



Vilas County Public Health Department

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Vilas County Beach Monitoring Program

Water resources are vital to the Northwoods and Vilas County. Thousands of people visit Vilas County every summer to enjoy our lakes and beaches.

To better protect our residents and visitors, Vilas County Health Department and the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh partner together to monitor swimming beaches within Vilas County. The beach monitoring program started in 2002 with six beaches and has expanded to twelve beaches currently.

Beaches are monitored weekly from approximately Memorial Day to Labor Day each summer. The water is sampled for the presence of the bacteria *E. coli*. Presence of *E. coli* tells us that fecal contamination is in the water. Other organisms such as *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *Norovirus*, *Campylobacter*, and *Cryptosporidium* may also be found in water when *E. coli* is present. The higher the *E. coli* levels found in beach water, the greater the chances of swimmers becoming sick. Less than 2% of beach water sampling in Vilas County results in an advisory or closure of a beach. The beach monitoring program helps us know if there is a change to beach water. This in turn will lower the chance of our beach visitors becoming ill and help us protect the public's health.

Most beach contamination comes from geese, gulls, storm water runoff, and animal fecal deposits (i.e., dog, deer, etc.). People also play a role due to poor sanitation, a large number of bathers in a small area, broken pipes, or failing septic systems.

Some helpful tips to keep you and your family safe while swimming include:

- Do not drink lake water.
- Do not allow children to eat beach sand.
- Take a shower after swimming.
- If you can't shower, wash your hands.

You can keep the beach healthy by encouraging children to use the bathrooms throughout their time at the beach, by not feeding birds or wildlife while at the beach, by not directing storm water to the beach, and by maintaining septic systems.

Current Vilas County beach conditions can be found throughout the beach season at <http://www.wibeaches.us/>. All advisories and closures are posted on this site. For additional information call the Vilas County Public Health Department at (715) 479-3656 or visit our website at <http://www.vilaspublichealth.com>.

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