

Water quality swimming alerts issued for two sound-side sites in Carteret County

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MOREHEAD CITY – State recreational water quality officials today are alerting the public that initial testing at two sound-side sites in Carteret County showed levels of bacteria exceeding the state's and Environmental Protection Agency's recreational water quality swimming standards.

The alerts affect waters near Beaufort. The first is at the Radio Island public beach access off Marine Drive and the other is located at the north side of the mouth of Town Creek. Tests of water samples collected yesterday show bacteria levels that exceed the state and federal single-sample standard of 104 enterococci per 100 milliliters for Tier 1, high-usage, sites. Swimming areas are classified based on recreational use and are referred to as tiers.

State officials will test these sites again today, and the results of the sampling will dictate further action. If the new samples also show elevated bacteria counts, state officials will post a swimming advisory sign and issue a swimming advisory.

The N.C. Recreational Water Quality Program tests water quality at ocean and sound beaches in accordance with federal and state laws.

Enterococci, the bacteria group used for testing, are found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals. While it is not known to cause illness, scientific studies indicate that enterococci may indicate the presence of other disease-causing organisms. People swimming or playing in waters with bacteria levels higher than the standards have an increased risk of developing gastrointestinal illness or skin infections.

State officials sample 209 sites throughout the coastal region, most of them on a weekly basis from April to October. Testing continues on a reduced schedule during the rest of the year, when the waters are colder.