



# VENTURA COUNTY

# BLUE WATER TASK FORCE

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# WATER QUALITY REPORT

2022-2023





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Ventura State Beach after the January 2023 atmospheric river stalled off the California coast. Photo credit: Bill Hickman

# VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The results of this report are brought to you through community efforts of the Surfrider Foundation Ventura County Chapter Blue Water Task Force leaders and core volunteers. Thank you to Scott, Chuck, Michelle, Jennifer, Steve, Isabelle, Diane, Dan, Dave, Kenny, and Tracy, as well as the Foothill Technology High School Blue Water Task Force lab technicians sponsored by Mrs. Emily Hunt.



This program is made possible through generous funding in memory of Chuck Vinson and Patagonia USA.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

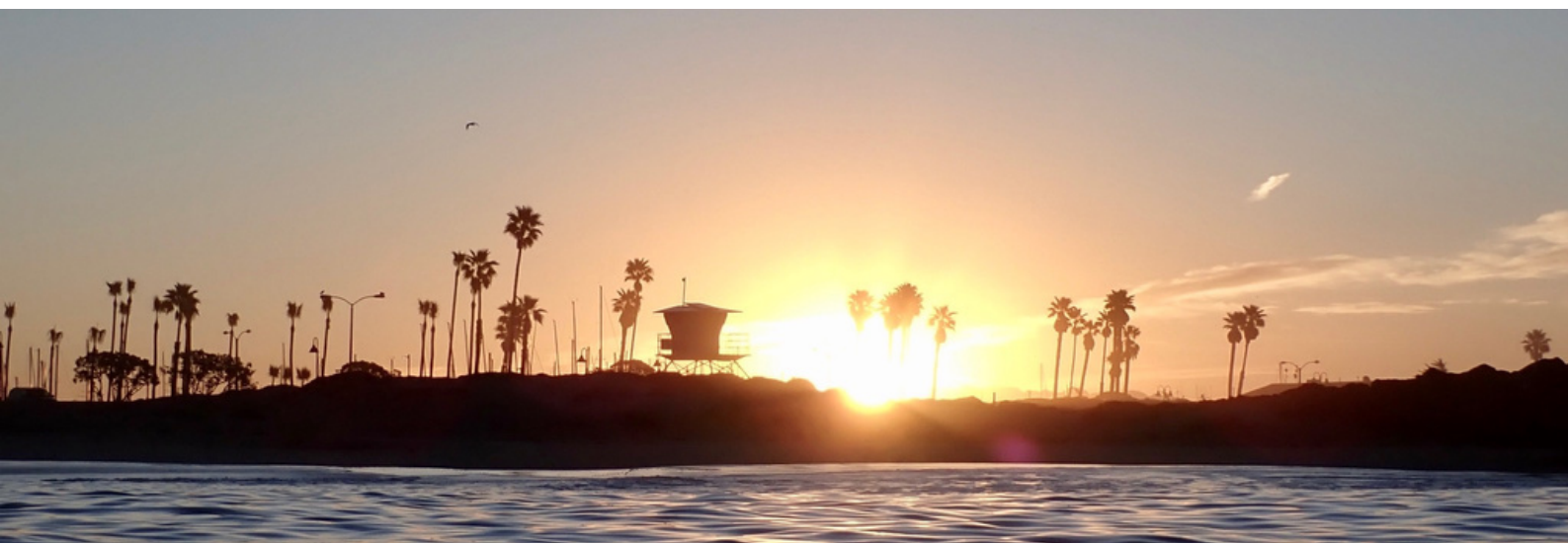
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The Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) is the Surfrider Foundation's volunteer water quality monitoring program that provides critical water quality information to protect public health at the beach. Water quality samples are tested for the presence of enterococcus, a fecal bacteria that indicates the presence of human or animal waste in the water. Elevated levels of enterococcus increase the likelihood that other pathogens that can make people sick may be present.

Our water quality results are compared to the standards used by the California Department of Health Services (DHS) to issue swim advisories, specifically 104 colony forming units of enterococcus per 100 mL sample (104 CFU/100mL). To avoid areas with potentially high bacteria levels,

beachgoers should avoid swimming, surfing, or recreating after significant rain events for 72 hours. Do not enter brown water areas, or where there is a warning sign for high bacteria levels.

Currently, Ventura County's Ocean Water Quality Monitoring Program (VCOWQP) collects and reports fewer samples in the winter than in the summer season. The Ventura County BWTF is focused on supplementing the winter testing sites not covered by the VCOWQP. While there may be fewer beachgoers in the winter months, the winter storm swells attract more surfers; therefore, we sample at 13 sites, that include popular surf spots, from November to March. BWTF water quality data can be accessed at [bwtf.surfrider.org](http://bwtf.surfrider.org).



# WHERE WE TEST

Mondos Cove

Mondos Cove Drain

Surfer's Point

Ventura Rivermouth

Promenade Park - C St

Promenade Park - C St Drain

Weymouth Lane

Weymouth Drain

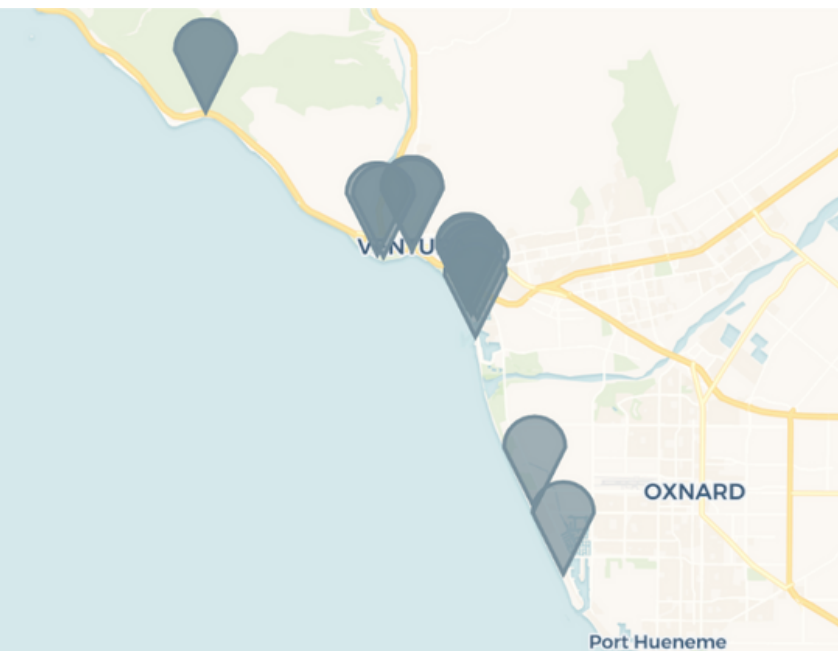
Marina Park Beach

Leo Robbins Sailing Center

Harbor Cove

Outrigger Way - Oxnard Beach

La Crescenta - Hollywood Beach



# 2022-2023 DATA SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis of water test results for thirteen sites that were monitored from November 2022 to March 2023. Data trends indicate that sampling sites associated with a storm drain, stream, or river mouth were more likely to measure bacteria levels that exceeded the state health standard compared to ocean beaches, which have more water exchange and opportunity for dilution (**Table 1**). This past year, however, with the significant rain and pollution events associated with the atmospheric rivers that occurred between December 31, 2022 and March 25, 2023, four ocean beaches had high bacteria rates of 25% or above. With an exceedance rate of 32%, nearly one in every three samples collected at Marina Park Beach failed to meet health standards.

High bacterial counts indicate the presence of human or animal waste in the water and fecal pathogens that can make people sick. Potential sources of pollution include leaking septic systems, sewer line failures, boat discharges, and animal waste from pets, birds and other wildlife. Water quality testing is important to inform safe recreation and to identifying pollution problems that need to be addressed. Families, ocean users, and the public should be aware of areas with poor water quality conditions and seek to avoid them.

**TABLE 1: PERCENT OF SAMPLES EXCEEDING STATE HEALTH STANDARDS (> 104 CFU/100ML)**

Site Name	Site Type	# Samples Collected	% Exceedance
<b>Weymouth Lane</b>	Ocean beach	20	5%
<b>Mondos Cove</b>	Ocean beach	20	10%
<b>La Crescenta - Hollywood Beach</b>	Ocean beach	21	14%
<b>Harbor Cove</b>	Cove	20	10%
<b>Outrigger Way - Oxnard Beach</b>	Ocean beach	20	25%
<b>Weymouth Drain</b>	Drain	4	25%
<b>C Street at Surf</b>	Ocean beach	18	28%
<b>Surfer's Point</b>	Ocean beach	20	30%
<b>Leo Robbins Sailing Center</b>	Marina	20	30%
<b>Marina Park Beach</b>	Ocean beach	22	32%
<b>Ventura Rivermouth</b>	River mouth	21	33%
<b>Mondos Cove Drain</b>	Drain	15	47%
<b>C Street Drain</b>	Drain	2	100%

**Table 1.** Percent of samples at each site that exceeded state health standards of 104 CFU/100 mL in 2022-2023. Note BWTF results are recorded as Most Probable Number (MPN/100 mL) due to our testing methods.

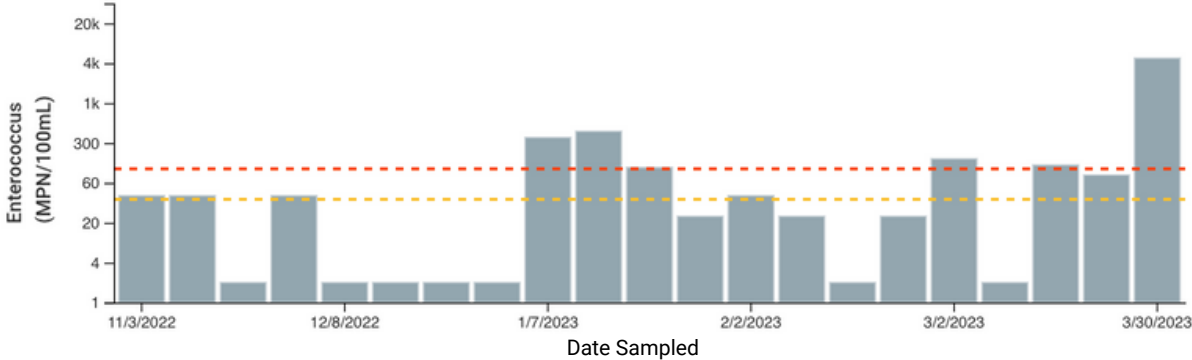
# KEY OUTCOMES

## PRIORITY SAMPLE SITE: MARINA PARK BEACH

During the 2022-2023 sampling period, 32% of the samples collected at Marina Park - in the ocean directly in front of the stormwater drain - exceeded state health standards. This ocean site at Marina Park receives urban runoff near Greenock Street, often resulting in high bacteria levels after rain events. Beachgoers should be aware that high bacterial counts indicate there is human or animal waste present, which may threaten public health.

**32%**  
OF SAMPLES IN 2022-2023 EXCEEDED HEALTH STANDARDS FOR BACTERIAL COUNTS

### Marina Park Beach Results

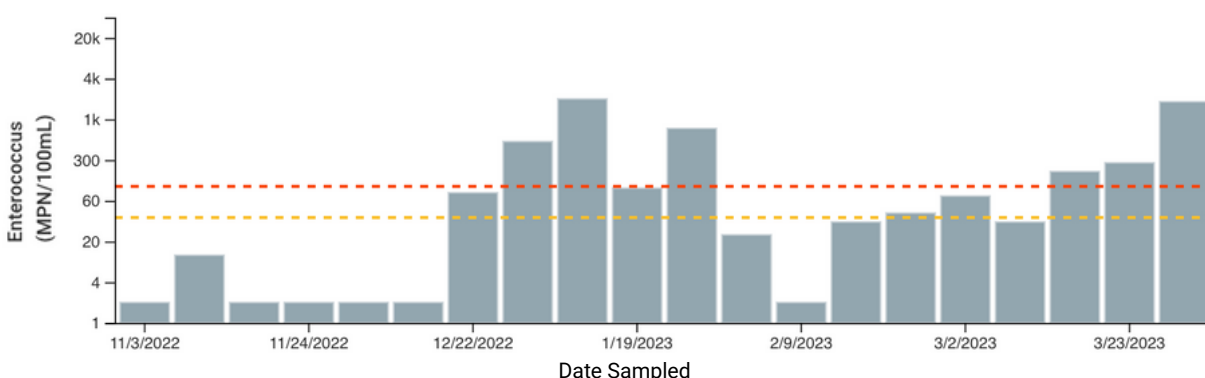


## PRIORITY SAMPLE SITE: SURFER'S POINT

During the 2022 - 2023 sampling period, 30% of the samples collected at Surfer's Point exceeded state health standards. The chapter tests water quality at the surf north of "The Pipe," since there are multiple stormwater drains that flow into the Ventura River north of the Point. In addition, stormwater flows from the Ventura County Fairgrounds parking lot. The public should take note of stormwater drains into the Ventura River and south into Surfer's Point. Surfers should wait 72 hours after it rains, and check water quality conditions before entering the water here.

**30%**  
OF SAMPLES IN 2022-2023 EXCEEDED HEALTH STANDARDS FOR BACTERIAL COUNTS

### Surfer's Point Results



# KEY OUTCOMES

In the beginning of 2023, the region was faced with 12 unprecedented atmospheric river storm events that resulted in two sewage spills into the Ventura River (from the Ojai Valley Sanitation District) and Santa Clara River (Fillmore Water Sanitation District). These two spills released over 14 million gallons of untreated sewage and closed Ventura beaches for two and half weeks from January 10 - January 26, 2023, and also closed beaches from Surfer's Knoll to Oxnard Shores one week in mid-March, 2023. Subsequently, ocean temperatures were elevated due to climate change, while heavy rains resulted in increased urban runoff. As such, coastal ecosystems were experiencing multiple stressors at once, which likely contributed to local algal blooms and domoic acid events that have been harming local wildlife.

Our 2021-2022 BWTF annual report demonstrated that all sites had higher average enterococcus counts when sampled after a recent rain, compared to dry weather. This year's exceedance rates were significantly higher compared to last year's report, and correlate with this year's atmospheric river storms. For example, in 2021-22, Marina Park Beach had a bacteria exceedance rate of 0%, whereas this year it is 32%, with all exceedances occurring in January and March. Likewise, in 2021-22, Leo Robbins Sailing Center had an exceedance rate of 10%, whereas this year it is 30%, with a majority of those exceedances occurring in March. With climate change exacerbating coastal storms, it is crucial to provide the public with water quality data so people can best protect their health.



Ventura River bank eroded and broke one of two sewage lines the first week of January 2023 at San Antonio Creek. Photo credit: Rick Reid



BWTF lab samples from Surfer's Point on January 16, 2023.



# HOW TO VOLUNTEER

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We are now recruiting BWTF volunteers for the 2023-2024 sampling season!

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Joy Downing Riley at [\*\*BWTF@ventura.surfrider.org\*\*](mailto:BWTF@ventura.surfrider.org)

For general information about the BWTF program, visit [bwtf.surfrider.org](http://bwtf.surfrider.org)