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Health Department of Northwest Michigan

Water Sampling Expands Around Richardi Park Beach

Partial body contact recommendation continues

In place since August 24, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) is extending a partial body contact advisory for Richardi Park Beach in Antrim County. Water sampling collected Wednesday showed an E. coli level of 673.9 per 100ml, which calls for restricted use based on Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) water quality standards.

Today, an additional 12 samples are being taken in areas which include upstream and downstream of the beach area normally tested. The results will help determine a potential source for the elevated E. coli level and next steps. The advisory continues to be posted at the beach.

“Our Beach Monitoring Program is all about public safety,” said Jeremy Fruk, HDNW Environmental Health Director. “While we realize Richardi Park Beach is not a popular swimming location, we ask the public to be cautious about water contact.”

A common cause of elevated E. coli levels comes from geese/duck feces on or near the beach. While this situation has been seen at Richardi Beach Park, a more thorough analysis is being done based on the longevity of sample levels being over 301 per 100ml. The E. coli levels from the samples taken today at the beach and along the Intermediate River will be known Friday, Sept. 9, with more extensive tests being done over the fall and winter.

“If you look at the where the beach is located, the water from upstream tends to form an eddy at that location prior to moving through the dam spill way,” said Dan Thorell, HDNW Interim Health Officer. “Our lab has been preserving samples and will perform molecular source tracking to determine the origin of the E. coli (human or other animals).”

Levels testing between 301 and 1000 per 100ml qualify for partial body contact advisories, based on EGLE standards. Levels 300 per 100ml allow for full body contact. At the current level of 506.3, HDNW continues to recommend limiting water contact there to wading, fishing, and paddling. Contact above the waist is not advised.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

HDNW posts beach monitoring reports on its website at <https://www.nwhealth.org/beach.html>.
Through an EGLE supported web-based program, the public has real-time access to beach water quality results for beaches all over Michigan. Information can be found at www.deq.state.mi.us/beach/.

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