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General questions: Patrick O'Neill, DHS, (971) 673-1282

Technical questions: Jennifer Ketterman, DHS, (971) 673-0431; Larry Caton, DEQ, (503) 693-5726

Precautionary health advisory issued for north and central coast beaches

A precautionary public health advisory was issued today due to the potential for higher-than-normal levels of bacteria in ocean waters along Oregon's north and central coast following recent wind and rain storms.

The affected beaches are in Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln Counties.

Increased pathogen and fecal bacteria levels in ocean waters can come from both shore and inland sources, including storm water runoff, sewer overflows, failing septic systems and animal waste, which can result in diarrhea, stomach cramps, skin rashes and other illnesses affecting the eyes, ears, nose and throat.

While this precautionary advisory is in effect, visitors should avoid direct contact with ocean water, particularly children and the elderly who may be more vulnerable to waterborne bacteria.

Additionally, visitors should avoid wading in nearby creeks or in discolored water, and stay clear of water runoff flowing into the ocean. Even if there is no advisory in effect, officials recommend avoiding swimming in the ocean within 48 hours after a rainstorm.

State health officials will be monitoring the situation and will lift the advisory when water quality samples indicate the water is safe for recreational use.

State officials say that the status of water contact advisories at beaches is subject to change. For the most recent information on advisories, please visit www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/beaches/ or call 877-290-6767.

Since 2003 state officials have used a federal Environmental Protection Agency grant to monitor popular Oregon beaches and make timely reports to the public about elevated levels of fecal bacteria. Oregon state agencies participating in this program are the Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. More detailed test results are available at www.healthoregon.org/beach.

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