



Save the Sound®

TOP 20 LONG ISLAND SOUND BEACHES BASED ON BEST WATER QUALITY HIGHLIGHTED IN BEACH REPORT FROM SAVE THE SOUND

10 Years of Data Show Water Pollution Patterns Differ by Beach and by Region; Troubling Trends in Wet Weather

MAMARONECK, New York/NEW HAVEN, Connecticut — August 2, 2019 – The nonprofit organization Save the Sound released results of its “Long Island Sound Beach Report” on August 2. The report highlighted the “Top 20” beaches on Long Island Sound based on water quality, and, for the first time, presented comprehensive grades for 204 swimming beaches in New York and Connecticut. The report detailed safe swimming conditions at numerous beaches, but noted that continued rain-triggered water pollution is a harbinger of future challenges. Save the Sound also unveiled an upgraded website dedicated to providing public access to over a decade of water quality data for Sound beaches, at www.SoundHealthExplorer.org.

Save the Sound’s LIS Beach Report offered good news for swimmers and beachgoers, highlighting dozens of beaches on both sides of the Sound that consistently earn top grades for water quality. On average, Long Island Sound beaches met safe-swimming criteria 93.3% of the time in 2016-2018. In Connecticut, the Surf Club Beach in Madison was ranked #1, followed by beaches in New Haven, New London, and Fairfield Counties. New York’s top beach for 2016-2018 was the Rye Town Beach (also known as Oakland Beach), in Rye, followed by numerous beaches in Suffolk County, and Westchester County’s Rye Playland Beach. New York City residents will be pleased to know that popular Orchard Beach in the Bronx earned top honors, ranking #9 in the New York Top 10. Top beaches included:

Connecticut Beaches: 2016 - 2018

Towns

SURF CLUB BEACH	Madison
QUIGLEY BEACH	Stamford
EASTERN POINT BEACH	Groton
ESKER POINT BEACH	Groton
EAST (COVE ISLAND) BEACH	Stamford
MCCOOK POINT BEACH	East Lyme
*WHITE SANDS BEACH	Old Lyme
PLEASURE BEACH	Waterford
EAST WHARF BEACH	Madison
*PEAR TREE POINT BEACH	Darien

New York Beaches: 2016 - 2018	Town
RYE TOWN PARK - OAKLAND BEACH	Rye
HOBART BEACH (Sand City) - INLET/SOUND	Northport
HOBART BEACH (Sand City) - BAY	Northport
*PORT JEFFERSON BEACH - WEST	Brookhaven
IRON PIER BEACH	Riverhead
MATTITUCK BREAKWATER BEACH	Riverhead
*PORT JEFFERSON BEACH - EAST	Brookhaven
*BELLE TERRE BEACH	Brookhaven
ORCHARD BEACH	Bronx
RYE PLAYLAND BEACH	Rye

*these five beaches have limited access for local residents only

However, the report, which analyzed trends from the most recent three years tested (2016-2018), also revealed some troubling findings. For the three summers covered in the report, the overall failure rate of beach samples more than doubled in wet weather—jumping from 5.4% in dry weather to 11.1% following wet weather. As a result of climate change, the Sound region is expected to experience steadily increasing rainfall over the coming decades which means more needs to be done to improve coastal stormwater management and sewage infrastructure.

High rainfall impacts water quality at beaches in a number of ways, including by diverting untreated sewage directly into the Sound in locations which use combined stormwater and sewer pipes, or those locations with decaying and damaged pipes. With increased rainfall levels leading to added beach closure days, even in the sunny days following heavy rain, Save the Sound is urging communities to invest in improved sewer treatment and handling capacity, as well as to increase testing at impacted beaches. Save the Sound has successfully lobbied for state funding in both Connecticut and New York to assist municipalities in upgrading their wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

Tracy Brown, director of Save the Sound, commented, “Long Island Sound beaches are an integral part of the lives of millions of beachgoers each year. We’re pleased to see so many beaches testing water quality regularly and offering public access for swimmers and beachgoers to enjoy the Sound safely. At the same time, we know that beaches practically next door to one another can have vastly different water quality, especially if local stormwater and sewer lines are combined or are in poor condition. Our upgraded SoundHealthExplorer.org website is an extremely useful tool for regulators, local leaders, and residents to identify water quality trends at individual beaches.”

Gregory O’Mullan, an environmental microbiologist and professor at Queens College who consulted with Save the Sound on this report, stated that “The Sound Health Explorer website and this newly released report are important tools that can help the public and elected officials to become more informed about water quality and actions they can take to improve conditions at our local beaches. These data help to identify locations where environmental quality consistently supports safe recreation and locations where major improvements are needed to achieve that goal.”

Save the Sound's 2019 Beach Report utilizes the Sound Health Explorer website to compile and analyze data from federal water quality databases. The EPA administers a grant program that assists states and coastal areas in paying for beach monitoring and public notification through an amendment to the Clean Water Act, called The BEACH Act. The BEACH Act directs local health departments to monitor water quality weekly at swimming beaches and posts results to the EPA database.

The Beach Report also assigned regional grades for each year from 2009 to 2018. Overall, there is a pattern of higher grades in the eastern Sound and lower grades to the western Sound. However, this east–west gradient is not constant in every year, showing that all regions have opportunities for improvement.

The maximum magnitude (concentration of fecal bacteria) of failure also differed by region. In the Westchester/NYC region, where Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and urban surfaces deliver concentrated pollution during rain events, the maximum magnitude at beaches averaged more than one and a half times higher during wet weather. In Connecticut and Suffolk County, where onsite sewage treatment and animal sources are more prevalent and can reach the water independently of weather, the magnitudes of contamination were often highest in dry weather.

Residents, as well as local and regional officials, are urged to check www.soundhealthexplorer.org for data regarding specific beaches. Often, issues forcing beaches into frequent closures can be addressed when local water quality patterns are carefully assessed and associated pollution sources identified.

**** Box link to images, charts, the report cover, the report itself and the press release:**

<https://app.box.com/s/34x69wjtq6zzfudfcp30bmwuh0a32zyu>

**** Webpage for public:** www.savethesound.org/beach-report

About Save the Sound

Save the Sound is a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment with an established 45-year track record of restoring and protecting the waters and shorelines of the Long Island Sound. From its offices in Mamaroneck, NY and New Haven, CT, Save the Sound works for a cleaner, healthier, and more vibrant Long Island Sound where humans and marine life can prosper year-round. The organization's success is based on scientific knowledge, legal expertise, and thousands of ordinary people teaming up to achieve results that benefit the environment for current and future generations. Learn more at www.savethesound.org.

Funding Provided by the Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative

Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative is a group of funders with missions that include protecting and restoring the Long Island Sound. www.lisfc.org.

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Long Island Sound Beach Report: Pull Quotes

"This summer, thousands of Connecticut residents will spend time on Long Island Sound. A vibrant shoreline means more money flowing into our local businesses. This report is encouraging, but there's more work that can be done which is why my Long Island Sound Investment Plan calls for massive increases in federal spending to

support the Sound. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I've already worked to triple funding for the Sound and will continue to back legislation that protects our precious natural resource."

- U.S. Senator Chris Murphy

"I am proud that Connecticut beaches have received high grades in Save the Sound's Long Island Sound Beach Report. This great natural resource has come a long way – over the last few decades, we have prioritized the protection of the Sound to make it an asset to our region. That is good news for our environment, our residents, and the regional economy, as the Sound contributes tens of billions of dollars through commercial and recreational fishing, ecotourism, and other water-dependent businesses. In celebrating this achievement, we must also renew our commitment to protecting our shoreline and ensuring its resilience against the effects of extreme weather events and climate change. As co-chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus, I will continue the fight to protect and improve one of Connecticut's most vital natural treasures."

- Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, CT

"This week alone, beaches across Long Island were closed with dead fish washing up on the shores. Addressing water pollution helps improve water quality and is a critical component to ensuring the region's long term growth. The State has committed vital funding to improving Long Island's water quality and I look forward to fighting for smart policies alongside Save the Sound to protect our treasured beaches and improve water quality."

- NYS Senator James F. Gaughran

"This report by Save the Sound reinforces the importance of partnerships between environmental groups and government leaders. It also shows how much progress has already been made to reduce water pollution and improve water quality at our north shore beaches," said Nassau County Executive Laura Curran. "In fact, in 2017 only one beach in Nassau County had an A- rating or higher, and now we have 11 beaches with an A- rating or higher. The Long Island Sound is a precious resource and I will continue to work and advocate to improve its water quality for the hundreds of species of marine life that live in it as well as the thousands of residents and tourists who enjoy it each year."

- Nassau County Executive Laura Curran

"In the Town of Oyster Bay, we are doing more than ever to help protect our beautiful harbor, which has long been considered one of the crown jewels of Oyster Bay. Our annual harbor seeding program, expanded FLUPSY program, and new hatchery place millions of oysters and clams back on our waters, helping to restore shellfish populations and improve water quality. As an avid lifelong environmentalist, I am especially glad to hear that water quality data is being studied so closely and that new measures are being taken to gather information and explore how we can get even better."

- Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino

"The Beach Report shows clear success in cleaning up the places where most people come to enjoy the Sound. But it also lets us know that we have more work to do. For our children and grandchildren to enjoy the Sound the way we do, we need to address runoff and nutrient pollution issues. They're big issues, but all of us (local people, non-profits, philanthropy, and government at all levels) have worked together in the past to solve similar problems. We should celebrate, and congratulate, but also recommit ourselves to successful partnership."

- Hugh Killin, Jeniam Foundation (Newtown, CT)

"The Long Island Sound and its beaches are treasured resources for Westchester's residents. This Beach Report is the result of tremendous collaboration, including the work of volunteer citizen scientists collecting water samples. We commend the many partners who make the report possible, and we celebrate the improved conditions of our beaches. Those partnerships become even more critical as our region experiences increased storm events which can result in more beach closures. We look forward to supporting Sound communities as they embrace the report and dedicate themselves to the work ahead."

- Laura Rossi, Esq., Executive Director, Westchester Community Foundation

"We know that a healthy Long Island Sound supports the economic vitality and the quality of life in of our coastal communities. The Beach Report documents improvements, but also demonstrates the essential role of, and need for, continued investment in restoring and sustaining Long Island Sound. The Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative looks forward to working with government, nongovernmental and community partners and investing in projects to forge a path which will protect and enhance the ecological, recreational and commercial value of the Sound's waters, as well as the quality of life for the broader community."

- Marian Conway, Ph.D., Executive Director, NY Community Bank Foundation