COLEMAN BEACH

Clean Water, Great Life

An update on bay water quality from the Morro Bay National Estuary Program

Tidelands Park

The Morro Bay estuary is a special place that is central to many of our lives. It is a wonderful place to live, work, or visit. Some of our livelihoods depend on the bay, such as the fishing industry or recreational boat rentals. Many of us enjoy paddling in the bay's calm waters or wading along the shore. All of these uses of the bay depend on clean water.

Windy Cove

State Park Marina

Pasadena Point

BAYWOOD PIER

Cuesta Inlet

Sharks Inlet

So, is Morro Bay clean enough for safe swimming and recreating? Most areas of the bay have good water quality. Testing for indicator bacteria like Enterococcus and *E. coli*, found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals, tell us whether water may be contaminated by fecal matter. The presence of these indicator organisms indicates a higher likelihood that pathogens are present that could make a swimmer or boater ill if they accidentally ingest water.

Each month, Estuary Program volunteers venture to sites throughout the bay and watershed to collect and analyze samples to determine if the waters are safe for swimming. The map on the previous page,

shows the results from monthly testing of Enterococcus at eight sites along the bay shoreline. The analysis represents data from 2009 through 2014.

Above, the green dots represent areas that typically have good water quality that is safe for swimming. The yellow dots indicate slightly elevated bacteria levels. At the two sites with a fair rating, the bacteria level for safe swimming was exceeded in 15 to 25% of samples tested.
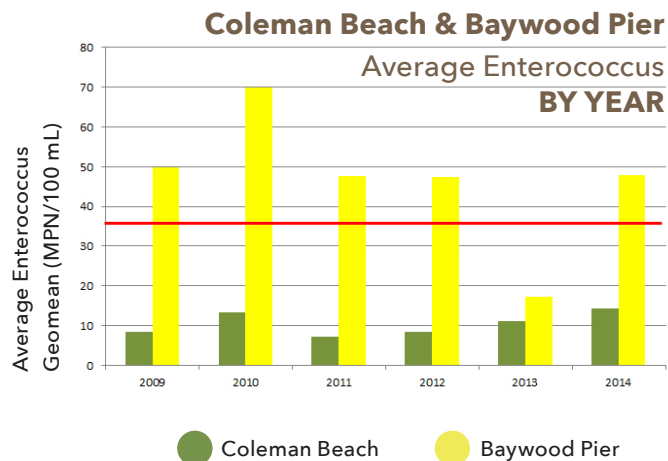
MORRO BAY
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

Is Morro Bay safe for swimming?

Yes, in most areas.

What are some of the potential sources of pathogens in the bay? Stormwater runoff from nearby communities can wash waste from wild and domestic animals into the bay. An improperly maintained septic tank can impact shallow groundwater or the bay itself. A leaking waste-holding tank on a boat can be a source, as well as a sewage spill.

In the graph to the right, bacteria levels below the red line that are safe for swimming. The green bars representing Coleman Beach are consistently below this level, while the yellow bars representing Baywood Pier are above this level in 15 to 25% of samples tested.

Coleman Beach & Baywood Pier
Average Enterococcus
BY YEAR

Average Enterococcus Geomean (MPN/100 mL)

(Bar chart showing values for years 2009–2014, with Coleman Beach (green) and Baywood Pier (yellow) bars, and a red reference line at approximately 35.)

● Coleman Beach   ● Baywood Pier

Much of the contamination impacting Morro Bay begins with human activities. Each of us can make a difference in keeping our estuary clean and healthy.

Making a Difference.
What can you do?

Pet owners
Pick up after your pet. Dog poop is not good fertilizer and can take up to a year to break down.

Car owners
Fix any leaks right away. Spilled automotive fluids wash into the bay during rainstorms.

Boat owners
Learn how to correctly use your Y-valve and find out where pumpouts are located so you can empty your waste-holding tank safely.

Homeowners
If your home has a septic system, have your septic serviced regularly to ensure proper operation.

Gardeners
Don't over-fertilize your yard. Excess fertilizer washes away during storms to end up in our bay.

Everyone
If your neighborhood has storm drains, remember that these drains transport untreated stormwater directly into the bay. Keep your storm drains clean and never use them to dispose of chemicals, yard waste, or pet waste.

Absorbents for containing oil & fuel spills are available from the Morro Bay Harbor Department's oil recycling center through a free exchange program. *Contact the Harbor Department for more.* 805.772.6254

*CLEAN BOATING information, a map of waste & pumpout stations around the bay, plus more about your Y-valve are available in our **online library**!*

The Morro Bay MUTT MITTS PROGRAM **provides free bags for picking up pet waste** around the bay in parks & recreation areas. **A map of the dispenser locations is available for print on our website!**

Our BAYSIDE GUIDE in our **online library** is a great resource for new & current residents alike on **how to be good neighbor** to Morro Bay. It provides more details & ideas on how to make a difference in your everyday practices.

MBNEP.org
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