

NEWS RELEASE

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Annual water quality testing set to begin at Nanaimo's outdoor swim spots

Testing to begin June 15, 2021

Summary

Each year, during the summer months, the City of Nanaimo monitors water quality at popular swimming spots to make sure the water is clean for beach goers and for wildlife. Staff from the public works department, with assistance from the Nanaimo Port Authority, take water samples from various locations in and around each beach as well as from the waterways that feed into them. The samples are then tested by a lab for fecal coliforms. If the level of fecal coliforms exceeds Provincial health guidelines, it will force a beach closure.

Testing occurs at the following locations: Departure Bay, Brannen Lake, Long Lake, Westwood Lake and Colliery Dam Park.

To help keep water clean and beaches open, pet owners are reminded to take their dogs to designated dog parks and off-leash areas. With shore birds and other naturally occurring wildlife in and around water bodies, 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.

To view the latest beach reports, visit the City's website at www.nanaimo.ca/goto/beachreports.

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, Brannen Lake, Long Lake, Westwood Lake and Colliery Dam Park to ensure that the beach can remain open during peak season. This year, monitoring will take place beginning June 15.
- Each week, 23 samples are taken to ensure coliform levels remain within Provincial health guidelines.
- Animal feces that wash into water bodies such as lakes, contributing creeks, drainage ditches or storm sewer system can potentially raise coliform and E.coli levels in the water and may cause a beach closure.

Quotes

"Monitoring the water quality in and around some of Nanaimo's popular swimming spots not only helps keep beaches stay open for everyone's enjoyment, it also protects the wildlife and aquatic life that call those places home. We can all do our part to ensure our waterways and beaches are clean. Do not dispose feces, paint, drywall or oils into ditches, catch basins or any water source as they can end up in our streams and oceans."

Bill Sims
General Manager, Engineering and Public Works
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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