco Bay that are monitored regularly for bacterial contamination. East End Beach in Portland is monitored by the City of Portland three times per week during the summer. Since 1996, Willard Beach in South Portland has been monitored twice per week, from May to September. Three beaches on Peaks Island have been permanently closed due to sewage pollution since 1991. There is currently no monitoring program in place for Peaks Island and the other beaches in Casco Bay. See the map identifying the locations of Casco Bay swimming beaches.

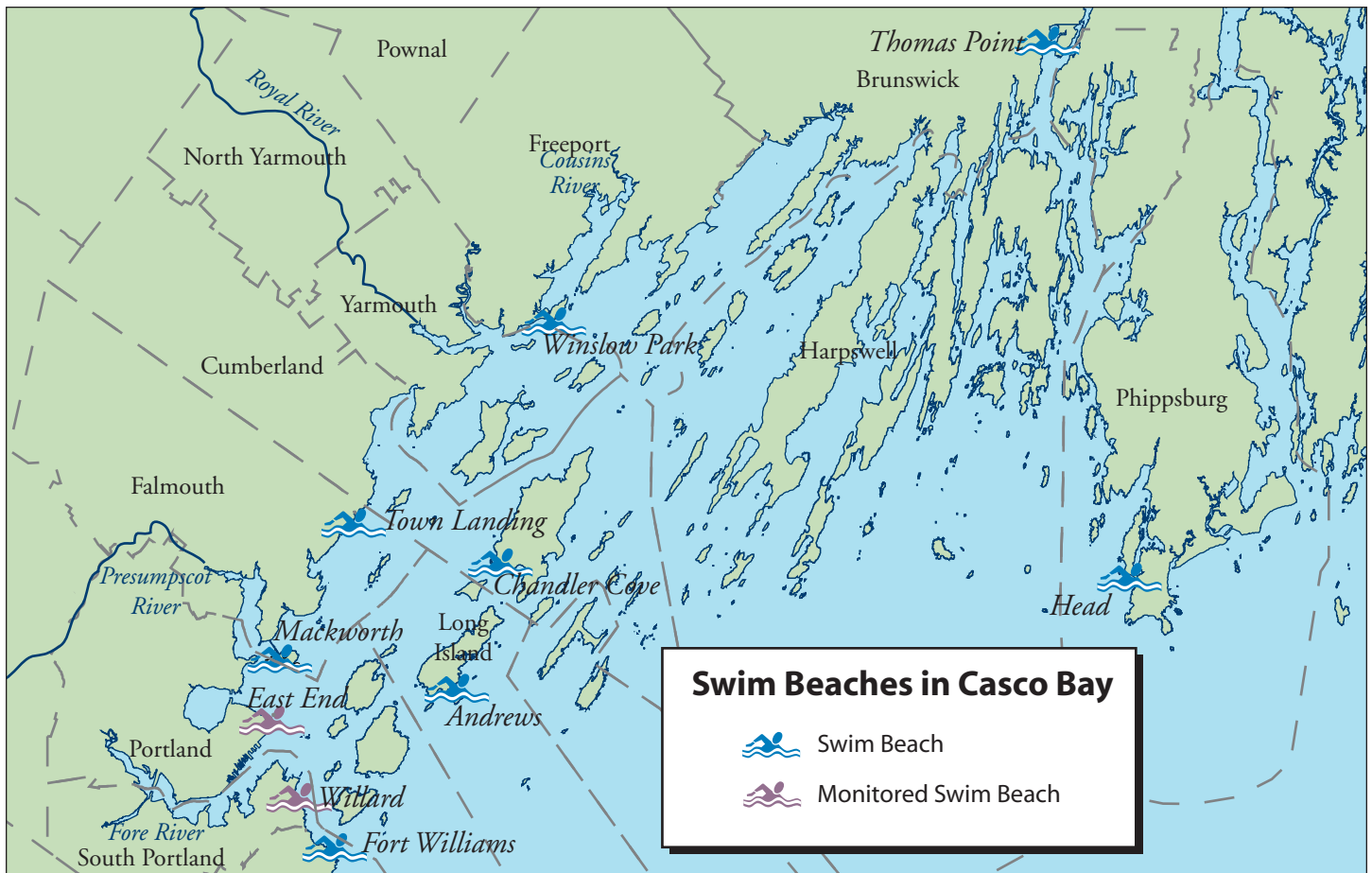
Why is Beach Monitoring Important?

Bathers are at risk when water is contaminated by fecal matter from nearby poorly functioning septic systems, boat moorings and marinas, stormwater runoff, combined sewer overflows, animals or poor practices by recreational water users. Regularly monitoring the water quality during the summer for the presence of indicator organisms such as *Enterococcus* bacteria helps to protect bathers from health problems caused by waterborne bacteria and viruses. These can include ear and eye infections, sore throats and gastric illness. Recreational bathers are often surprised to learn that many beaches are not routinely monitored for safe water quality. In Maine, the decision to monitor and/or issue swimming beach advisories or closures is left to the discretion of municipal health departments and State Park officials.

Number of Beach Days with Closures or Advisories

Year	Willard Beach, South Portland	East End Beach, Portland
1997	6	14
1998	2	10
1999	2	4
2000	1	5
2001	0	3
2002	7	4
2003	0	1
2004	6	2

Source: South Portland Parks and Recreation Department, Portland Water District, Portland Parks and Recreation Department



Willard Beach and East End Beach (highlighted) are monitored regularly. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension/Sea Grant staff conducted Sanitary Shoreline Surveys on East End Beach in 2003 and Willard Beach in 2005, providing technical support and oversight. Both Portland and South Portland are committed to remediating pollution problems and notifying the public of health risks at these beaches.

Maine Healthy Beaches Program

With the help of U.S. EPA funding, administered by the Maine State Planning Office (SPO), the state is implementing the Maine Healthy Beaches program (MHB). MHB has established a unified coastal water quality monitoring program for 18 towns and State Parks representing 38 of the state's beaches. SPO, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant along with an Advisory Committee of state agencies and organizations, including Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, are working together to educate the public about healthy beach use and to encourage towns to participate in the MHB program. The MHB program provides towns with training and technical resources including permanent signs with a changeable color-coded plate. Beach administrators determine whether to close a beach or issue an advisory using a risk based approach in conjunction with bacterial samples on a single sample basis.

The MHB program uses an on-line database for managers and has launched a new segment of their website which allows members of the public to view the status and data generated for each beach participating in the program. To learn more, visit the website: <http://www.mainehealthybeaches.org/index.html>.



Maine Healthy Beaches program signs have signs with changeable color-coded plates. Green indicates the beach is open. Orange warns that swimming and other water contact activities are not advised. Red indicates the beach is closed.