

High Bacteria Levels at South End of Lake Montauk

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In its latest round of water testing results for the week of July 15, Concerned Citizens of Montauk identified East Creek at the south end of Lake Montauk as an area of serious concern. Water sampled there showed the highest levels of the bacteria enterococcus of any of the more than two dozen sites monitored by C.C.O.M.

Enterococcus -- often present after heavy rains, extreme high tides or warm temperatures -- is considered a risk to human health when found at levels of 104 and above; it was found at a level more than 10 times that at East Creek.

CCOM tests water bodies in Montauk, Amagansett, and East Hampton for traces of entero. The latest samples, taken on Monday morning, were processed in the office lab of C.C.O.M., which partners with the Surfrider Foundation's Blue Water Task Force to share the results on their online portal.

This week's testing also showed high entero levels at the Surfside Place outfall pipe on the ocean in Montauk. Before the rain on Wednesday night and Thursday, C.C.O.M.'s Kate Rossi-Snook had written, "with the . . . outfall pipe flow reduced to a trickle, we might soon get a respite from high bacteria exposure at that beach, unless we get another round of heavy rainfall this week."

High entero levels were also recorded at Pussy's Pond in Springs (also nearly 10 times the lowest level considered a risk to human health), and at the Head of the Harbor on Three Mile Harbor. A greater presence of bird excrement at the Pussy's Pond location may have accounted for the spike in bacteria levels, particularly at high tide. In addition, what Ms. Rossi-Snook described as a "visual sludge" along the waterline at the boat ramp at the time of sampling at the head of Three Mile Harbor may have something to do with the high levels of bacteria found there. The previous weekend has also seen increased boat traffic due to the Great Bonac Fireworks on Saturday night.

Testing showed medium bacteria at six of the other sites tested -- the Little Reed Pond Creek testing site at Lake Montauk, at the boat ramp at Fort Pond, and at Louse Point Beach at Accobonac Harbor. The Folkstone Drive side of Three Mile Harbor, the Culvert end of Northwest Creek, and the Beach Side of Georgica pond also indicated medium bacteria levels.

C.C.O.M. is also teaming up with Gobler Lab at Stony Brook Southampton to monitor Fort Pond for harmful blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria. The organization usually samples for cyanobacteria at two locations in Fort Pond: by a town boat ramp on the southern part of the pond and at the northern end off of Industrial Road. The most recent round of testing, however, took periodic samples from Big Reed Pond, which now has a certified cyanobacteria bloom. This week's results indicated high risk levels of blue-green algal blooms at Big Reed Pond. Fort Pond's blue-green algae concentrations have elevated to medium risk, but are still below the harmful algal bloom level threshold. The next sampling will be conducted on Monday.