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Great Beaches Come From Great Citizens

by [Community for a Clean Watershed](#) on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 at 1:41pm ·

Ventura County's ocean water quality is outstanding. Bacteria testing done to notify the public of potential health risks shows that Ventura County beaches have some of the best water quality in the state. The environmental organization Heal the Bay summarized the results in their Beach Report Card Annual Report. Like a report card, letter grades A through F are given to beaches based on the bacteria levels found. Ventura County beaches earned straight A's during dry weather with almost half of them getting perfect scores. Even in wet weather when rain is washing over the county and carrying anything it can pick up, Ventura County beaches were surprisingly good with all but two beaches scoring at least a B or higher.

So who deserves the credit for this great news? The report came from Heal the Bay, but the monitoring is performed by Ventura County Environmental Health Department with the purpose to provide information to protect beachgoers. Protecting water quality by reducing polluted runoff of is the mission of the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program (Ventura Stormwater Program for short).

All ten cities, Ventura County and the Watershed Protection District joined together in 1992 to create the Ventura Stormwater Program as a proactive response to new regulations. For 18 years the Ventura Stormwater Program has accomplished a great deal to maintain Ventura County's high water quality, but it cannot take all the credit for these great grades.

The reason water quality in Ventura County is so good is because the people of Ventura County are so good to their watersheds. It's all of you who deserve the recognition for not using the streets and gutters as an ashtray, waste basket or sewer. Venturans across the county, from inland cities to the coast, help keep the ocean in our backyard clean with these common practices:

No careless littering: food wrappers and cigarette butts dropped into gutters and washed into storm drains can harm the watershed. Litter can also come from uncovered trash bins with the help of the wind or hungry seagulls. To keep litter out of the watershed simply keep trashcan lids tightly closed, make sure items in truck beds are covered or tightly secured, and pickup water bottles or other litter that may fall out your car.

Conserve water: Over watering provides a highway for pollutants into the watershed and eventually the ocean. Designed to kill, residential landscape chemicals are seriously harmful to the environment. Once applied, they are often washed away into the gutter by over watering. To avoid runoff, do not over water after applying the chemicals and do not apply pesticides, weed killers or fertilizers before a rain.

Good car maintenance: Leaking oil builds up on driveways and on the roads. These toxic fluids accumulate until they are washed through the storm drain system during the first rains of the season. Check your car for leaks regularly and get them fixed. Spent oil and other automotive fluids must be disposed of properly. Certified used oil collection centers are available at some auto parts stores or repair shops, or at your city's household hazard waste events.

Don't add to nature: Pet waste and discarded food seem natural but are sources of bacteria that can make people sick. Pick up after your dog and dispose the waste properly in trashcans. The same is true for baby diapers and food waste. Keep the trash lids tight so these items won't accidentally become part of the watershed.

Congratulations Ventura County, because you do such a good job keeping an eye on the environment we will be able to enjoy our clean beaches for years to come. To learn more about how to keep the watershed clean, go to www.cleanwatershed.org. For information on beach water quality visit http://www.ventura.org/rma/envhealth/programs/tech_serv/ocean/index.html.

— Arne Anselm is a water quality manager with the Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

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