

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DPNR Clears 24 Beaches As Safe This Weekend

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ST. CROIX -- Last week, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources cautioned residents to stay away from all the territory's beaches because of what the government agency said was the anticipation of "negative environmental impacts caused by stormwater runoff." This week, though, 24 of the beaches tested were cleared for swimming and fishing while 2 remained off limits.

The two beaches that DPNR said did not meet water quality standards because they exceeded the established Enterococci Bacteria threshold and therefore are not considered to be safe for swimming or fishing are Frenchman's Bay and Bolongo Bay, both in St. Thomas.

Beaches cleared for activity include the following:

St. Croix: Stoney Ground, Protestant Cay, Chenay Bay, Buccaneer, Cramer Park, Rainbow, Shoy's, New Fort (Ft. Louise Augusta), Princess (Condo Row), Columbus Landing, Dorsch, Frederiksted Public Beach, Sprat Hall, Cane Bay, Pelican Cove (Comorant) and Gentle Winds.

St. Thomas: Hull Bay, Sapphire, Vessup Bay, Magen's Bay, Secret Harbor, Bluebeards, Brewer's Bay and Lindbergh Bay.

St. John beaches were not tested this weekend.

DPNR said Halfpenny and Grapetree Bay here could not be sampled this week due to the heavy presence of seaweed along the shoreline. Beaches on St. John district were not sampled this week.

The release also stated that high levels of Enterococci Bacteria and Turbidity may be caused by runoff due to heavy rains, heavy marine vessel traffic, high wave activity near the shoreline, irresponsible recreational use, etc. Runoff can consist of sediment, pesticides, animal feces and oil & grease, all of which are harmful to the waters of the Territory.

DPNR says it will continue to monitor these popular swimming areas. DPNR also recommends that you use your own discretion when swimming or fishing at the designated beaches. If the waters appear muddy or murky or have foul odors, do not swim or fish.

For additional information regarding water quality call the Division of Environmental Protection at 773-1082 in St. Croix.

Feature Image: Frenchman's Reef, St. Thomas.