

THE STAR

Generally Low Bacteria Levels in East Hampton Town Waters

By Christopher Walsh

May 8, 2020

Recent testing for the bacteria enterococcus in the East Hampton Town water bodies indicated generally low levels, though bodies frequently found to have medium or high bacteria levels continued to do so this week.

Elevated enterococcus levels are an indication of fecal contamination from humans or other mammals. Levels are quantified using the number of colony-forming units per 100 milliliters of water sampled. Levels of 104 and above are considered a risk to human health and often result from heavy rain, extreme high tides, and/or warm water temperatures. Levels between 36 and 103 are considered medium.

Concerned Citizens of Montauk regularly tests sites in Montauk, Amagansett, and East Hampton, which it processes and shares with the Surfrider Foundation's Blue Water Task Force online portal.

C.C.O.M.'s report for the week of May 4 showed medium bacteria at the outflow pipe at Surfside Place in Montauk, at 41 colony-forming units per 100 ml. The same measurement was taken at the Dunemere Road test site at Hook Pond in East Hampton Village. A level of 74 was measured at Pussy's Pond in Springs.

At the duck pond on David's Lane, in the East Hampton Village Nature Trail, a high bacteria level of 3,654 colony-forming units per 100 ml was found.

The Suffolk County Health Department announced this week that blooms of cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, were found in Willow Pond in Huntington Bay, the first reported in the county this year. East Hampton water bodies including Georgica Pond, Wainscott Pond, and Fort Pond have in recent years been fouled by the toxic algae during the hotter months, but they have yet to be detected this year.

C.C.O.M., in partnership with the Gobler Lab at Stony Brook Southampton, monitors Fort Pond for cyanobacteria and delivers samples to the lab, which shares bloom occurrences online through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's harmful algal blooms notification page.