

BEACH ADVISORIES, CLOSURES AND HUMAN HEALTH

Why is the Beach Posted with an Advisory or Closed?

Through natural and human-made causes, pollutants may enter Rock Lake that pose a health risk to swimmers and boaters. Microscopic pollutants, such as bacteria and viruses can cause illness in humans. The symptoms and illnesses that these pathogens cause can vary based on multiple factors. Some people might get a sore throat or cold-like symptoms, others might get diarrhea. Usually the elderly, people with compromised immune systems and children are more at risk of illness from disease-causing bacteria in the water.

To help prevent people from getting sick, the Environmental Public Health Consortium of Jefferson County tests Ferry Park Beach once a week for E. coli bacteria. The City of Lake Mills Wastewater Treatment Plant tests for E. coli bacteria once a week at 4 locations on Rock Lake: Sandy Beach west, Sandy Beach east, Bartel's Beach and Tyranena Park.

If the E. coli exceeds 235 cfu/100 ml, then an advisory sign is posted at the beach. An advisory means that an increased risk of illness may be present. If the E. coli exceeds 1,000 cfu/100 ml, then a beach closure sign is posted. A closure means that a serious risk of illness may be present. After advisories and closures, the water is tested again in a week unless the Town or the City chooses to test more samples sooner.

What Makes a Beach Polluted?

Many pollution sources, alone or in combination, can degrade water quality. Some causes include seagulls, geese and other waterfowl; and the density of bathers at the beach. Factors that can increase the amount of bacteria at a beach include: warm water which helps bacteria grow, and windless days or wind direction which causes bacteria to stay in one location.

What is E.coli?

E. coli live in the digestive systems of humans and animals, as well as in soils and water. Most strains of the bacteria are not dangerous, but some strains can cause illness. Water is monitored for E. coli because it can indicate the presence of other disease-causing bacteria.

How do I know if a beach is closed or has an advisory?

Data for Rock Lake beaches is posted at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Beaches>. If a beach is closed or has an advisory, then a sign will be posted at the beach. People can also check the City's website, or they can contact the Environmental Public Health Consortium for Jefferson County, or the City of Lake Mills and ask about beach conditions.

Play It Safe at the Beach

- * Wash your hands or rinse off your body before and after going to the beach.
- * Wash or sanitize hands before eating or drinking after swimming or playing in the sand.
- * Do not swallow beach or lake water.
- * Wade or avoid submerging your head in water while swimming.
- * Avoid swimming after a heavy rainfall.
- * Get medical treatment if you if you are feeling sick after swimming.
- * If you are feeling ill before swimming, do not go swimming.
- * Take your kids on bathroom breaks and check diapers often.
- * Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at the beach.
- * Wash your children thoroughly with soap and water before they go swimming.

This information is provided by the Joint Rock Lake Committee in consultation with the City of Lake Mills, the Town of Lake Mills, the Jefferson County Health Department, the Watertown Department of Public Health, and the Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department. Updated 6/14/2021