

BOSTON Herald

Brian Dowling | Sunday, May 27, 2018



Credit: Stuart Cahill. *WADING RIGHT IN: Visitors enjoy Carson Beach at low tide on Saturday. Clean water has led to more enjoyment of the great outdoors.*

Boston area beaches come clean

South Boston beaches landed top marks in an annual water quality report card that showed which public shores from Swampscott to Hull had fewer contamination issues last year.

M Street Beach recorded its fourth yearly perfect score of 100 percent in the report from environmental advocate Save the Harbor. Nearby Carson Beach and Pleasure Bay also snatched flawless top scores. Nahant Beach also scored 100 percent.

Nantasket Beach in Hull and Revere Beach scored 98 percent, while City Point in Southie and the Winthrop shore recorded 94 percent. The percentages indicate how often bacteria levels complied with state limits.

“We are really lucky to be enjoying the benefits of the harbor cleanup,” said Bruce Berman of Save the Harbor. “We have some of the cleanest beaches in the world in Boston Harbor.”

The report looks at daily or weekly testing at the public beaches for bacteria levels and docked the beaches points for when they exceeded state swimming standards or when colored flags were used to caution beachgoers of contamination.

The bacteria counted in the readings, enterococcus, is

what the Environmental Protection Agency considers an indicator for causing stomach illnesses from marine waters. Its pathways to the shoreline are many, but Berman says the most direct cause of high bacteria levels comes from stormwater runoff and sewer overflows during heavy rainfall.

“In urban areas, stuff washed into the harbor and rivers and that increases the bacteria levels,” he said. “The key to addressing it is public investment in stormwater and sewer infrastructure, which isn’t exciting but is really important.”

Tenean Beach in Dorchester and Short Beach in Revere landed at the bottom of the list. The water at Short Beach only met state standards 80 percent of the days it was tested, and Tenean only met the limits 81 percent of the time, according to the report.