

NEWS RELEASE

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Annual water quality testing in Departure Bay taking place

Summary

Each year, from May through September, the City of Nanaimo monitors the water quality in Departure Bay to make sure the water is clean for beachgoers and wildlife. Staff from the public works department, with assistance from the Nanaimo Port Authority, take water samples from various locations in and around the bay as well as from the waterways that feed into the bay. The samples are then tested by a lab for fecal coliforms. If the level of fecal coliforms exceeds Federal health guidelines, it will force a beach closure.

To help keep the bay water clean and the beach open, pet owners are reminded to take their dogs to other designated dog parks and off-leash areas. With shore birds and other naturally occurring wildlife in the bay daily, adding pets to the mix could elevate the levels of fecal coliforms. The City of Nanaimo has a bylaw in place that states dogs are not to be on beaches or in the water between the beginning of May and the end of September each year. This bylaw is in place for all of Nanaimo's lakes, streams and waterfront swimming spots, except for those designated as off-leash areas.

For more information on coliform testing in Departure Bay, watch the video attached to the online version of this news release or on the City's YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/rvbuYxdPH2s>.

Strategic Link: The City of Nanaimo's water quality initiatives support the City's commitment to a livable community.

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo's wastewater section monitors coliform levels in Departure Bay to ensure that the beach can remain open during peak season, May 1 - September 30 each year.
- Each week, 26 samples are taken from Departure Bay and the surrounding and contributing waterways to ensure Coliform levels remain within Federal health guidelines.
- Animal feces that wash into Departure Bay, or even that enter into a contributing creek, drainage ditch or storm sewer system can potentially raise coliform and E.coli levels in the water and may cause a beach closure.

Quotes

"The City takes water quality testing in Departure Bay and surrounding tributaries seriously. Regular monitoring helps protect aquatic life and wildlife and keeps beaches open for water activities. We can all do our part to ensure clean waterways. Do not dispose feces, paint, drywall or oils into ditches or catch basins as they can end up in our streams and oceans."

Wayne Roulston
General Foreman Wastewater Collection
City of Nanaimo

Quick Facts

- City of Nanaimo Bylaw 7073, section 3.3(C) states that no person shall permit any animal under their ownership or custody to be on a public beach during the months of May through September inclusive.
- The following parks have designated off-leash areas: May Richards Bennett Pioneer, Beaufort, Westwood Lake, Invermere Beach, Northfield, Wardropper, Colliery Dam, St. George Ravine, Gallow's Point (Protection Island), Cable Bay Trail, Beban and Diver Lake (October - April).
- In 1994 Departure Bay beach was closed to swimmers due to elevated levels of fecal coliforms and Escherichia coli (E. coli) in the water. There was too much bacteria in the water for it to be considered safe to swim in.

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