

Dillingham Area Beaches Bacteria Testing

Project Information

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has heard community concerns of potential bacteria water quality pollution from fishing vessel operation in Nushagak Bay, especially during the busy summer season.

When and where will the monitoring occur?

To address the community water quality concerns, DEC has partnered with Alaska Water Laboratories to collect water samples at three Dillingham area beaches during the summers of 2022 and 2023 before, during, and after the commercial fishing season. Waters samples will be collected by trained individuals and shipped to Alaska Water Laboratories for analysis. Results will be posted on DEC's web page as soon as they are available.

Monitoring locations include Snag Point, Scandinavian Beach, and Kakanak Beach. These locations are areas of recreational use and where contact with water is more likely. Additionally, these locations were sampled previously approximately 12 years ago allowing for comparison. The study's data will provide information on the water quality at these locations and assist in identifying potential sources of bacteria, if any. A final project report will be developed and shared with the community.



Proposed beaches for sampling during the summers of 2022 and 2023

What are Bacteria?

Water sampling is occurring to check for levels of Fecal Coliform and Enterococci bacteria. These bacteria occur naturally in the gut of all warm-blooded animals and are used as indicators of potential sewage pollution. Commonly documented health issues from swimming in or ingesting bacteria contaminated recreational waters include gastrointestinal illness, respiratory illnesses, skin rashes, and ear, eye, and wound infections.

Are fish safe to eat?

Yes, fish are safe to eat, however we recommend you rinse fish with clean water after they have been harvested from areas with elevated bacteria levels. Please follow safe food handling recommendations and cook seafood to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit to destroy any bacteria. Note that freezing alone does not kill pathogens.

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DEC Water Program Website:
<https://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-quality/>

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