

Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Annual Water Quality Report Card

Released: May 28, 2022 | Prepared by Caroline Adamson

Beach	Six-year average safety rating (2016-2021)	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Pleasure Bay	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%
City Point	99%	100%	100%	100%	97%	94%	100%
Nantasket	99%	100%	98%	97%	100%	98%	100%
M Street	98%	94%	94%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Carson	98%	92%	100%	100%	93%	100%	100%
Revere	96%	94%	100%	87%	98%	98%	98%
Winthrop	95%	100%	100%	78%	100%	94%	100%
Constitution	94%	91%	98%	90%	94%	95%	96%
Nahant	94%	77%	96%	93%	100%	100%	97%
Short	90%	89%	94%	88%	100%	80%	88%
Wollaston	89%	82%	85%	87%	93%	92%	93%
Savin Hill	89%	70%	89%	79%	100%	94%	100%
Malibu	88%	73%	91%	83%	91%	91%	97%
King's	78%	68%	70%	79%	75%	92%	83%
Tenean	77%	63%	79%	67%	78%	81%	92%
All Beaches	92%	86%	93%	89%	95%	94%	96%

The Boston Globe

Charlie McKenna | May 30, 2022

Water quality at Boston area beaches declined in 2021, report says



Early morning sun highlighted the sand on Pleasure Bay in South Boston. DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The overall water quality safety rating for beaches in Greater Boston declined in 2021, according to a new report by environmental group Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, which gave the region's beaches a rating of 86 percent — a 7 percentage point decrease from 2020 and a six-year low.

The decrease in water quality safety, determined by the amount of bacteria in a sample, is a result of “far more” rainfall events, which have a “significant impact on water quality on many beaches,” occurring in 2021 than in 2020, the organization said. In all, 19 storms exceeded a half-inch of rainfall, while 12 exceeded one inch of rainfall, the report said.

As a result, the report cautioned against using yearly figures to draw conclusions about water quality on the whole.

“These seasonal variations are why Save the Harbor/Save the Bay is reluctant to draw conclusions from results for individual years, preferring to rely on multi-year averages in evaluating overall water quality on the region's public beaches,” the statement said.

The 2021 rating represents the lowest figure since at least 2016, when area beaches were rated at 96 percent. The average rating for all beaches during the time span is 92 percent.

Fifteen beaches are graded in the annual report, which covers the “Boston Harbor region” — spanning from Nahant Beach to Nantasket Beach. Beaches' scores are calculated as “the percent of samples that comply with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health single sample limit for bacteria,” according to the report. Weekly water testing for beaches began in late May 2021 and continued through Labor Day.

Despite the heavy rainfall, four beaches received perfect scores — Pleasure Bay and City Point Beach in South Boston, Nantasket Beach in Hull, and Winthrop Beach. Six others — M Street Beach and Carson Beach in South Boston, Constitution Beach in East Boston, Revere Beach, Short Beach, and Wollaston Beach in Quincy — all scored between 82 percent and 94 percent.

“Considering the wet weather, most of the region's beaches scored quite well, earning A's

and B's,” said Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's executive director Chris Mancini in a statement.

However, King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott, and Tenean Beach in Dorchester scored well below the year's average safety rating — each receiving scores in the 60s, according to the report. King's scored a meager 68 percent while Tenean lagged further behind at 63 percent.

The report also assesses the Public Health Department's beach posting and flagging protocols, which Mancini said “failed to make the grade again this year.”

“We believe that there are better ways to provide timely and accurate information about beach water quality to those who need it most and would like to work with DPH and other stakeholders to get it right,” Mancini said in the statement.

The group found that 75 percent of red flags posted on Constitution Beach in East Boston in 2021 were wrong and an “astonishing” 100 percent of red flags there were incorrect in 2020. The problem of incorrect flagging, Mancini said, is

exacerbated by the fact that the Bureau of Environmental Health does not offer its beach water quality locator in languages aside from English even though many beachgoers speak a language other than English at home.

Working with state and city agencies, “we can provide more accessible, timely and accurate water quality data to beachgoers, improving public access to the beach and better protecting the public's health,” said Save the Harbor's director of strategy & communications Bruce Berman in the statement.

Berman said the organization intends to apply the data review process it used to evaluate posting and flagging at Constitution Beach to other beaches in the region going forward.

“On many beaches, simply installing an accurate and accessible rain gauge and making the information available online in real time with a QR code would provide better information. We can — and should — do better than the current system, which relies on yesterday's results which are a terrible predictor of today's water quality,” he said.

BOSTON Herald

Gayla Cowley | May 28, 2022

South Boston beaches top region's water quality report card



BOSTON, MA May 28: A man walks his dog on Pleasure Bay in South Boston on Saturday, May 28, 2022, in Boston, Massachusetts. (Photo By Jim Michaud/ Boston Herald)

Four of the five safest beaches in the metropolitan region, in terms of water quality, are nestled near the Harbor in South Boston, according to a Beach Water Quality Report Card released on Saturday.

Compiled by Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, the annual Metropolitan Beaches Water Quality Report Card grades the safety of public beaches in Dorchester, East Boston, South Boston, Hull, Lynn, Nahant, Quincy, Revere and Winthrop.

Topping the list, with a 100% six-year average safety rating from 2016-21, is Pleasure Bay, followed by nearby City Point, which has a 99% average safety rating.

“The water is great for the dogs to jump in,” said Brian Johnson, who was taking advantage of the empty sandy beach at Pleasure Bay with his

four-month-old golden retriever, Toby, on Saturday afternoon.

Johnson, 31, said he does not visit Pleasure Bay much anymore, but went often when he was growing up on the South Shore. He lives in Hingham now, and made the trip Saturday to walk the two-mile loop with his puppy.

“(The water) does look much cleaner than it was in the past,” he said. “I used to come here as a kid and do the loop.”

Two other beaches in the area, M Street Beach and Carson Beach, are fourth and fifth with the same six-year average rating of 98%. M Street held a slight edge in 2021, with a 94% rating to Carson’s 92%. In third place in this year’s report card was Hull’s Nantasket Beach, with a 99% six-year average safety

rating.

While Southie beaches scored high, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay said that in 2021, the overall water quality safety rating for the Boston Harbor region’s beaches, managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, was down 7% from 2020 — 86% to the previous year’s 93%.

The organization said rainfall had a significant impact on the water quality of the region’s beaches in 2021, a year that saw much more rain than 2020. For example, 19 storms last year exceeded a half-inch of rain, and 12 storms resulted in more than an inch of rain.

Despite the rain, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay said five beaches — Pleasure Bay and City Point in South Boston, Nantasket in Hull

and Winthrop Beach — had perfect water quality scores last year, according to the report card.

“Considering the wet weather, most of the region’s beaches scored quite well, earning A’s and B’s,” said Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Executive Director Chris Mancini.

While the beach area itself may have been nearly empty on Saturday afternoon, plenty of people were taking advantage of the Pleasure Bay loop. Walkers, runners and even a couple of rollerbladers could be seen taking advantage of the scenic stroll.

It’s a nice place to go for a run,” said Brendan Taranowski, 24, a Boston resident who was out for a walk with his girlfriend, Jess Boyajian.

“We try to (come) at least a few times a week,” added Boyajian, 19, who said the Castle Island area is “super convenient” for them because it’s well-maintained.

BOSTON Herald

Gayla Cowley | May 28, 2022

High safety marks for all but two Boston Harbor region beaches



BOSTON, MA May 28: Pleasure Bay in South Boston on an overcast day with occasional rain, Saturday, May 28, 2022, in Boston, Massachusetts. (Photo By Jim Michaud/ Boston Herald)

Public beaches in the Boston Harbor region scored high overall in terms of water quality safety, according to the latest report card, but two continue to lag far behind.

The latest Metropolitan Beaches Water Quality Report Card, released Saturday by Save the Harbor/Save the Bay shows two South Boston beaches have the safest water quality, followed by Nantasket Beach in Hull and another two beaches in Southie.

However, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Executive Director Chris Mancini did point out that King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott and Tenean Beach in Dorchester continue to show poor water quality scores.

Mancini also pointed to poor communication from the state Department of Public Health, in terms of alerting beachgoers to water quality risks last year.

He said 75% of the red flags, which indicate tests have found unsafe levels of bacteria in the water, that flew at Constitution Beach in East Boston in 2021 were wrong, while an "astonishing" 100% of the red flags on that beach were incorrect in 2020.

"Sadly the Department of Public Health's beach posting and flagging protocols failed to make the grade again this year," Mancini said.

The annual report card ranks the safety of DCR-managed public

beaches in Dorchester, East Boston, South Boston, Hull, Nahant, Lynn, Quincy, Revere and Winthrop.

The rankings for the beaches with the highest average safety rating from 2016-21 were: Pleasure Bay at 100%, City Point at 99%, Nantasket at 99%, M Street at 98%, Carson at 98%, Revere at 96%, Winthrop at 95%, Constitution at 94%, Nahant at 94%, Short at 90%, Wollaston at 89%, Savin Hill at 89%, Malibu at 88%, King's at 78%, and Tenean at 77%.

The overall six-year rating for the 15 beaches was 92%. However, the report card showed the overall water quality rating was down 7% in 2021 — 86% to the previous year's 93% score.