

# HEALTHY BEACHES

What You Don't See *Can Hurt You...*



## **Different things can pollute water.**

Litter is the most visible source of pollution, but it is often the things we cannot see, such as bacteria and viruses that we need to be concerned about.

Studies of freshwater bathing beaches have established a direct relationship between the density of *E. coli* (a bacterium) in water and the occurrence of swimming-associated viral illnesses. In other words, *E. coli* is an indicator of unhealthy water.

The most frequent sources of disease-causing microorganisms in the water are from stormwater runoff, malfunctioning septic systems, animal waste (i.e. ducks, geese, pets etc.), and illegal sewage discharge from boats.

Pollution of beach waters is often much higher during and immediately after rainstorms, especially if the beach is near a stormwater outfall. When it rains, water runs off streets, lawns, farms and urban areas, picking up animal waste, fertilizers, trash, and other pollutants. This water flows through storm drains and local waterways, eventually ending up at our beaches.

# DO YOUR PART...



The use of Grand Traverse Bay, inland lakes, and rivers for swimming is a valuable recreational resource for residents and visitors to our region. It is important that all of us do our part to help keep our beaches **HEALTHY**.

## Tips for a Healthy Beach:

- Don't litter.
- Clean up pet waste and dispose of it in trash.
- Discharge boat and recreational vehicle waste only at approved disposal locations.
- Properly operate and maintain your septic system.
- Dispose of hazardous chemicals, automotive fluids, and other household waste properly... don't dump them on the ground or down a storm drain.
- Do NOT feed waterfowl!

## To learn more...

Grand Traverse County Health Department:  
231.995.6051

Benzie-Leelanau Health Department: 231.256.0200

Northwest Michigan Community Health Department  
(Antrim County): 231.533.6255

**The Watershed Center**  
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