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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GRAND TRAVERSE REGION BEACH TESTING BEGINS JUNE 14**  
THE WATERSHED CENTER TO SAMPLE 19 LOCAL BEACHES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 6

Traverse City, MI; June 13, 2023 – The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay will begin its annual beach testing on June 14, 2023. Nineteen area beaches in Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau counties will be tested for harmful *E.coli* bacteria every Wednesday through September 6.

Bacteria test results will be available by noon on Thursdays and posted shortly thereafter on the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy \(EGLE\) BeachGuard website](#), [The Watershed Center Facebook page](#), the [Grand Traverse County Health Department website](#), and the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). If results show high bacteria levels, local health departments will post advisories at impacted beaches and the water at those beaches will immediately be re-tested until results return to acceptable levels.

“We are proud to be able to offer this service every year,” said Sarah U'Ren, Program Director at The Watershed Center. “Our weekly testing for *E. coli* bacteria is an integral piece of our efforts to keep our residents, visitors, and beaches healthy.”

Elevated bacteria levels such as *E. coli* at beaches pose a threat to public health and cause illness, especially in young children and people with compromised immune systems. The presence of *E. coli* in surface water indicates fecal contamination is present at the beach, which includes a host of other harmful viruses and bacteria.

In 2023, The Watershed Center was awarded additional funding to include source tracking analyses as part of the annual beach testing. Water samples collected at beaches that have elevated *E. coli* levels will also be analyzed to determine the source of the bacterial contamination. Samples will be tested for human, cow, pig, canine, and gull sources.

“To reduce the public health threats due to elevated *E. coli* levels it is essential to know the source of bacterial contamination so proper steps can be taken to lower the inputs,” U'Ren said. “This opportunity will help us learn more about where *E. coli* contamination is coming from so we can work towards reducing those sources to better protect the health of our community.”

Beachgoers are encouraged to take simple actions to reduce the risk of *E. coli* at beaches such as not feeding ducks and other birds, disposing of diapers (including swim diapers) in trash cans, and having young children take frequent bathroom breaks. Beachgoers are also reminded not to swim near storm drains, especially during and immediately after a rain event, as water from the



storm drain may contain *E. coli* and other harmful pathogens from animal feces that are washed into the drains during a storm. The risk of elevated *E. coli* levels after a rain event decreases as sunlight breaks down the bacteria in open water.

Funding for beach monitoring comes from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency BEACH Act Funds; Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy's Water Resources Division Beaches Program; City of Traverse City; Acme Township; the Village of Empire; and the Village of Beulah. This year, Lake Michigan beaches will mainly be tested due to lack of grant funding for inland lake testing. Testing will be conducted at the following beaches:

#### Lake Michigan

- Empire Beach
- Frankfort Beach

#### Grand Traverse Bay - West

- Bryant Park (Traverse City)
- Sunset Park (Traverse City)
- Senior Beach (Traverse City)
- Clinch Park (Traverse City)
- Volleyball Beach (Traverse City)
- West End Beach (Traverse City)
- Greilickville Harbor Park
- Suttons Bay South Shore Beach
- Suttons Bay Marina Park Beach
- Northport Beach

#### Grand Traverse Bay - East

- East Bay Park (Traverse City)
- Haserot Park Beach
- Traverse City State Park
- Acme Bayside Park
- Saylor Park (Acme)

#### Inland Beaches

- South Bar Beach (South Bar Lake)
- Beulah Beach (Crystal Lake)

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#### **About The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay**

The Watershed Center is a non-profit organization that advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve its watershed. The Watershed Center blends scientific and policy expertise with education, advocacy, collaboration, and solution-oriented actions to serve as a multi-faceted resource for the community. Learn more at [gtbay.org](http://gtbay.org).