
EASTERN LONG ISLAND
BLUE WATER TASK FORCE

WATER QUALITY REPORT

2024

bwtf.surfrider.org

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Front Cover: Sampling at the surf break known as Third Jetty,
by Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter.

Inside Cover: Sampling at Hook Pond in East Hampton,
by Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter

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The outfall pipe at Surfside Place in Montauk. Photo: CCOM

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS

The Blue Water Task Force aims to provide year-round water quality information to the public to supplement seasonal monitoring by the Suffolk County Department of Health. This data is used to inform safe beachgoing and water recreation on Eastern Long Island.

We are thankful to the volunteers, partners, and supporters of the Blue Water Task Force on Eastern Long Island, which includes the Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter, Concerned Citizens of Montauk, and Peconic Baykeeper. Your support and commitment make this program possible.

THANK YOU to our 35 volunteers and interns for your help with our 2024 sampling:

2024 EASTERN LONG ISLAND BLUE WATER TASK FORCE SAMPLERS

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**For more information about volunteering, please contact
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Photo: Hook Pond in East Hampton, by Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter.

INTRODUCTION

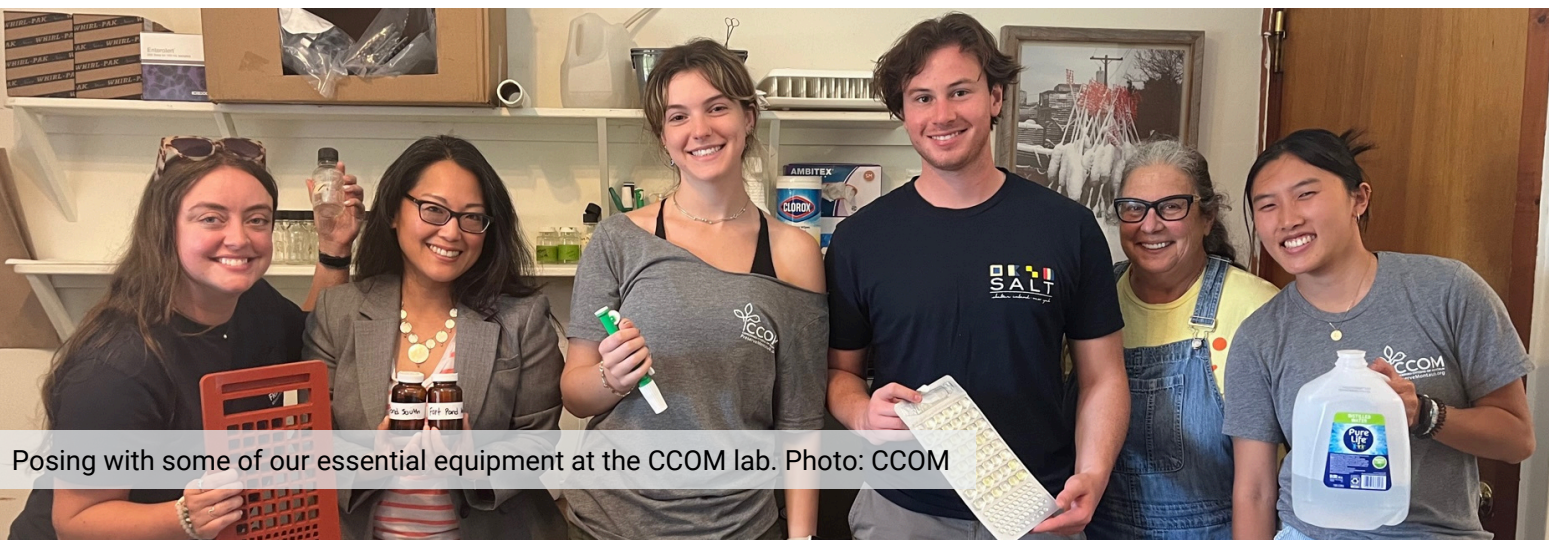
The Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) is the Surfrider Foundation's volunteer water quality monitoring program that generates critical water quality information in coastal communities around the country to inform safe beach-going. With a national network of nearly 60 BWTF labs, Surfrider chapters use this program to raise awareness of local pollution problems and to bring together communities to implement solutions.

On the East End of Long Island, the **Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter** partners with two other nonprofit organizations – the **Concerned Citizens of Montauk** (CCOM) and **Peconic Baykeeper** – to perform year-round water quality monitoring. In 2024, we had 83 sampling locations on the East End. Our Blue Water Task Force team samples weekly during the summer, biweekly during the fall and spring, and monthly during the winter.

The BWTF water quality information augments the data provided by the

Suffolk County Department of Health Services through their seasonal beach program. The County only monitors lifeguarded bathing beaches during the summer swimming season, while the Blue Water Task Force covers a variety of popular recreational areas including ocean and bay beaches, estuaries, and coastal ponds, which may not have lifeguards present. The Blue Water Task Force also tests stormwater outflows and creeks as they can carry pollution into recreational waters.

Water quality samples are tested for the presence of enterococcus, a type of fecal bacteria that indicates the presence of human or animal waste in the water. Elevated levels of enterococcus increase the likelihood that other pathogens are present in the water, which can potentially make people sick. Water quality results are compared to the health standard used by New York State and Suffolk County, specifically 104 colony-forming units of enterococcus per 100 milliliters (104 cfu/100mL). Our water quality data is posted online at bwtf.surfrider.org. We encourage everyone to check the most recent test results before heading out for a swim.

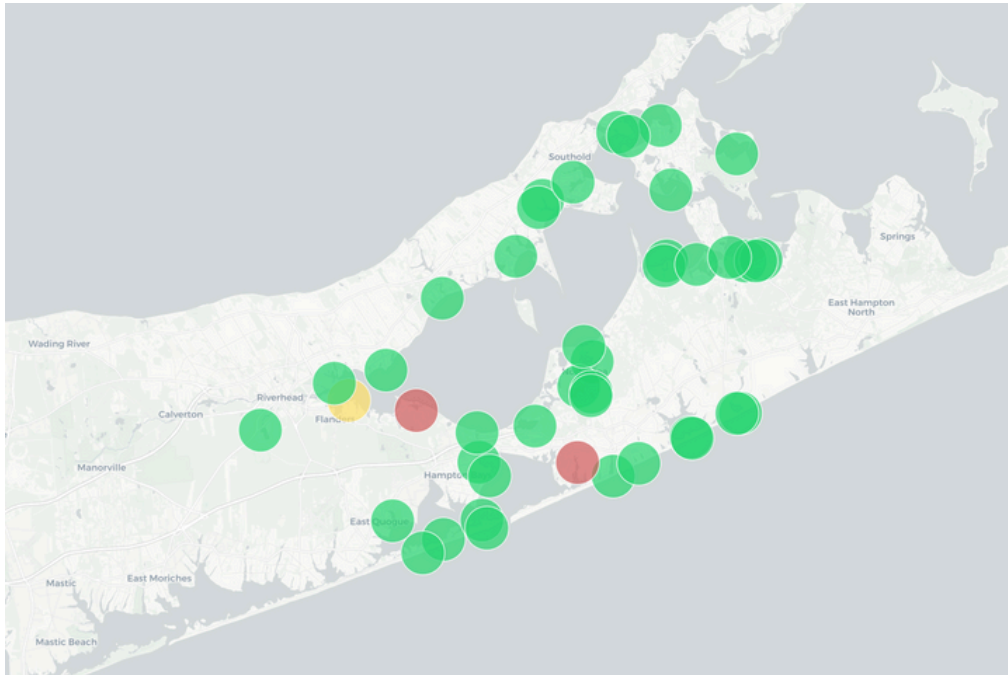


Posing with some of our essential equipment at the CCOM lab. Photo: CCOM

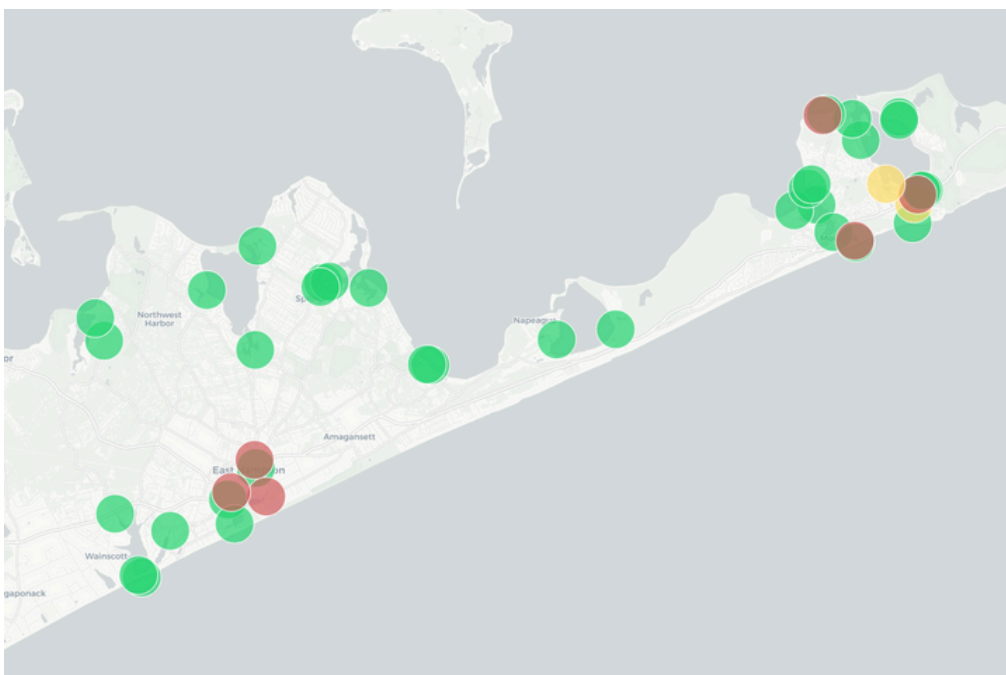
WHERE WE TEST

For the full list of sample locations and results, visit the interactive maps on the Blue Water Task Force website: bwtf.surfrider.org

NORTH FORK AND SOUTHAMPTON:



EAST HAMPTON AND MONTAUK:



PROGRAM UPDATES

The number of sampling locations did not change from 2023 to 2024, but a few locations changed. Due to phragmites overgrowth, we were not able to sample from Pussy's Pond in Springs, a site we added in 2015. The only new location we added was Nineveh Beach in Sag Harbor. Nineveh is a popular bathing beach in the historically African-American community that was founded after World War II. We also swapped one of our locations tested by members of the Shinnecock Nation. Instead of sampling at the Shinnecock Kelp Farmer's field site, we are now sampling an important recreational site on the Shinnecock Reservation known as Cuffee's Beach. While we intentionally did not want to increase the size of our program to protect staff and volunteer capacity, we are incredibly grateful to our volunteers and partners for staying dedicated to our already expansive program!

In 2024, we finished developing and

NEW SITES IN 2024:

- Sag Harbor: Nineveh Beach
- Shinnecock Reservation: Cuffee's Beach

implementing a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the Eastern Long Island Blue Water Task Force. This is a project made possible by funding from the [New York Community Trust](#) (formerly the Long Island Community Foundation). This QAPP outlines our sampling and analysis methods, quality assurance protocols, and training practices that all three partner organizations will follow to ensure that our program is producing reliable data that can be used by a growing audience of data users - local agencies and elected officials, other NGOs and community groups, academics and the general public. We are thrilled to share a finalized QAPP this year and hope it will be a useful resource to new data users. You can view [our finished QAPP on our website](#).



Staff and volunteers celebrate after our annual training, which is one of our quality assurance measures. Photo: The Surfrider Foundation.

2024 DATA SUMMARY

The Eastern Long Island Blue Water Task Force monitors bacteria levels at 83 locations from East Quogue to Montauk and on the North Fork and Shelter Island. Water samples are collected at popular recreational sites, including ocean and bay beaches, estuaries, and coastal ponds. We also test stormwater and other freshwater flows that discharge at the beach. Water samples are processed in the labs at the offices of Concerned Citizens of Montauk or Peconic Baykeeper.

In 2024, trained volunteers and staff collected 2,044 samples from 83 sampling sites located across the East End. This is a new record for us, surpassing 2,000 samples for the first time! The reliability and dedication of our volunteers, as well as the lack of any weather-related cancellations, allowed us to run this high volume of water quality tests this year. We are grateful to our dedicated volunteers and partners for helping us maintain a robust and consistent program.

Tables 1-5 below provide summary statistics for all water quality results obtained during 2024. The tables show the percentage of samples collected at each site that resulted in enterococcus bacteria counts that exceeded the state health standard of 104 cfu/100mL seawater. This translates to a percentage of high bacteria measured for each site as an indication of safety for recreational use.



Sampling from Circle Beach in Noyack. Photo: Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Chapter.

2024 DATA SUMMARY

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR MONTAUK SITES IN 2024.

MONTAUK	Site Type	2024 Sample Count	% High Samples, 2024
Ditch Plains: East of Jetty	Ocean Beach	27	7%
Fort Pond: Industrial	Pond	28	36%
Fort Pond: Ramp	Pond	29	34%
L I Sound: Fort Pond Bay at Navy Rd	Bay Beach	28	4%
L I Sound: Fort Pond Bay at Tuthill Rd	Bay Beach	28	4%
L I Sound: Soundview Drive Beach	Bay Beach	25	16%
Lake Montauk: Causeway South	Harbor	26	4%
Lake Montauk: East Creek	Harbor	26	65%
Lake Montauk: Harbor	Harbor	26	14%
Lake Montauk: Little Reed Pond Creek	Harbor	27	26%
Lake Montauk: Nature Preserve Beach	Harbor	26	23%
Lake Montauk: South Beach	Harbor	25	24%
Lake Montauk: Stepping Stones	Harbor	25	28%
Lake Montauk: West Creek	Harbor	26	38%
Surfside Place: Ocean Beach	Ocean Beach	27	4%
Tuthill Pond	Pond	28	14%

Photos: Some of the summer 2024 interns sampling, by Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island and CCOM.



2024 DATA SUMMARY

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR EAST HAMPTON SITES IN 2024.

EAST HAMPTON	Site Type	2024 Sample Count	% High Samples, 2024
Accabonac Harbor: Louse Point Beach	Bay Beach	26	19%
Accabonac Harbor: Shipyard Ramp	Harbor	28	21%
EH Town Pond	Pond	18	6%
Fresh Pond: Beach	Bay Beach	27	11%
Fresh Pond: Creek	Creek	27	12%
Georgica Beach Assoc./ Third Jetty	Ocean Beach	26	19%
Georgica Pond Beach-side	Pond	25	40%
Georgica Pond: Cove Hollow Access	Pond	23	61%
Georgica Pond: Rte 27 Kayak Launch	Pond	20	75%
Hook Pond South	Pond	17	41%
Hook Pond: Dunemere Lane	Pond	17	88%
Napeague Harbor: East	Harbor	24	8%
Napeague Harbor: West	Harbor	27	7%
Northwest Creek: Ramp	Harbor	26	12%
Three Mile Harbor: Folkstone Drive	Harbor	27	11%
Three Mile Harbor: Head of the Harbor	Groundwater	27	7%
Three Mile Harbor: Settler's Landing	Harbor	27	7%



A volunteer samples in South Jamesport. Photo: Peconic Baykeeper

2024 DATA SUMMARY

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR SOUTHAMPTON SITES IN 2024.

SOUTHAMPTON	Site Type	2024 Sample Count	% High Samples, 2024
East Quogue: Tiana Bay Park	Bay Beach	27	4%
East Quogue: Triton Lane	Ocean Beach	23	4%
East Quogue: Weesuck Creek Boat Ramp	Bay Beach	22	9%
Flanders: Long Neck Boulevard	Bay Beach	28	14%
Hampton Bays: Argonne Rd. East	Bay Beach	27	26%
Hampton Bays: Meschutt Beach	Bay Beach	23	13%
Hampton Bays: Old Ponquogue Bridge- Marine Park	Bay Beach	28	21%
Hampton Bays: Ponquogue Beach	Ocean Beach	24	8%
Hampton Bays: Red Creek	Harbor	26	35%
Mecox: Bay	Bay Beach	27	52%
Mecox: Scott Cameron Ocean Beach	Ocean Beach	27	4%
North Sea Harbor, Noyac Rd.	Harbor	23	13%
North Sea: Big Fresh Pond	Pond	28	0%
North Sea: Little Fresh Pond North	Pond	28	36%
North Sea: Little Fresh Pond West	Pond	28	39%
North Sea: Towd Point	Bay Beach	24	4%
Noyac: Circle Beach	Bay Beach	28	4%
Noyac: Circle Beach Estuary	Harbor	28	0%
Sag Harbor: Havens Beach	Bay Beach	28	11%
Sag Harbor: Little Northwest Creek	Creek	24	63%
Sag Harbor: Long Beach	Bay Beach	28	4%
Sag Harbor: Ninevah Beach	Creek	23	17%
Sag Harbor: Windmill Beach	Harbor	28	43%
Sagg Main Beach	Ocean Beach	27	15%
Sagg Pond	Pond	26	54%
Southampton: Gin Lane/Bathing Corp.	Ocean Beach	28	0%
Southampton: Heady Creek	Creek	21	48%
Southampton: Old Town Beach	Ocean Beach	27	0%
Tuckahoe: Cold Spring Pond South	Harbor	23	35%

2024 DATA SUMMARY

TABLE 4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR NORTH FORK SITES IN 2024.

NORTH FORK	Site Type	2024 Sample Count	% High Samples, 2024
Cutchogue: Wickham Creek	Creek	27	7%
North Fork: Bay Ave, Mattituck	Bay Beach	28	18%
North Fork: S. Jamesport Ave.	Bay Beach	28	14%
Riverhead: Indian Island County Park	Bay Beach	26	19%
Riverhead: Wildwood Lake	Lake	25	12%
Shelter Island: Coecles Harbor Anchorage	Harbor	22	5%
Shelter Island: Dering Harbor	Harbor	20	20%
Shelter Island: West Neck Anchorage	Harbor	21	5%
Southold: Breezy Point Inlet	Bay Beach	24	8%
Southold: Conkling Point Inlet	Bay Beach	24	8%
Southold: Goose Creek	Creek	26	23%
Southold: Richmond Creek East	Creek	27	37%
Southold: Richmond Creek West	Creek	27	41%

TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR STORMWATER SITES IN 2024.

STORMWATER	Site Type	2024 Sample Count	% High Samples, 2024
Accabonac Harbor: E of Old Stone Hwy Culvert	Stormwater	8	25%
EH Fithian Lane: South Drain	Stormwater	25	80%
EH Methodist Lane Bioswale	Stormwater	10	70%
EH Village Green Bioswale	Stormwater	0	N/A
Lake Montauk: Benson Dr. Culvert	Stormwater	19	84%
L I Sound: Soundview Drive Culvert	Stormwater	16	44%
Northwest Creek: Culvert	Stormwater	26	12%
Surfside Place: Outfall Pipe	Stormwater	19	63%

*Note: These sites have fewer samples because they are only collected when water is flowing. The bioswales remained dry for most sampling days this year as the native plants soaked up the excess stormwater that previously flooded the area.

2024 DATA SUMMARY

As in past years, our water quality results continue to indicate that many sites on the East End frequently experience bacteria levels that exceed health standards. Historically, ocean and bay beaches generally test clean, seldom showing high bacteria levels because of the high volumes of water exchange and mixing that occur at these sites. However, bacteria can be elevated during the busy summer tourist season or after heavy rainfall or storm events, especially at bay beaches that are more sheltered and have less mixing than in the ocean. In 2024, however, nearly 20% of the samples collected in the ocean at the third jetty at Georgica Beach Association (5 of 26 samples) measured high bacteria levels that exceeded the recreational health standard. Sagg Main Beach also had a high bacteria rate of 15%, with 4 of 27 samples failing to meet health standards. It is far more typical for ocean beaches to have 0% exceedances or only fail one or two tests per year. Most samples that failed to meet health standards at these two sites in 2024 were collected during or just after rain events, and all were collected between the end of June and the end of September, when the local population swells, putting more pressure on inadequate wastewater infrastructure, namely septic systems and cesspools. [Groundwater levels also were high](#) last summer and fall, and this could have contributed to the high levels of pollution we measured at ocean beaches that lie just outside of Georgica and Sagg Ponds.

As expected, the sites where high bacteria levels were most frequently measured include creeks, ponds, and outfalls that receive high volumes of stormwater runoff. Examples include the East and West Creeks at South Lake in Lake Montauk, and Little Fresh Pond in North Sea. Smaller stagnant water bodies with high populations of birds and waterfowl also show frequent high bacteria levels, as seen in Hook's Pond at Dunemere Lane.

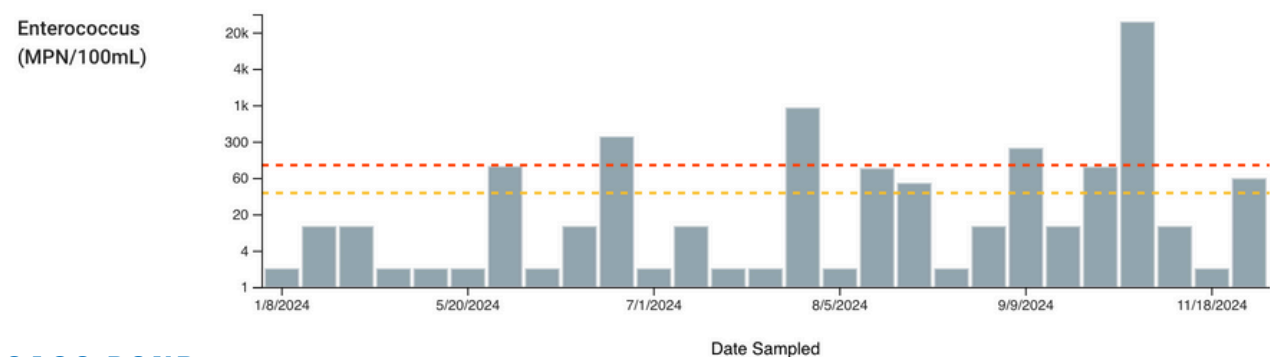
These trends are clearly demonstrated in the data analyses presented below in the Key Outcomes section. You can also visit easternli.surfrider.org for additional tables that show how bacteria rates have fluctuated at some of our sampling sites since 2013.

KEY OUTCOMES

SAGG MAIN BEACH

This Sagaponack beach is a serene and picturesque destination known for its soft, golden sands and gentle waves. With its blend of natural beauty and community events, Sagg Main Beach provides a quintessential Hamptons beach experience. However, because of its connection to the often polluted pond, bacteria levels can be higher than at other ocean beaches. In 2024, 15% of samples collected were high, all during the peak summer season, most of these collected during or right after rain events that can wash pollution down to the beach.

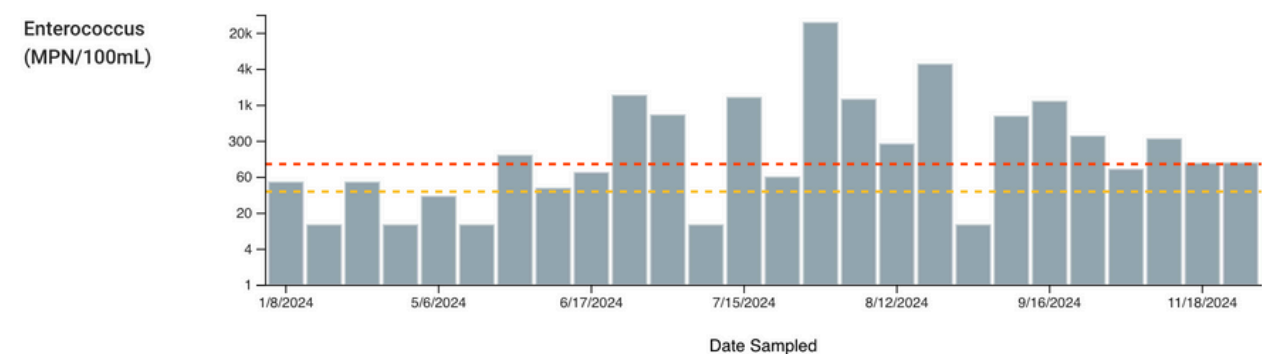
15%
OF SAMPLES IN 2024
EXCEEDED HEALTH
STANDARDS FOR
BACTERIAL COUNTS



SAGG POND

Also known as Sagaponack Pond, this coastal salt pond is connected to the ocean through a manually managed inlet, commonly referred to as "the cut." Sagg Pond offers opportunities for recreational activities like kayaking, paddleboarding, and birdwatching, especially during the warmer months. It is also a vital habitat for various species, including shellfish, wetland vegetation, and other wildlife. However, the pond has faced environmental challenges, notably harmful algal blooms (HABs) caused by cyanobacteria. These blooms are primarily driven by nitrogen pollution, largely from outdated septic systems and cesspools in the watershed. Such blooms pose health risks to both humans and animals.

54%
OF SAMPLES IN 2024
EXCEEDED HEALTH
STANDARDS FOR
BACTERIAL COUNTS



KEY OUTCOMES

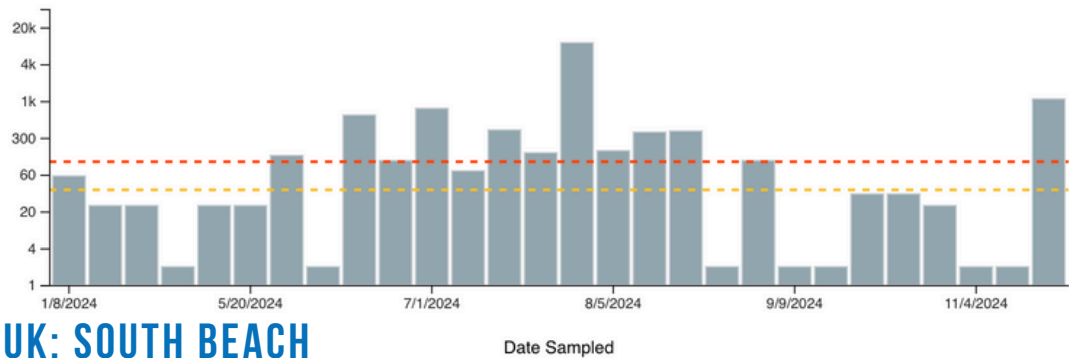
SAG HARBOR: WINDMILL BEACH

Windmill Beach is a charming, family-friendly spot located in downtown Sag Harbor, just steps from Main Street. Established approximately 20 years ago by the village trustees, this small beach was created by adding sand next to the town windmill at the foot of Long Wharf. Its central location and scenic views of Sag Harbor Bay make it a popular spot for both locals and visitors - especially families with young children who want to enjoy a picnic or ice cream cone by the water. This site frequently has high bacteria levels however, and is not a good place to let children wash their hands or splash around. Located at the bottom of Main Street, this beach receives a lot of runoff from the main commercial area of Sag Harbor when it rains. In 2024, a sign was posted by the Sag Harbor Environmental Advisory Committee directing people to our water quality data online.

43%

OF SAMPLES IN 2024
EXCEEDED HEALTH
STANDARDS FOR
BACTERIAL COUNTS

Enterococcus
(MPN/100mL)



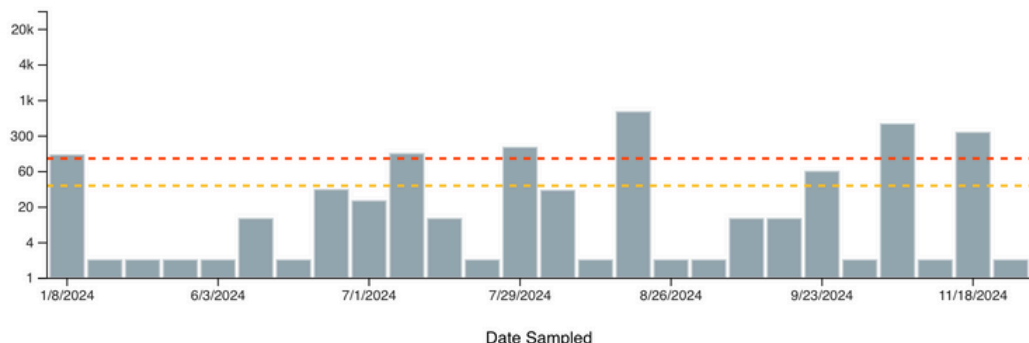
LAKE MONTAUK: SOUTH BEACH

South Beach used to be a lifeguarded beach where families with small children would enjoy its calm, shallow water until bacteria pollution forced the Town of East Hampton to close it down. The Town has recently put a lot of effort into revitalization projects aimed at improving water quality and restoring public access to South Lake Beach (more details in following section). These measures are part of a broader initiative to reduce stormwater runoff and contaminants entering Lake Montauk, with the ultimate goal of reopening the beach for public swimming and enhancing the overall health of the lake's ecosystem. Now that the project is complete, we hope to see less frequent high samples from this location.

24%

OF SAMPLES IN 2023
EXCEEDED HEALTH
STANDARDS FOR
BACTERIAL COUNTS

Enterococcus
(MPN/100mL)



STOP SEWAGE POLLUTION

Outdated cesspools and septic systems are the biggest sources of water pollution on the East End of Long Island. Neither system adequately treats sewage from our homes or businesses; instead, they allow nitrogen and fecal pathogens to leach into our groundwater supply and surface waterways. This puts human health at risk and has caused massive problems with harmful algal blooms in our bays and coastal ponds since sewage pollution carries excess nutrients to our waters.

New advanced treatment septic systems are now available and approved for use in Suffolk County. These advanced systems provide better treatment of wastewater than regular septic systems, including a nitrogen removal rate of up to 90%. There are several incentive programs available to help encourage, require, and fund the installation of these new systems on Eastern Long Island:

- Suffolk County residents can receive up to \$30,000 of non-taxable funds towards their septic upgrades through a combined county and state incentive program. Visit the [Reclaim Our Water Septic Improvement Program website](#) to learn more.
- Homeowners in the Towns of [East Hampton](#), [Southampton](#), or [Shelter Island](#) are eligible for an additional non-taxable \$20,000 - \$25,000 grant -- more information can be found on each town's link above.
- Municipalities, nonprofits, and owners of high-density residential properties in Suffolk County may be eligible for up to 100% reimbursement for septic upgrades through the Community Preservation Fund, supported by a 2% real estate transfer tax in the five East End Towns.

A coalition of environmental organizations - including all three BWTF partners - advocated for a new source of funding in Suffolk County to help pay for wastewater infrastructure upgrades, extensions, and maintenance. This coalition was successful in getting a proposition on the November 2024 ballot asking for voters' support in establishing an additional 0.125% sales tax to pay for this new fund. After much advocacy, the ballot proposition passed with an overwhelming majority – **nearly 72%** of Suffolk County voters supported a tax increase for clean water. We hope this new fund will help the East End make significant progress towards upgrading our out-of-date wastewater infrastructure and restore clean water for all to enjoy.



Blue Water Task Force partners showing support for the ballot proposition, October 2024.

CLEAN WATER SOLUTIONS

All three NGOs that collaborate to perform local Blue Water Task Force water testing also lead restoration projects to help improve water quality conditions on Eastern Long Island.

LAKE MONTAUK REVITALIZATION

In 2024, Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM) advocated for and supported key water quality remediation initiatives in partnership with the Town of East Hampton. At South Lake Beach at Lake Montauk, a beach closed to public bathing since 2005 due to known and continued high levels of fecal bacteria contamination, a restoration was completed to reduce stormwater runoff and nutrient contamination. The project included permeable pavement, a nitrogen-reducing septic system, and native plant restoration. Additionally, new East Hampton Town Trustee pump-out boats became fully operational in Lake Montauk and Three Mile Harbor, helping to prevent sewage discharge from vessels. Together, these efforts address long-standing water quality issues and support the health of Montauk's coastal waters.



Photo: Lake Montauk's shoreline, by CCOM.

OYSTERS IN ACTION

With permission from the Southampton Town Trustees, Peconic Baykeeper has operated a Community Oyster Restoration Program in Southampton's Cold Spring Pond since 2020. This project is designed to grow up to 150,000 oysters per year for water quality improvement and shellfish enhancement in Southampton Town Waters. Peconic Baykeeper has been scaling up every year to reach that annual goal. Since the project's inception, approximately 237,430 second-year oysters have been grown and seeded in

Southampton Town waters. In 2023, the project began a new "seed to sanctuary" initiative with the majority of oysters being placed in four designated shellfish sanctuaries. Peconic Baykeeper worked with the Southampton Town Trustees to establish two new sanctuary sites in Cold Spring Pond while also utilizing two preexisting sanctuary areas in North Sea Harbor and Red Creek Pond. In addition to water quality improvement and shellfish enhancement, the program serves as an outreach hub with volunteers helping with maintenance and educational programs offered throughout the field season. Those interested in volunteering for the Community Oyster Restoration Program can email Peconic Baykeeper at:

info@peconicbaykeeper.org.



Photo: Seeding oysters, by Peconic Baykeeper.

CLEAN WATER SOLUTIONS

OCEAN FRIENDLY GARDENS

Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island is addressing runoff that flows into Hook Pond with two Ocean Friendly Garden Bioswales installed in East Hampton Village - one at the Village Green (planted in 2017) and the other at Methodist Lane (planted in 2021). Both sites were formerly large grass lawn areas that frequently flooded when it rained. Both gardens have grown into beautiful oases of native plants that provide much-needed habitat for local pollinators. They also absorb and filter pollution from massive amounts of stormwater and runoff that each site receives when it rains. By reducing the flow of polluted runoff, the garden helps to reduce the inputs of nutrients, pathogens and sediment into Hook Pond. In 2024, Surfrider recruited community volunteers and joined forces with our community partners at [Piazza Horticultural](#) and [ReWild Long Island](#) to help steward and care for these large public gardens. We'd also like to thank Girl Scout Troop 340 for fundraising and installing a new bench for all Methodist Lane visitors to enjoy!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Upgrade your septic to an Advanced Treatment System. **This is the most important action that residents can take to help stop water pollution throughout Suffolk County.**
2. Use Ocean Friendly Gardening practices to maintain your yard. Skip chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Plant more natives.
3. Pick up your pet's waste.
4. Stay safe at the beach:
 - Check water quality results here before heading to the beach.
 - Swim at ocean or bay beaches with lifeguards on duty.
 - Avoid swimming 24-48 hours after it rains, especially in ponds and enclosed bay and lake sites. Keep your kids out of streams and runoff at the beach.
 - Do not enter the water where there are Blue-Green Algae Bloom signs posted, and do not let your dogs in the water either!
 - Rinse with freshwater before you eat or leave the beach.



Volunteers at a fall work day in our Methodist Lane bioswale. Photo: ReWild Long Island

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Our 2024 results are made possible thanks to generous donations from:

- The Kate W. Cassidy Foundation
- The New York Community Trust (formerly the Long Island Community Foundation)
- The Walrath Foundation
- Southampton Bath and Tennis Club Charitable Fund

We'd also like to thank our dedicated volunteers for their continued efforts to inform our community about our local water quality.





This report is brought to you by the
Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter.

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Photo of a sample at Sagg Main Beach by the
Surfrider Foundation Eastern Long Island Chapter.