



Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2015

‘No Swim’ advisory issued for Venice Fishing Pier

SARASOTA COUNTY — Sarasota County health officials have issued a precautionary "No Swim" advisory for:

1600 Harbor Drive South, Venice. FL 34285

The precautionary “No Swim” advisory is due to elevated levels of enterococci (enteric) bacteria, some of which are naturally present in the environment, on Thursday, April 30. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there is a correlation between the levels of enteric bacteria in recreational waters and human health.

Signage advising the public not to swim or engage in water recreation at Venice Fishing Pier will remain in place until follow-up water testing results meet the EPA’s recreational water quality standard. The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) expects to have the next round of test results available on Friday, May 1.

Enteric bacteria can come from a variety of natural and man-made sources including pet waste, baby diapers when young children are playing at the water’s edge, livestock, birds, wildlife (land-dwelling and marine), stormwater runoff, and human sewage from failed septic systems and sewage spills. There have been no reported sewage spills within one-mile of the beach in the past month.

The city of Venice’s response team has determined that the cause of the elevated bacteria levels is likely due to natural sources. Large numbers of shorebirds were observed all along the water’s edge at the Venice Fishing Pier. Recent heavy rains in the area that wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from pet feces, birds, and wildlife into local waters could be an important factor. Higher surf conditions associated with the storms also created turbulence in the Gulf which churns up bottom sediments that can impact water quality.



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MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

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Website: www.sarasotahealth.org



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DOH-Sarasota Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham emphasizes that the Florida Healthy Beaches program protects beachgoers from conditions unsuitable for swimming by sampling beach water and providing accurate and up-to-date explanations of the results.

“When these bacteria are detected in high concentrations in recreational waters, there is a risk that some people who swallow water while swimming or have contact with water entering the skin through a cut or sore may become ill with gastrointestinal illnesses, infections or rashes.” says Higginbotham.

Local health officials emphasize that beaches remain open. However, residents and visitors are urged to take precautions by not wading or swimming in the water or engaging in water recreation at Venice Fishing Pier until the advisory is lifted. In addition, shellfish such as crabs and shrimp collected in the immediate area of Venice Fishing Pier should not be consumed. However, it is safe to fish and consume fin-fish from these waters.

“Our coastline of over 30 miles of world-class beaches is a wonderful asset to our community,” says Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County. “Let’s work together to help preserve this amenity.”

To help keep beach water safe for swimming and recreation, officials say people should not allow pets to roam on beaches and in park areas and pick up pet waste since summer rains tend to wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from birds and wildlife into local waterways. Additionally, children in diapers and people of all ages who are experiencing diarrhea should not go into the water.

Testing has revealed bacteria levels within acceptable limits at the following area beaches:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| North Lido Beach | North Jetty Beach |
| South Lido Beach | Venice Beach |
| Lido Casino Beach | |
| Siesta Key Beach | Service Club Beach |
| Bird Key Park (Ringling Causeway) | Brohard Beach |
| Longboat Key Public Beach | Caspersen Beach |
| Turtle Beach | Manasota Key Beach |
| Nokomis Beach | Blind Pass Beach |

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“It is important to know that our beaches are never closed. However, it is best to check the latest reports on beach conditions before heading out to the beach,” says Haley.

For more information:

- Visit <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net> and click on water monitoring and then bacterial testing to check beach water testing results of area Gulf beaches.
- Call 941-BEACHES (941-232-2437) or visit www.mote.org/beaches. Click on the same link to the mobile-friendly version of the beach conditions report.
- The local visitor and convention bureau known as Visit Sarasota County also provides extensive information about the Sarasota area, including its beaches. The website is www.visitsarasota.org.

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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.
View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx

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DOH-Sarasota Media Contact: A news release will be issued when the advisory is lifted
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Our Gulf Environment website: <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net>



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