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Water quality at Wollaston Beach has room for improvement, according to report



Water quality at Wollaston Beach has room for improvement, according to Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. Gred Derr/The Patriot Ledger

QUINCY – The water quality at Wollaston Beach has room for improvement, according to a report from the nonprofit advocacy group Save the Harbor/Save the Bay.

The organization uses water samples collected from beaches in Eastern Massachusetts to calculate a safety score. The score is a percentage of water samples that comply with the state's bacteria limit.

In 2020, Wollaston Beach scored 85 percent, down from 87 percent the year before and 93 percent in 2018. The six-year average for Wollaston is 89 percent, ranking it near the bottom of the 15 beaches the organization surveys.

The organization said rainfall has a significant impact on the water quality tests because of runoff.

"Wollaston in dry weather is a good place to swim. In wet weather, it's problematic," said Bruce Berman, the nonprofit's director of strategy and communication.

Save the Harbor's water quality report card.

The organization said 2020 was a relatively dry year with few big storms. Quincy's beach was sampled daily, while other beaches surveyed, including Nantasket in Hull, were sampled weekly. Nantasket scored 98 percent in 2020.

Berman said Nantasket, as an open ocean beach, isn't affected by a storm as much as Wollaston, which is affected by runoff from much of Quincy.

Overall water quality at the Department of Conservation and Recreation-run beaches was up, with a 93 percent safety score for the beaches collectively in 2020, up from 89 percent the year before.

Earlier this year, Quincy agreed to pay a \$115,000 penalty and spend \$100 million to improve stormwater and sewer systems after a federal lawsuit accused Quincy of releasing sewage and untreated wastewater into

Boston Harbor, Dorchester Bay, Quincy Bay and other public waterways.

Despite massive cleanup efforts over the last two decades, the federal Environmental Protection Agency said Quincy had not done enough to stop the pollution.

Berman said Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch deserved credit for the city's efforts.

"Mayor Koch's willingness to invest in clean water is laudable," Berman said.

Tenean Beach in Dorchester and King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott had the lowest scores last year, 79 percent and 70 percent, respectively.

"While we are delighted with the progress that we have made on most of the region's public beaches, we are disappointed to report that Tenean Beach in Dorchester and King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott were still unsafe for swimming more than one out of every five days in 2020," said Chris Mancini, the nonprofit's executive director, in a statement.

"We are particularly concerned about the situation at King's Beach, where filthy, bacteria-laden discharges from both Lynn and Swampscott at Stacey Brook continue to threaten public health."

The nonprofit also took aim at the Department of

Public Health's flagging system when bacteria prompts swimming advisories. Berman said the advisories are always a day late because beach managers must wait 36 hours to obtain test results.

"Beach water quality may have already changed significantly during this period, so the prior day's tests often do not reflect current conditions," the organization said in a statement.

Berman said the organization plans to work with the state to come up with a more accurate flagging system.

The Department of Public Health did not respond to a request for comment.

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