

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DPNR Advise St. Thomas Residents To 'Use Caution' At Beaches This Weekend

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ST. CROIX -- All but one of the beaches that the Department of Planning and Natural Resources tested here during the week proved to be safe for swimming and fishing, according to a press release the government agency issued this afternoon. But, while residents here were cleared to fish and swim this weekend, St. Thomas residents eager to jump into the water have been warned to use caution.

"Beaches on St. Thomas were not sampled this week due to heavy rains this week, and DPNR anticipates that negative environmental impacts will be caused by storm-water runoff. DPNR advises the public to use caution when using the coastal waters on St. Thomas until further notification," reads the release.

Of the 21 beaches DPNR tested during the weekend -- most of them on St. Croix -- the results proved to be good for the big island: Stoney Ground, Protestant Cay, Buccaneer, Cramer Park, New Fort (Ft. Louise Augusta), Dorsch, Frederiksted Public Beach, Pelican Cove (Comorant), Shoy's, Rainbow, Cane Bay, Chenay Bay, Gentle Winds, Princess (Condo Row), B - Breezes, Halfpenny and Grapetree Bay. Only Princess (Condo Row) and A-Mill Harbour were unsafe on St. Croix this weekend.

For St. John, DPNR said Oppenheimer could not be sampled this week, and declared the remaining beaches there -- Johnson Bay, Frank Bay, Cruz Bay and Great Cruz Bay -- as safe for swimming and fishing this weekend.

DPNR said 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.

The agency also said it would continue to monitor these popular swimming areas, and stressed the importance of using one's 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," the release concluded.

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

Feature Image: Coki Point Beach, St. Thomas.