

# DEC ISSUES ADVISORY FOR KENAI RIVER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — July 5, 2019

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SOLDOTNA, AK — The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has issued a recreational beach advisory for the Kenai River mouth due to elevated levels of enterococci found in the marine water. This recreational advisory will remain in effect for personal use fishery (July 10-31). Following the personal use fishery, the advisory will be lifted when two consecutive weekly samples have shown enterococci levels at safe levels.

Water samples were collected on July 2. One of the five monitoring locations (South Kenai Beach) exceeded the water quality criteria for enterococci bacteria. To protect beach users, the other monitoring locations within the Kenai River mouth area (North Kenai River beach and Gull Rookery areas) are included in this recreational advisory. DEC recommends beach users take precautions to avoid exposure, such as avoiding swimming in the water, and washing after contact with the water. DEC advises that people take precautionary measures when fishing along the Kenai River Beaches by rinsing fish with clean water after harvesting from the area. As always, people should cook seafood to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit to destroy pathogens.

Fecal coliform bacteria results were above state limits of 31 cfu/100ml set to protect humans from consumption of raw fish and shellfish at three monitoring locations (North Kenai Beach, South Kenai Beach and Kenai River Gull Rookery 1 and 2) with levels ranging from 49 to 141 cfu/100ml.

Water quality samples were collected at the following locations:

- North Kenai Beach
- South Kenai Beach
- Kenai River Gull Rookery 1 (60.53660N, -151.25400W)
- Kenai River Gull Rookery 2 (60.55180N, -151.24400W)
- Warren Ames Bridge

As part of a statewide recreational beach monitoring program, marine water samples will be collected at the listed coastal areas to evaluate enterococci bacteria and fecal coliform levels weekly from May to September 2019. Monitoring locations maps and sampling information are shown on the [Alaska BEACH Grant Program website](#).

Enterococci bacteria can come from any warm blooded animal, including birds, seals, and dogs, as well as humans. Based on microbial source testing for bacteria genetic identification, the primary source of this bacteria on Kenai beaches is gulls. Contact with water impacted by enterococci bacteria may cause stomach aches, diarrhea, or ear, eye, and skin infections.

The BEACH sampling program is funded and implemented by DEC. It is part of a nationwide effort to decrease the incidence of water-borne illness at public beaches under the federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act. Water samples have been collected periodically at Kenai River beaches since 2010. For more information about the Alaska BEACH monitoring program, visit the [Alaska BEACH Grant Program website](#).