

# San Diego Coastkeeper Publishes 2024 Mission Bay Water Quality Monitoring Report

*Data Shows Spikes of Bacteria, Metals and Nutrients at Many Locations*

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-- San Diego Coastkeeper

(Coastkeeper), an environmental nonprofit working to protect and



restore swimmable, drinkable, and fishable waters throughout San Diego, published its first annual [2024 Mission Bay Water Quality Monitoring Report](#). The report summarizes a year of monthly water monitoring data at locations around Mission Bay, showing persistently high levels of bacteria, copper and phosphorus in both dry and wet weather, often at levels that exceed

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*Phillip Musegaas, Executive Director of San Diego Coastkeeper*

state water quality standards for safe public recreation and a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Aging stormwater and leaking wastewater infrastructure are likely sources of bacterial contamination, while high levels of copper and phosphorus could be the result of multiple sources. Coastkeeper’s findings highlight the urgent need for increased investment in stormwater infrastructure, and increased attention to tracking and addressing the sources of these pollutants, so that water quality will improve in the future. The report also highlights the program’s highly successful community outreach component, including the recruitment and training of over 180 volunteers who play a key role in Coastkeeper’s community science work.

Coastkeeper conducts ongoing Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) at ten sampling locations throughout Mission Bay. Each location is tested monthly with the help of teams of volunteers trained to collect water samples. Results from sampling efforts are published online for public records, and uploaded to the California State Water Resources Control Board’s California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN), where it will help inform future regulatory actions to reduce pollution. This is the first full year of sampling, giving researchers, elected officials and government regulators a year-long view of Mission Bay’s water quality.

## Key Findings & Risks

Data collected from sampling events reveals that not a single location passed all state Water Quality Objectives (WQO) for safe contact recreation, particularly after rain events. A closer look at the findings shows:

- 50% of sampling locations reported fecal bacteria levels exceeding state standards more than 50% of the time, both in dry and wet weather.
- 90% of our locations reported copper levels well above state standards more than 50% of the time.
- 60% of sampling locations reported high levels of phosphorus in more than 50% of samples.
- Mission Point had the best rate of success in passing the WQOs for fecal indicator bacteria and phosphorus.
- Tecolote Creek, however, had the highest average rate of failing WQOs for fecal indicator bacteria and phosphorus.

This data supports the need to effectively address sources of pollutants, including stormwater runoff, commercial and industrial discharges, and leaking stormwater and wastewater systems that surround Mission Bay. High levels of pollutants, such as fecal bacteria, can lead to chronic health risks for people recreating in and on the water, as well as marine species which depend on a clean Bay.

“Mission Bay is one of San Diego’s most popular marine recreation attractions, yet it is frequently plagued with unsafe levels of bacteria and other pollutants that are a risk to public health and adversely affect fish and other marine life in the Bay,” said Phillip Musegaas, Executive Director of Coastkeeper. “Our report highlights the critical need for increased investment to address leaking sewer and stormwater pipes, and increased focus on finding and stopping the sources of this pollution to protect public health and our precious marine environment.”

## Program Achievements

The Mission Bay Water Quality Monitoring program has been successful in immeasurable ways, and has proven integral to the organization’s overarching Watershed Watch program, meeting its goals and expanding its reach to a variety of educational, professional, and social backgrounds. Notable program achievements include:

- Engaging 180+ volunteers in water quality monitoring, cleanups, and advocacy initiatives □
- Gathering crucial evidence of pollution concerns
- Ensuring equitable access to environmental stewardship
- Promoting workforce and career development
- Expanding community engagement and advocacy opportunities

"This program demonstrates how community science can bridge the gap between scientific research and public engagement, creating a more environmentally aware community while gathering the crucial data needed to drive policy changes," explained Lesly Gallegos, Volunteer and Outreach Manager at Coastkeeper.

Coastkeeper thanks the partners, sponsors, staff, and volunteers who helped make the Mission Bay Water Quality Monitoring Program so successful.

## About Coastkeeper

Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper safeguards our region's inland and coastal waters through a strategic blend of community science, education, grassroots outreach, policy advocacy, and legal enforcement of environmental laws. This approach allows us to effectively tackle the most pressing water issues facing our region. For more information, visit [sdcoastkeeper.org](https://sdcoastkeeper.org).

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