VENTURA BLUE WATER TASK FORCE

2025-26 Water Quality Monitoring Annual Report

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) is Surfrider Foundation's volunteer water quality monitoring program that provides critical water quality information to protect public health at local beaches.

Water quality samples are tested for the presence of enterococcus, a fecal indicator bacteria that indicates the presence of human or animal waste, which may cause waterborne illness from contact with affected water.

Elevated levels of enterococcus increase the likelihood that other pathogens such as E. coli and Fecal Coliform in addition to viruses that can make people sick may be present in ocean water https://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/environmental-health/recreational-water-illness/

The goal of BWTF is to fill in Ventura County's Environmental Health Division monitoring gaps and communicate with the public in a timely way where it is safe to enter the water, and where bacteria levels are elevated.

Blue Water Task Force water quality results are compared to the State of California Ocean Water Quality Bacteriological Standards set by the California State Water Resources Control Board to issue Bacteriological Contamination Warnings. Specifically, values greater than 104 colony forming units of enterococcus per 100mL sample (>104 MPN cfu/100 mL) are considered high results.

Beachgoers should avoid contact with ocean water after rain events for 72 hours and observe warning advisory signs posted at beaches in dry or wet weather. Contact with ocean water should be avoided for a minimum of 50 yards on either side of each sign posted for warnings for high bacteria levels. Water quality data can be accessed at bwtf.surfrider.org from our weekly email and postings at surfridervc on Instagram and Ventura County Chapter Surfrider Foundation on Facebook.

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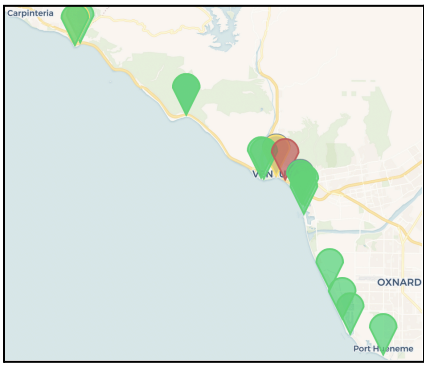
WHERE WE SAMPLE



In 2025-26, Ventura Chapter volunteers collected samples from sites along the Ventura County coastline during our wet weather season.
We collected water samples from beaches, harbors, culverts and drains on a weekly basis November through March. We processed the samples at our labs in Ventura to supplement the reduced sampling done Ventura County Resource Resource Management Division during the winter. BWTF collects samples on Thursday mornings and publishes results on Fridays afternoons. Our community can make informed decisions about which of their favorite beaches they may want to avoid over the weekend that may have bacteria counts that exceed the state standards for safe water entry.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the percentage of samples that exceeded state health standards at 20 sampling sites in 2025-26. At Mondos Drain and the Ventura Rivermouth, 56% and 50% of samples, respectively, failed to meet state standards (**Table 1**). Mondos Drain is one outlet to the ocean from our hillsides that may contain stormwater runoff or discharges from oil and agricultural operations.

The Ventura Rivermouth has two outlets at the ocean surf, one at the estuarial lagoon nearest Surfers' Point and then slightly north of the estuarial lagoon. While the Ventura River has been designated an impaired waterway by the State of California Regional Water Quality Board per the federal Clean Water Act section 303 (d) since 1998, and is monitored by the city of Ventura, the County of Ventura and the LA Regional Water Quality Board to meet water quality standards, high bacterial counts still indicate the presence of bacterial pollution in the Ventura River where it flows southward into the ocean near Surfers' Point which may cause waterborne illness in ocean goers.

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Potential sources of pollution include commercial agricultural or ranching (fertilizer or animal waste runoff), industrial effluent, leaking septic systems, sewer line failures, human waste from outdoor living sites, coastal birds, and domestic or wild animal waste, dredging and the resuspension of deposited bacteria. The data is important in identifying chronically polluted sites that should continue to be prioritized for public health and safety. Ocean visitors and the general public should be aware of areas with high bacterial counts and avoid contact with ocean water at these sites when high bacteria counts indicate the risk of contracting waterborne illness.

SITE NAME	TOTAL SAMPLES	%HIGH BACTERIA >104MPN/100ML
Mondos Drain	**18**	**56%**
Ventura Rivermouth	**18**	**50%**
Sanjon Rd (Ocean)	16	19%
C Street (Ocean)	17	18%
Marina Park: Playground (Ocean)	18	17%
Port Hueneme Beach Pier	17	12%
Mondos Cove	18	11%
Leo Robbins Sailing Center	18	11%
Rincon Cove	17	6%
Surfers Point: Dunes	17	6%
Oxnard Beach: Outrigger Way	17	6%
Hollywood Beach: La Crescenta Street	17	6%
Pierpont: Weymouth Lane	18	0%
Ventura Harbor Cove	18	0%
Silver Strand: San Nicholas Avenue	18	0%

Table 1. Percent of samples at each site that failed to meet state health standards of 104 MPN cfu/100 mL from November 2025 through March of 2026.

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RESULTS for creeks and drains that run to the ocean

SITE NAME	TOTAL SAMPLES	%HIGH BACTERIA >104MPN/100ML
Rincon Creek*	8	63%
C Street Drain*	8	50%
San Jon Drain*	7	86%
Rincon Point Beach*	7	14%
Weymouth Drain*	1	100%

* Caution: Spot tested sites, typically after heavy rains, resulting in small sample sizes that do not qualify for season-long analysis.

Table 1. Percent of samples at each site that failed to meet state health standards of 104 MPN cfu /100 mL in 2025-26.

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PRIORITY SITE - MONDOS DRAIN

Mondos Drain recorded the most weekly high bacteria readings of all survey sites. 56% of samples in 2025-26 failed to meet state health standards, compared to 50% in 2024-25, and 69% in 2023-24. The Ventura County Environment Health Division maintains a permanent advisory sign above the drain due to the chronic bacteria pollution in the drain. The bacteria seems to dilute, however, depending on site conditions and wave heights when it reaches the surf most of the time during our sampling period.

In November 2025, Ventura BWTF received multiple reports of a yellow-green clotted substance in the stream above the drain and in the drain flowing to the ocean. In February 2026, a nose-burning chemical odor flowing into the creek and out to the ocean via the drain was reported to us and verified in our lab. These incidents were documented via photo and video by concerned surfers and BWTF water samplers.

We notified the Environmental Health Division ocean water division, who investigated the drain, and then notified the County's hazardous substance review team. The hazardous substance team did not find evidence for our reports for the possible presence of an unknown chemical. We also alerted VC Farm Bureau (VCAILG) who reviewed their records to ensure the most adjacent agricultural land owner was enrolled in their educational program.

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Board also investigated the water quality in the drain and could not find evidence that the discharge was related to agricultural runoff.

56%

of Mondos Drain samples had unsafe bacteria levels detected in 2025-26.

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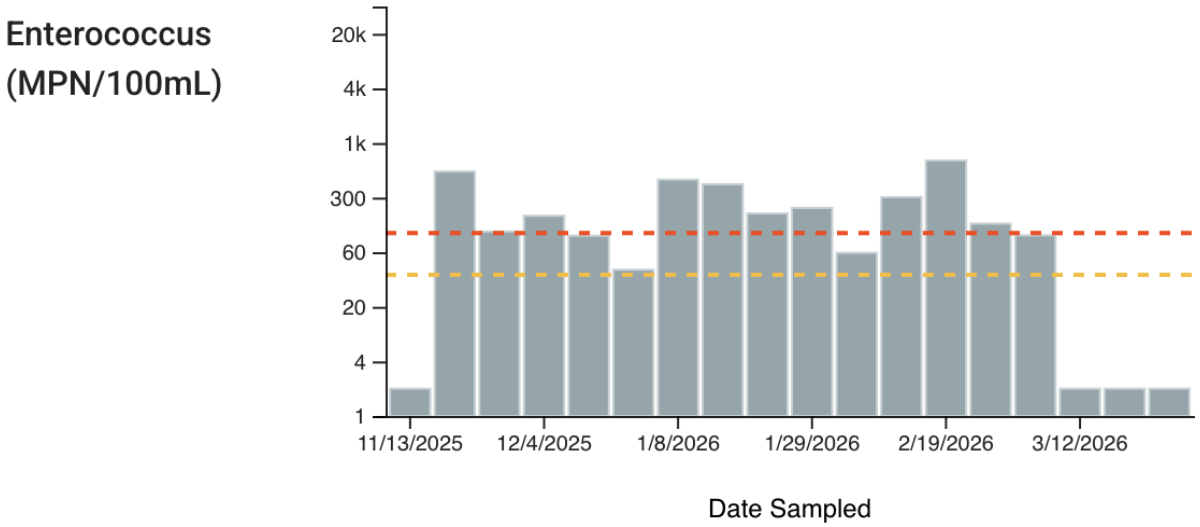
A formal investigation was launched with a site inspection by a LARWQB case manager on March 5, 2026.

Coincidentally, the week following LARWQB inspection Mondos Drain showed a precipitous drop in bacterial levels and has remained low since, though traces of chemical odor persist.

Mondos Drain - Detailed Results



Going forward, LARWQB requested California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) investigate the chemical discharges. Further, Ventura BWTF hired an independent commercial lab operator for chemical testing to identify the substance when we are able to capture a sample with a high concentration of the unknown chemical. We continue to monitor the drain during the week so we can sample any unknown chemical that may be discharged into the watershed and into Mondos Drain.

Additionally, partners at Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG) initiated a Public Records Request for the Conditional Use Permit that applies to Culvert #22 and Mondos Drain to discover the permit holder(s), when it was filed, and provide research of the Resources Code for what policies may apply.

The investigation of this chronically polluted drain is ongoing and should continue to be prioritized for public health and safety.

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PRIORITY SITE - VENTURA RIVERMOUTH

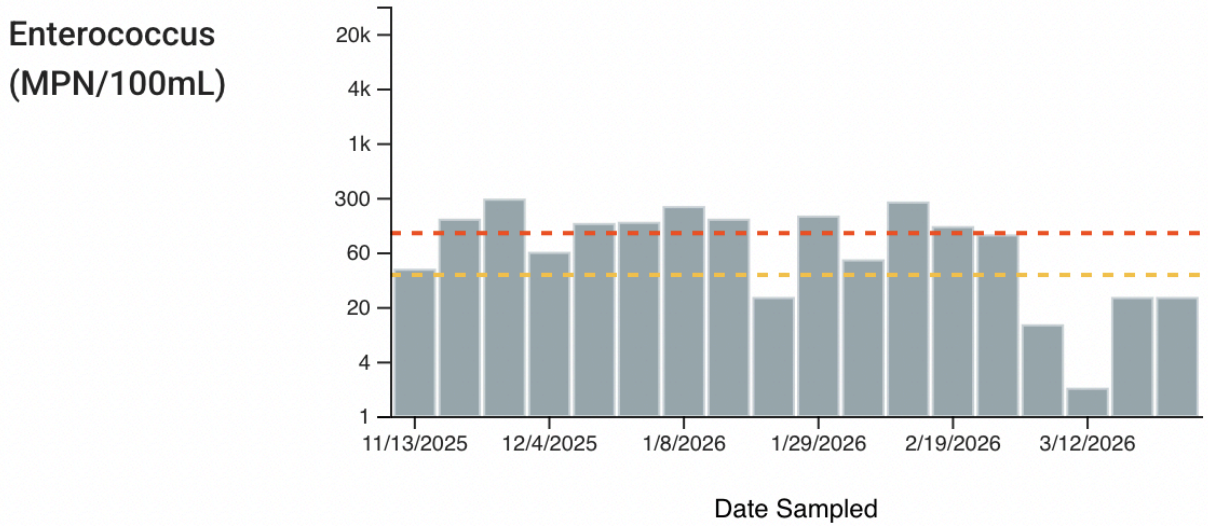
50% of weekly samples taken in 2025-26 from the surf at Ventura Rivermouth failed to meet state health standards, which is more than double the previous two seasons (22% both seasons).

50%

of Ventura Rivermouth samples had unsafe bacteria levels detected in 2025-26.

Upstream commercial horse ranching operations, agricultural runoff, legacy oil drilling and refining, treated wastewater effluent, human waste from outdoor living populations, and domestic or wild animal waste could all play a part in this chronically polluted site.

Ventura Rivermouth - Detailed Results



In 2008, LARWQB added a Ventura River Estuary Trash Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to establish time schedule orders to improve water quality in this segment of the watershed. In 2025, BWTF submitted reports for the 2012 TMDL for consideration by the LA Regional Water Quality Board for new pollution thresholds under review.

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In Summer 2025, Ventura BWTF Program began a preliminary investigative study for harmful algae blooms (HABs) within the lower areas of the Ventura River. State laboratory analysis of algal samples taken during a July 7, 2025, event response showed the presence of cyanobacterias and neurotoxin-producing genes at one recreational site at Big Rock Preserve owned by Ventura Land Trust, who were informed of the state lab result. BWTF posted advisory signs per protocol from the SWAMP standard operating procedures for two weeks.

https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/resources/response-guidance.html

Now, in summer 2026, a formal BWTF pilot program is being launched to monitor water quality at multiple sites along the Ventura River, its tributaries, and redline channels in an attempt to isolate and identify pollution sources that may produce benthic algae mats and cyanobacteria at recreational sites along the Ventura River.

For more information or to join the BWTF field research team this summer, email bwtf@ventura.surfrider.org.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This program is made possible through generous funding from Chatlen Fund of Marin Community Foundation, Yardi Systems Inc., Holdfast Collective Patagonia, and funding given by Lynda Blue, in memory of Chuck Vinson.

Results are brought to you through community efforts of the Surfrider Foundation Ventura Chapter Blue Water Task Force volunteers, as well as students and Mrs. Emily Hunt, Advanced Placement Environment Science instructor, Foothill Technology High School.