

## **Ventura County Star – Sunday, September 18, 2006**

### **“Eye on the Environment”**

#### **Join the Stream Team to keep area beaches clean**

**By Leigh Ann Grabowsky, Guest writer, Ventura Coastkeeper Watershed Monitoring Manager**

Each week, the Santa Monica-based nonprofit group Heal the Bay updates its "report cards" for numerous Ventura County beaches. A report for the beginning of September gave more than 40 of our local beaches scores of A or B, but four others got a D or F.

At those low-scoring beaches, ocean samples tested for a certain type of bacteria failed to meet public health standards. Swimming in those waters could make you ill. Although those four beaches — Point Mugu, Channel Islands' Kiddie Beach, Marina Park North and Rincon Beach south of the creek mouth — generally score better, some of the ones that scored well this month have had problems in the past.

Because you can't know in advance what the grade will be on the day you choose to swim, it is important to understand and fight water pollution everywhere.

To understand water pollution, we must first understand the concept of a "watershed." A watershed is a natural boundary within which all water drains to the same point, such as a lake, river or ocean. Natural processes and human activities within a watershed can affect how water makes its way to the end point, and what the quality of that water will be.

Contributors to water pollution include runoff from irrigated land (farmland, golf courses), animal waste (domestic pets and livestock), faulty septic or sewage systems, and general urban runoff (litter, hazardous chemicals, sediment and other materials).

For example, when poor water quality is found at Point Mugu beach, we must look upstream to the Calleguas Creek watershed. That watershed encompasses parts of Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark and Simi Valley. In addition to its namesake creek, the watershed includes several other bodies of water, including Revolon Slough, Conejo Creek, Arroyo Santa Rosa, Arroyo Simi, Arroyo Las Posas and Mugu Lagoon. The watershed drains to Mugu Lagoon, which then spills into the Pacific Ocean at Point Mugu beach.

Many pollution sources can be eliminated through simple steps like picking up after our pets and disposing of household chemicals properly. Other sources, such as industrial and agricultural runoff, are addressed through regulations and voluntary actions.

It takes monitoring to determine if these actions are working. That's why Ventura Coastkeeper launched its Stream Team, a volunteer-based monitoring program that tests the water at eight locations each month.

Volunteers collect information on basic water quality criteria, such as pH and dissolved oxygen, and also take water samples later analyzed in a laboratory for bacteria, nutrients, pesticides, metals and other pollutants.

By volunteering as a Stream Team member, you can help Ventura Coastkeeper identify sources and locations of pollution. This information will make a difference as businesses and policymakers come up with better solutions to beach pollution.

#### **On the Net:**

[www.wishtovo.org](http://www.wishtovo.org)