2020

Clean Water Report

Photo: Russell Ord

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

Contents

Clean Water Initiative

Americans love the beach. Over 100 million beachgoers flock to U.S. beaches every year to enjoy the sand, sunshine and water. With limited recreation options available during the COVID-19 pandemic, beach attendance soared in 2020 and was up as much as 200 - 300% in some states. Not only do beaches provide recreation, leisure and social opportunities, but they are also the foundation of valuable coastal tourism and ocean recreation economies that provide 2.4 million jobs nationwide and contribute $130 billion to the gross domestic product (oceaneconomics.org).

Since the Surfrider Foundation was founded in 1984, improving coastal water quality has been one of our top priorities. Through our Clean Water Initiative, we strive to protect water quality and reduce pollution so it is safe to surf, swim and play in the ocean and in our coastal waterways. To meet this goal, Surfrider chapters and activists are building awareness of water pollution problems and advocating for solutions to protect public health and clean water.

Sewage spills and failing wastewater infrastructure threaten coastal water quality and public health.

10 trillion

Gallons of untreated stormwater runoff flows into U.S. waterways every year.

We are testing the waters for bacteria and toxins, raising public awareness and finding real solutions to ocean pollution.

51
BWTF Labs

501
Sampling Sites

5,796
Samples Collected

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THE THREATS

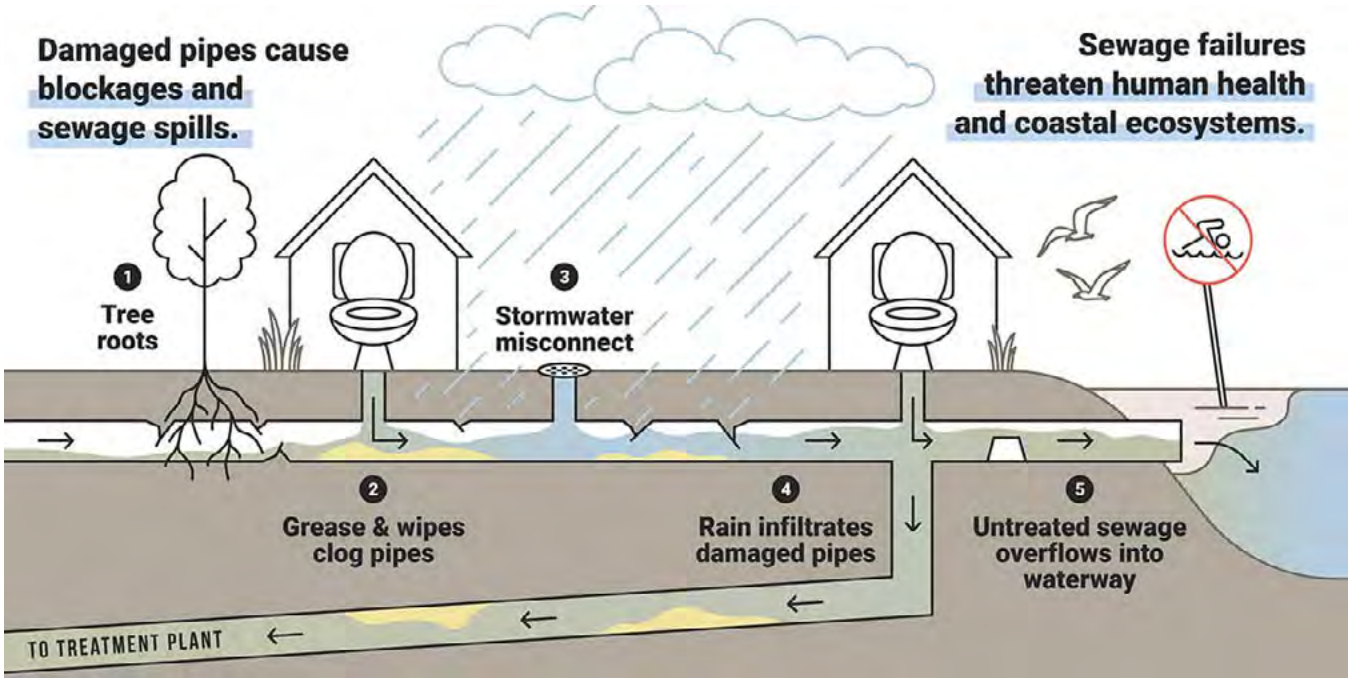
Despite the high value of clean beaches, coastal water quality is threatened by stormwater, urban and agricultural runoff, and sewage and industrial discharges. Nearly 10 trillion gallons of untreated stormwater runoff flows into U.S. waterways every year, carrying along with it a cocktail of pollutants including road dust, oil, animal waste, fertilizers and other chemicals. Years of neglect have also left America's wastewater infrastructure in disrepair, outdated and failing.

Sewage spills and failing wastewater infrastructure threaten coastal water quality by discharging raw and undertreated sewage into local waterways and the ocean. In fact, sewage spills and infrastructure failures release over 900 billion gallons of untreated sewage into surface waters every year!

Sewage can contain bacteria, viruses and parasites that make people sick with gastrointestinal symptoms, rashes, skin and eye infections, flu-like symptoms, and worse. Sewage and stormwater runoff also pollute waterways with excess nutrients that wreak havoc on coastal ecosystems by fueling harmful algal blooms that put human health at risk and result in fish kills and coral reef die-offs.

The growing threats from climate change on our coasts, including sea level rise and more frequent extreme weather events that generate massive amounts of stormwater, are going to result in even more water infrastructure failures in the future. Significant investments need to be made now to prepare our coastal communities to become more resilient and to better manage their water resources.

POORLY MAINTAINED SEWERS DISCHARGE UNTREATED SEWAGE INTO LOCAL WATERWAYS



Sewage spills and infrastructure failures release over 900 billion gallons of untreated sewage into surface waters every year.

SURFRIDER'S APPROACH

Everyone deserves access to clean water to surf, swim and play in. The Surfrider Foundation is taking a multi-tiered approach to tackle ocean pollution problems. We advocate for strong laws and sufficient funding to monitor and protect water quality. We ensure that people have access to the information they need to protect their health and the health of their families when recreating at the beach and in our coastal waterways. When we see information gaps in government testing programs that leave public health unprotected, we seek to meet those community needs with our Blue Water Task Force water quality monitoring program. Through a large network of volunteer-led chapters, we are building awareness of pollution problems and bringing together local stakeholders to protect clean water. Our Ocean Friendly Gardens program is educating communities and local officials on the actions that can be taken in our own yards and in our public spaces to reduce the amount of polluted runoff that flows into local waterways and out to the beach. When more collaborative approaches fail, the Surfrider Foundation can also look toward the courts to ensure proper enforcement of the Clean Water Act to protect clean water for all people.

In coastal states across the country, Surfrider Foundation advocates are building awareness of local water quality problems and bringing together diverse interests to find and fix the sources of pollution. For instance, in Florida, we are working to secure state funding for the Florida Healthy Beaches water quality testing program. We are also seeking to improve public notification practices used to inform beachgoers of elevated bacteria levels and sewage spills. In Hawai'i, our chapters are advocating for improvements to beach water quality monitoring and public notification programs to better protect safe coastal recreation. In addition, we are working with partners to protect coastal water quality by phasing out the use of cesspools across the state. Read more about our campaigns in Hawai'i and Florida.


Photo: Erik Kabik


Photo: Erik Kabik


Photo: Tahnei Roy

Along the U.S. and Mexico Border, the San Diego County Chapter is running a campaign to eliminate the flow of trash, chemicals and untreated sewage into the Pacific Ocean and onto San Diego County beaches. The situation is so dire that beaches adjacent to the Tijuana River Valley were closed for nearly 300 days in 2020 to protect the public from exposure to these pollutants! The San Diego County Chapter is working hard to raise community awareness and build the political will necessary to solve the border region's sewage infrastructure problems through their **Clean Border Water Now** campaign. Their goal is to restore coastal water quality conditions regionally so local families can once again enjoy recreating at the beach without having to worry about getting sick. This is what is driving Surfrider's efforts to protect water quality across the nation. We want to ensure that the beach and ocean are clean and safe for all people to enjoy for generations to come.

We want to ensure that the beach and ocean are clean and safe for all people to enjoy for generations to come.

FEDERAL NEEDS

Despite the dramatic threats that stormwater and sewage pollution place on public health and coastal communities, governments at all levels have failed to fully accept the responsibility to properly maintain our wastewater infrastructure that lies mostly beneath the ground and out of sight. Our nation relies on properly functioning wastewater infrastructure, yet failure to adequately maintain these systems has led to a backlog of roughly $271 billion worth of necessary infrastructure upgrades. This estimate doesn't even consider the threats coastal infrastructure faces from rising sea levels and exacerbated storm events associated with climate change.

Programs, such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), were developed to assist states and local communities with meeting wastewater infrastructure needs, including green infrastructure projects to capture and manage stormwater. However, the Clean Water SRF has not been adequately funded for decades, despite their well-established economic returns and stimulus. Every dollar in water infrastructure investment results in $2.40 of economic returns, and 15-33 jobs are created with every $1 million dollars spent.

Similarly, the water quality monitoring and public notification programs run by coastal states to protect public health at the beach have long been resource-restricted. Despite an authorized level of $30 million, funding for the EPA's BEACH Act Grants program that provides assistance to coastal states for their beach programs has hovered just below $10 million since the Surfrider Foundation helped pass the BEACH Act back in 2000. For the last nine consecutive years, the federal administration has proposed to eliminate funding for this critical public health program completely. Every year, Surfrider advocates across the country reach out to their representatives in Congress to communicate the importance of adequate beach water quality monitoring programs to protect public health at the beach. Congress has responded favorably thus far, and appropriated nearly level program funding for the BEACH Act each year. This has kept the beach monitoring programs in approximately 35 coastal states and territories in operation, but the managing agencies are forced to prioritize which beaches to monitor. They also have to limit beach seasons and sampling frequency to stretch their federal grant dollars as far as possible.

The American public deserves enjoyable and worry-free beach days. The Surfrider Foundation and our coalition partners nationwide continue to call on Congress to support critical beach water quality monitoring and public notification programs through the EPA's BEACH Act Grants program. We also urge Congress to make significant investments through the Clean Water SRF program to repair, upgrade and ensure climate resiliency for America's failing water infrastructure. These federal investments will allow states to conduct essential upgrades to their wastewater infrastructure to improve water quality conditions and will provide families with the information they need to stay safe at the beach. These federal dollars will also create jobs and protect our valuable coastal tourism-based economies. Learn how you can join us in these efforts here.

Our Programs

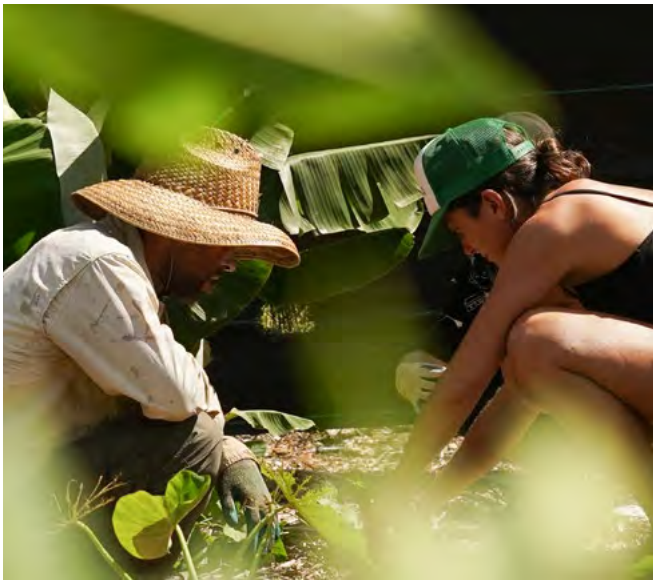
This 2020 Clean Water Report tracks the progress of the Surfrider Foundation's Blue Water Task Force and Ocean Friendly Gardens programs. It also shares case studies demonstrating how Surfrider chapters apply these programs to protect public health, identify water quality concerns and bring together local communities to implement lasting solutions.

The Surfrider Foundation is taking a multi-tiered approach to tackle ocean pollution problems.

BLUE WATER TASK FORCE

The Blue Water Task Force is Surfrider's volunteer water quality monitoring program that provides critical information to protect public health at the beach. Surfrider chapters use this program to raise awareness of local pollution problems and bring together communities to implement solutions.

bwtf.surfrider.org



OCEAN FRIENDLY GARDENS

Ocean Friendly Gardens is Surfrider's sustainable landscaping and education program that provides beautiful, inexpensive and natural solutions to water pollution caused by urban runoff. Chapters use this program to connect how we care for our yards and public spaces with the resulting health of our local waterways and beaches.

ofg.surfrider.org

Blue Water Task Force

Since the inception of the Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) program more than 25 years ago, Surfrider volunteers have been out in their communities testing water quality at the beach. Now, as a large national network with over 50 chapter-led labs, the BWTF is measuring bacteria levels at more than 500 ocean, bay, estuary and freshwater sampling sites across the country. Most chapter water testing programs are designed to fill in the gaps and extend the coverage of state and local agency beach programs. Surfrider volunteers are testing beaches that are not covered by agencies and are also monitoring potential sources of pollution, such as stormwater outlets, rivers and creeks, that discharge onto the beach. The BWTF is in operation year round, providing public health protection through the off-season when lifeguards leave the beach and health officials stop collecting water samples. This collaborative approach to extend public health protection at the beach is described at the end of this report in a case study featuring Washington state BWTF programs and their positive working relationships with state and local agencies.

In addition, the Blue Water Task Force is cultivating the next generation of coastal defenders. Students help to collect and process water samples for more than half of our BWTF programs nationwide and gain valuable field and laboratory experience along the way. Many former students go on to pursue careers in conservation and environmental science fields.

All BWTF test results are compared to state water quality standards set to protect public health in recreational waters and are posted on Surfrider's website. Chapters also share their water quality data through social media, email and community presentations to provide beachgoers with the information that they need to know where it's safe to surf, swim and play in the water.

With over 50 chapter-led labs, the BWTF is measuring bacteria levels at more than 500 ocean, bay, estuary and freshwater sampling sites across the country.

Photo: Cali Brennan

When our BWTF results demonstrate long-term or seasonal trends of elevated bacteria levels, our chapters apply their data to build community awareness and motivate local decision-makers to take action and fix the sources of pollution. For example, the BWTF program in Newport, Oregon has been successful in forming positive working relationships with other community groups and government agencies to raise awareness of local pollution problems. With persistence, Surfrider volunteers have successfully advocated for pollution source investigations, along with sewage and stormwater infrastructure improvement projects, that have resulted in improved water quality conditions at the beach. Learn more about how the Newport BWTF program is engaging community partners and inspiring local youth to care for our coasts in this short film.

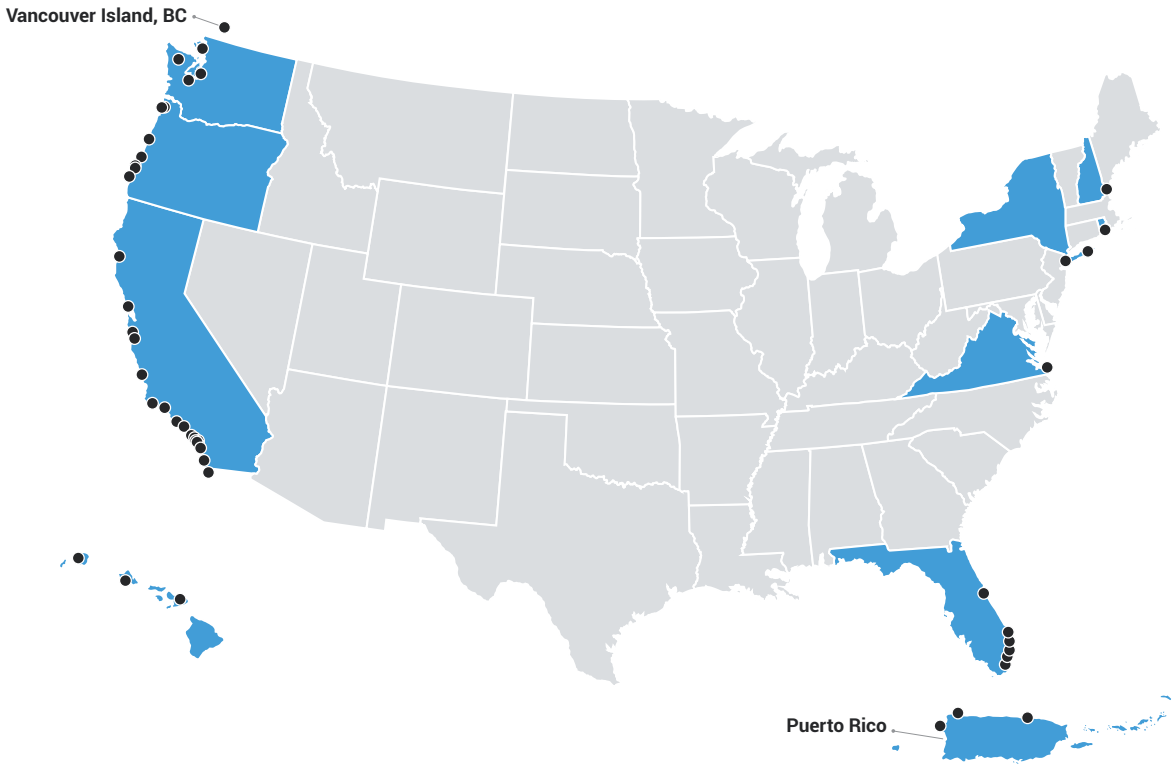
The Eastern Long Island Chapter and their community partners in New York have also applied their water quality data to inform pollution source tracking studies and prioritize placement of solutions. Many chapters in Puerto Rico, Washington, California and Hawai'i are working hard to build community awareness of pollution problems so they can see similar results. In South Florida, the chapters' BWTF programs have been busy measuring the impact of the frequent sewage spills that plague the region. They are also sharing their data to inform their communities of potential risks of recreating in waters that are polluted with sewage. In addition, they are appealing to local authorities to do a better job of warning the public of these health threats. Read more about the impressive community response to a massive sewage spill in Fort Lauderdale that the Broward County Chapter led in the early months of 2020 in the case study at the end of this report.

While it can take multiple years, even a decade, from the first discovery of new pollution concerns until enough political will is generated to drive solutions, the Surfrider Foundation is in it for the long-haul. Blue Water Task Force volunteers are not only committed to measuring water quality conditions at the beaches they love, but also to rallying their communities around protecting clean water for future generations.

To best protect yourself and your family's health, always check local water quality conditions before you head to the beach. All of Surfrider's water test results are available on the BWTF website or you can access your local agency beach advisories at Beachapedia.org.

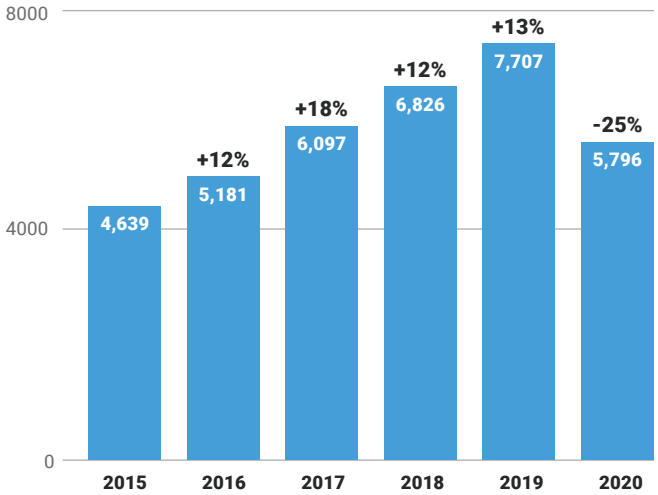
2020 Program Activity and Results

BLUE WATER TASK FORCE WATER TESTING LAB LOCATIONS



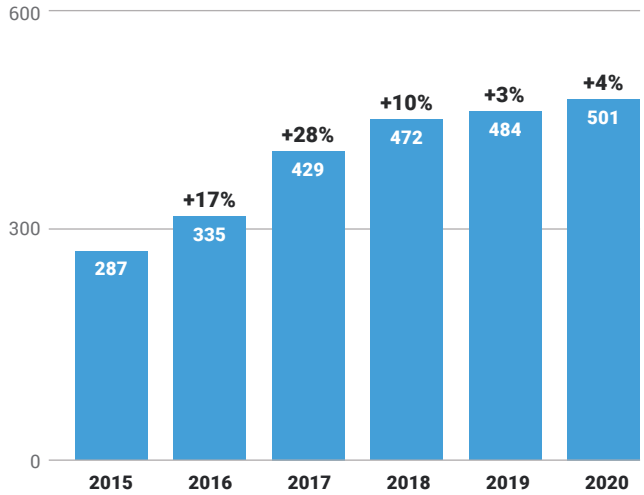
ANNUAL GROWTH IN WATER TESTING

Number of Tests

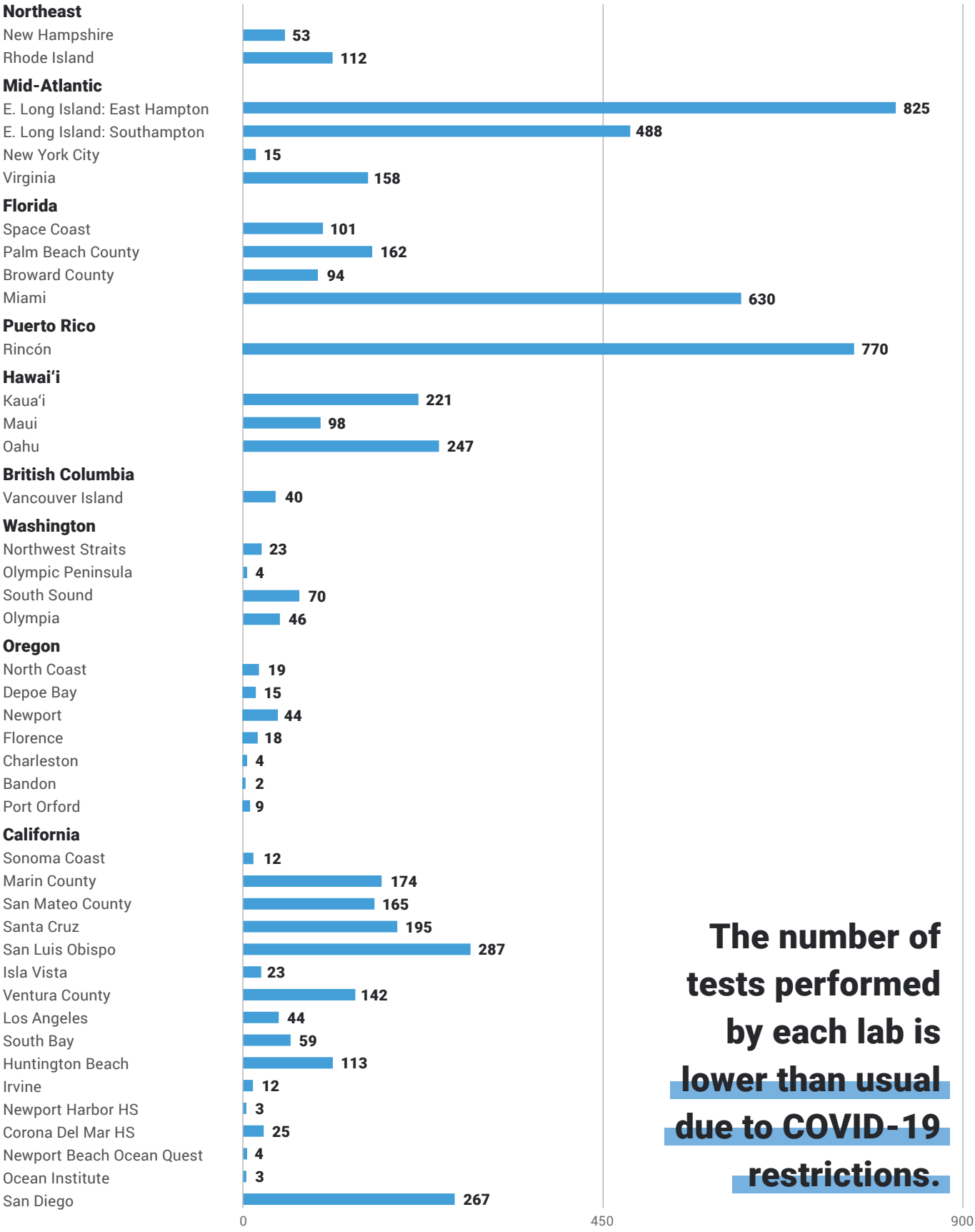


ANNUAL GROWTH IN WATER TESTING

Number of Beaches



WATER TESTS PERFORMED BY THE BLUE WATER TASK FORCE IN 2020 (5,796 total)



The number of tests performed by each lab is lower than usual due to COVID-19 restrictions.

During 2020, 51 BWTF labs processed 5,796 water samples collected from 501 distinct sampling sites. While the Blue Water Task Force collected fewer samples in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program expanded by covering more beaches. The above figures show how many water tests were performed by each chapter, which vary depending on the number of beaches monitored, sampling frequency and how significantly the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted each chapter's program.

While the Blue Water Task Force collected fewer samples in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program expanded by covering more beaches.

484
Water Sampling Sites in 2019

501
Water Sampling Sites in 2020

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

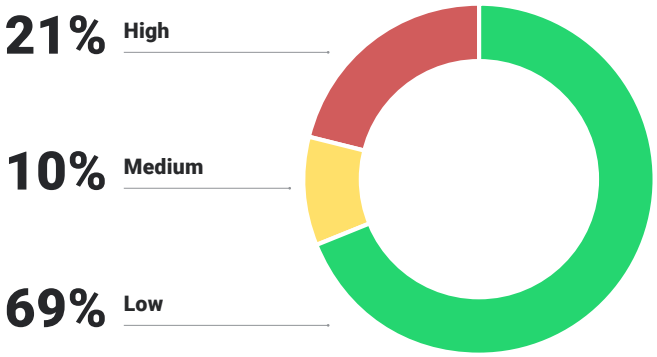
On March 16th, the Surfrider Foundation paused all in-person activities in order to meet CDC recommendations to reduce the risks of community spread of COVID-19. During this pause in programming, Surfrider's team of experts put together safety protocols to protect the health and safety of our volunteers and staff. Because beach use was increasing dramatically during the pandemic, many chapters were eager to continue providing water quality information to their communities. With strict physical distancing and safety protocols in place, BWTF labs were able to re-open in phases starting in June of last year.

The new safety protocols were relatively easy for Surfrider volunteers to adapt to as we already follow sterile sampling and lab techniques required by the BWTF standard operating procedures. However, as many chapters use lab space hosted by other organizations, such as public high school science classes, university research labs, and public aquariums, some chapters lost access to their lab space during the pandemic. As these public places were closed to the public for most of 2020, many chapters needed to find alternative lab space that was accessible to their volunteers. This proved to be a real challenge for many.

However, by the end of the year, chapters were able to restart 34 out of the initial 51 BWTF labs that we started the year with. As of April 2021, 40 BWTF labs have started testing again, leaving less than ten programs still waiting to regain access to their lab space in schools and other public institutions.

Despite the challenges of 2020, five new BWTF labs were established. The Virginia Chapter relaunched their lab in partnership with the Virginia Aquarium after a brief hiatus during 2019. In Florida, the Miami Chapter opened a second lab in partnership with University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, allowing the chapter to sample areas around Key Biscayne. The Palm Beach County Chapter opened a new lab at Boca Raton High School to sample more beaches in South Palm Beach County. In Puerto Rico, the Rincón Chapter partnered with Arrecife Isla Verde to start a new lab and monitor the impacts of stormwater on the Caribbean's first urban Marine Reserve. In California, the San Diego County Chapter opened a new lab at Reef in Carlsbad to sample more beaches in North San Diego County.

BACTERIA LEVELS MEASURED BY THE BWTF IN 2020



Nearly 10 trillion gallons of untreated stormwater runoff flows into U.S. waterways every year.

The collective results from all the participating BWTF labs have remained relatively constant since we began compiling data in an annual report in 2011. Of the 5,796 water test results reported in 2020, 69% indicated low bacteria levels, 10% indicated medium bacteria levels, and 21% measured high bacteria levels that exceed water quality criteria, or Beach Action Values, set by each state to protect public health in recreational waters. To view each state's Beach Action Values, visit Surfrider's Beachapedia article, Beach Water Quality Monitoring Programs in Coastal States.

The majority of the water samples that failed to meet health standards were collected from freshwater sources, such as rivers, creeks and marshes, which are influenced by stormwater runoff, or at beaches near these outlets. These results are consistent with national trends, which show that stormwater runoff is the number one cause of beach closures and swimming advisories in the United States. Keep reading to learn how Surfrider chapters are using the Ocean Friendly Gardens program to address this source of pollution in their local communities.

Ocean Friendly Gardens

Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Gardens (OFG) program offers simple and beautiful solutions to the water quality problems created by stormwater and urban runoff. By using native plants, building healthy soils naturally, and carefully shaping landscapes to slow down and retain rainwater, OFGs transform landscapes and hardscapes to reduce urban runoff, filter out pollutants, conserve water and create wildlife habitat. In addition, Ocean Friendly Gardens absorb carbon from the air and store it in the soil, which can help to reduce the impacts of climate change. Learn more about the benefits of Ocean Friendly Gardens at Surfrider.org.

Your yard is a mini-watershed that can protect clean water through CPR.

The OFG program takes a watershed approach to protect local water supplies and prevent pollution from reaching the ocean. Whether you live inland or at the beach, your yard is a mini-watershed that can protect clean water through CPR (Conservation, Permeability and Retention). We all live upstream from the ocean!

CONSERVATION

Reducing outdoor water demand and providing wildlife habitat with native and climate-appropriate plants.

PERMEABILITY

Building healthy, living soil with compost and mulch to sponge up water and filter out pollutants.

RETENTION

Storing rainwater in the landscape to rehydrate watersheds and reduce local flooding concerns.

2020 Program Activity

Each chapter designs and implements their OFG program to meet local needs and leverage available resources.

Surfrider chapters are educating people about water quality problems created by urban runoff and conventional landscaping practices. They are also promoting sustainable gardening and lawn care practices in their communities. Each chapter designs and implements their OFG program to meet local needs and leverage available resources. As the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited our ability to conduct in-person events in 2020, most chapters shared resources online and conducted virtual trainings on how to apply CPR to our yards using the watershed approach.

The Miami Chapter in Florida scored a clean water victory last year when the City of Miami Beach adopted new fertilizer restrictions. Read the following case study to learn how the past 10 years of advocacy and outreach also paid off for the Long Beach Chapter in California last year, as a city-run program made real headway transforming yards in economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods into Ocean Friendly Gardens.

TALKS AND TABLING

Chapter volunteers present to community groups and schools on the impacts of traditional landscaping and the benefits of OFG. Chapters also partner with landscape professionals, government agencies, and other like-minded nonprofits to teach classes that provide greater detail and instruction.

WORKDAYS

Chapters host workdays to transform yards into Ocean Friendly Gardens and to spark change in neighborhoods. Workdays are also a great training opportunity for do-it-yourselfers and landscape professionals to incorporate OFG principles into their business practices.

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

During Lawn Patrol neighborhood walks, participants start at an existing OFG to review the principles and practices implemented. Then they walk the neighborhood to assess additional properties and identify both successful and problematic landscape features.

POLICY CHANGE

Chapters advocate for OFG principles, such as limits on landscaping chemicals, to be incorporated into local ordinances. Surfrider also advocates for water supply and water quality management agencies to take a more holistic approach toward water management.

CASE STUDY

Long Beach, CA

Transforming neighborhoods with Ocean Friendly Gardens.

While the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited the ability of Surfrider chapters to host in-person Ocean Friendly Gardens events, the groundwork that the Long Beach Chapter has established over the past decade turned 2020 into one of its most successful years yet.

The Long Beach Chapter's Ocean Friendly Gardens (OFG) program has been led by a landscape professional, Kai Craig, whose business California Eco Design follows a watershed-wise approach to turn their clients' yards into beautiful, functioning ecosystems. Kai applies the experience he has gained from running his business, as well as past experiences working with Los Angeles watershed protection and biodiversity projects, to educate the Long Beach Chapter and their community on how they can turn their water guzzling lawns into Ocean Friendly Gardens. The Long Beach chapter provides OFG information to their community at their tabling events and Kai shares his expertise to advise interested homeowners on how to convert their own lawns.

Kai also gives presentations to community groups, such as local garden clubs, on the benefits of Ocean Friendly Gardens and how to incorporate the watershed approach into garden design and care. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, he also gave talks on how to capture stormwater in residential landscaping at the big annual Long Beach water festival.

Kai has been an effective spokesman for the Ocean Friendly Gardens program by participating in several Long Beach City planning efforts. He also advocates for changes to policies and programs aimed initially at water conservation and drought resiliency to better address stormwater runoff and water quality protection. For instance, largely in response to the OFG guidance that Kai has provided, the Long Beach Lawn to Garden program has evolved over the past 10 years to not only offer financial incentives to city residents to swap out their water guzzling turf grass for drought-resistant plants, but the program now emphasizes and rewards efforts to install stormwater retention features, native plants that create wildlife habitat, and the use of mulch and other natural materials. These are all core foundations of the Ocean Friendly Gardens program!

While the Lawn to Garden program has helped transform some neighborhoods into more water-wise landscapes, it has been a challenge to effect real change in lower-income neighborhoods. To address this environmental justice issue, the Long Beach Water Department created the **Direct Install Program** (DIG) to better serve residents in low-income neighborhoods that are affected by pollution. With funding provided by California Coastal Conservancy and labor provided by the Conservation Corps, this program allows qualifying homeowners to select from six different garden designs to be installed in their yards, free of charge. Kai designed the garden templates to meet Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Gardens criteria and the DIG program's goals of reducing runoff, conserving water and creating wildlife habitat. DIG also emphasizes the climate change benefits of native plants and healthy, biologically active soils in capturing and storing carbon dioxide in the soil. While the roll-out of this program was slow due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, six gardens have been installed in North Long Beach. The program partners hope to complete 25 in total.

Meanwhile, the Long Beach Chapter's OFG program continues to adjust to a new normal under the pandemic to virtually advise homeowners on how to transform their yards into Ocean Friendly Gardens and how to post signs where OFG criteria have been met. They are also looking forward to holding in-person events again once health and safety restrictions are lifted, in addition to hosting an Ocean Friendly Gardens tour and developing new opportunities for volunteers to participate in the program. Ultimately, their goal is to educate their community on how everyone can take steps in their own yard to help reduce the amount of pollution that flows downstream to the beach where we all love to play.

CASE STUDY

Fort Lauderdale, FL

The Broward County Chapter rallies to protect public health during Florida's largest sewage spill.

Sewage pollution in U.S. coastal waters is an unfortunate truth. In Florida, the situation is dire. The **state's wastewater infrastructure is failing** due to old age, poor maintenance, increased populations and rising sea levels in already low-lying communities. As a result, more than **1.6 billion gallons of sewage** have spilled into communities and waterways across the state over the last five years. Untreated sewage not only contains pathogens that put human health at risk, but these discharges also contribute high levels of nutrients to already stressed bodies of water. This leads to water quality conditions that result in toxic algae blooms, fish kills and coral reef die-offs.

For years, Surfrider's chapter network in Florida has been responding to these sewage spills and providing water quality information so beachgoers know where it's safe to surf, swim and recreate in the water. **In some cases,** they are even able to respond faster than the local health department.

In 2018, the **Broward County Chapter** started a small **Blue Water Task Force** (BWTF) water quality monitoring program. They began by testing at two locations, including Hollywood Beach and Pompano Beach, on a monthly basis. For the most part, water quality results were fair with occasional peaks of high bacteria after heavy rain events.

Then, during the winter months of 2019 and 2020, a series of massive sewage spills dumped more than 211 million gallons of raw, untreated sewage into the coastal waters and watersheds of Fort Lauderdale. Collectively, these infrastructure failures resulted in the **largest sewage spill in Florida's history**, releasing more sewage than the amount of oil spilled during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster!

Concerned by the lack of information about which specific coastal waters were affected by the spills, the Broward Chapter BWTF Coordinator, Mike Scully, reached out to several community groups and resource users, such as a stand-up paddle crew, to determine where public health might be most at risk. Within weeks, the Broward Chapter rallied a team of new volunteers from various coastal recreational groups to start weekly testing of nearly a dozen new sites within the intracoastal waterway.

The Surfrider chapter's testing perfectly complemented the **Florida Healthy Beaches Program** run by the Department of Health, which provides water quality testing of ocean beaches and limited intracoastal sites. In fact, the chapter's BWTF results identified several public access sites within the intracoastal waterway that yielded bacteria results that were 10 times higher than the state health standard, but were not previously tested or posted with sewage warning signs. This information was extremely important to share to inform safe recreation and to protect public health during these sewage spill events. Read more about this extraordinary community effort on **Surfrider's Coastal Blog**.

Armed with their Blue Water Task Force data, the chapter also began regularly communicating with local elected officials in Ft. Lauderdale to ask the city to start testing more sites where residents and visitors swim, kayak, paddle and surf. Their activism resulted in a **campaign win** when the City of Fort Lauderdale allocated $100,000 for independent water testing at ten recreational sites in the intracoastal waterway and the New River and Middle River a bit further upstream. The **Miami Waterkeeper** has been contracted to sample these sites on a weekly basis and the chapter has now transitioned their efforts into testing seven ocean beaches between Hollywood Beach and Deerfield Beach. Test results from the sampling conducted by both NGOs and the Florida Healthy Beaches Program can be found on the **Swim Guide**. All of this coordinated sampling continues to be important as sewage spills in the area unfortunately **continue in 2021**.

In addition to mobilizing our grassroots network when sewage spills occur, one of Surfrider's advocacy goals every year is to secure state funding for the Florida Healthy Beaches Program. More program support is needed so there is additional information available across the state to protect public health at the beach and identify areas that are affected by sewage spills and other sources of pollution. At the federal level, the Surfrider Foundation is calling on Congress to make significant investments in fixing and upgrading America's sewage infrastructure through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Through this program, the Environmental Protection Agency provides grants to states, including Florida, to improve their outdated wastewater infrastructure and prevent future sewage spills.

Join us in **Stopping Sewage Pollution** today!

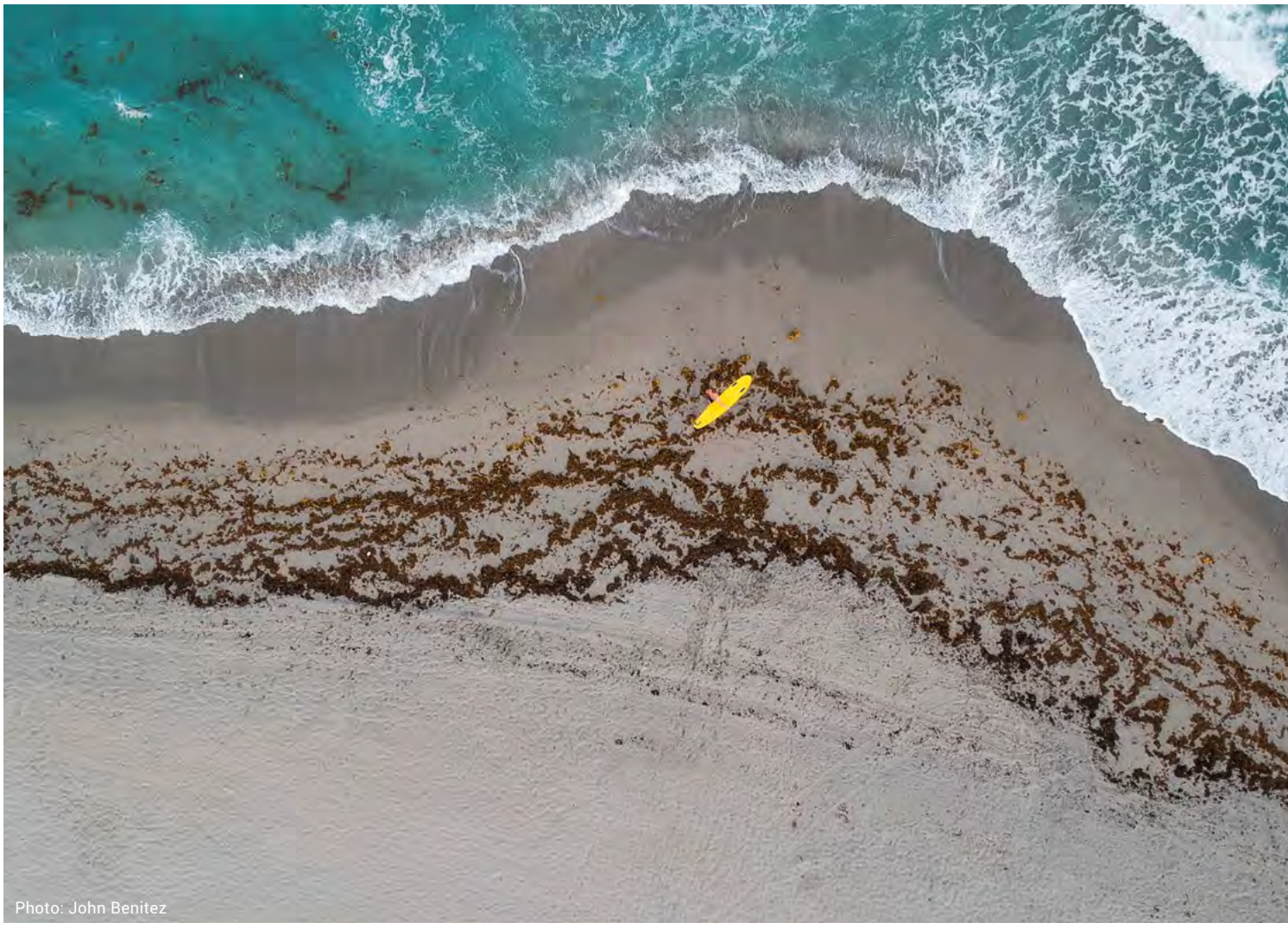


Photo: John Benitez

CASE STUDY

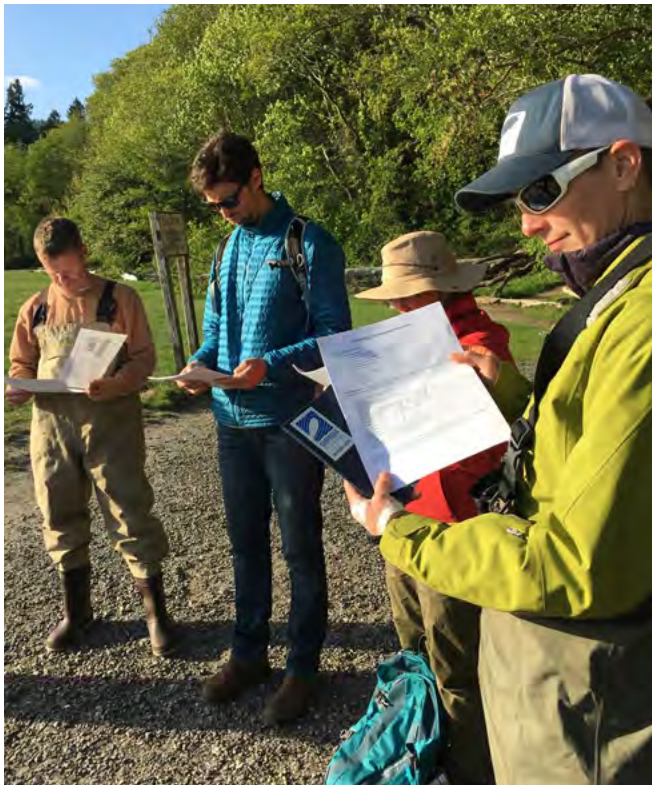
Washington State

Agencies and volunteers work together to protect public health at the beach.

Surfrider's Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) volunteers commit so much of their personal time to collecting water samples because they love the beach and want to know that recreating in the water will not put their health or their families' health at risk. Most chapter BWTF programs set up their sampling schedules to complement and extend the coverage of agency-run beach water testing programs to provide water quality information at more beaches than agencies can cover on their own. Chapters often test during the cooler, off-season months, or they collect samples from beaches that are not tested. They also sample freshwater sources, such as streams and stormwater discharges, that flow across the beach and empty into the ocean.

The Surfrider chapters in Washington state enjoy more of a collaborative relationship with their state and county beach programs than most. In Washington, the State Department of Ecology works closely with both local health agencies and citizen groups to provide more health coverage at the beach. Julianne Ruffner, manager of Ecology's Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication, and Health program, explains on their website, "Involving citizen science volunteers is vital to our monitoring program, especially in smaller communities. Ecology's citizen science volunteers collect data and potentially identify pollution issues in areas that may otherwise go unassessed."

Watch this great **short video** featuring Liz Schotman, formerly a BWTF volunteer with the Olympia Surfrider Chapter and now Surfrider's Washington Regional Manager, explaining this collaboration. She also speaks to why water testing programs are important to her personally and states, "I'm a big free diver, and so to me being able to go under the water safely and not having to worry about getting sick from it is super important."



Surfrider volunteers from the **Olympic Peninsula**, **Northwest Straits**, and **Olympia chapters** participate directly in their state and county-run beach programs. The agencies provide the volunteers with the equipment and training needed to collect samples. Volunteers' collect samples from beaches that are important to the community for recreation, but where the agencies don't have sufficient staff to monitor on a regular basis themselves. The volunteers sample their assigned beaches on a weekly basis throughout the summer season, from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Then they bring those samples to the state lab for processing.

Additionally, the long-established BWTF programs run by the Northwest Straits Chapter in Bellingham and the **South Sound Chapter** in Tacoma are testing their local beaches through the colder months, from September through May, to extend public health protection at the beach beyond the state's seasonal program. Both chapters have established strong working relationships with the state and county beach staff and have met in the field to align sampling locations and methods. This coordination ensures as much consistency as possible between the agency-run summer testing programs and Surfrider's off-season Blue Water Task Force testing. The chapters do a great job of sharing their results with their county health departments to improve public notification of pollution issues, prioritize sampling locations, and inform collaborative source tracking studies.

In Tacoma, the South Sound Chapter has even posted permanent signs at eight sampling locations within the Metro Parks system that direct visitors to where Surfrider's water quality results can be viewed online. This type of agency support and appreciation for a volunteer-run water quality monitoring program is really unique and something we'd like to see more of throughout Surfrider's national network. The South Sound Chapter certainly values the positive relationships and support offered by their partners at Metro Parks Tacoma, the Washington Department of Ecology and the Tacoma Public Schools Science and Math Institute, where all their samples are processed.

To view advisories and closures before you hit the beach in Washington, visit the **Washington State Coastal Atlas**. To see where Surfrider is testing and to view our results, visit the **BWTF website**. Finally, for more information on the programs and campaigns run by the Surfrider Foundation in Washington, please visit **Washington.surfrider.org**.

Photo: Morgan Maassen