



Save the Sound®

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## Declining conditions at some CT beaches in 2016, Save the Sound finds

New Haven, Conn. – Save the Sound has identified sharp drops in water quality at several Bridgeport, Fairfield, and West Haven beaches in 2016.

By analyzing data in its [SoundHealthExplorer.org](http://SoundHealthExplorer.org) tool, Save the Sound discovered that a number of beaches that tested very well in 2015 had significant increases in bacteria levels last year:

- **Pleasure Beach** in Bridgeport, which earned an A+ in 2015, got a D in 2016. Nearby **Seaside Park Beach**—a very popular summer spot for area residents—went from a B+ to a D+.
- Fairfield's **Jennings Beach** went from a B- to a D+.
- In West Haven, four beaches that earned an A+ in 2015—**Seabluff, Dawson, Rock Street, and Oak Street**—each received a D- or F in 2016. **Seaview**, which had gotten a C in 2015, received an F last year.

The Sound Health Explorer compiles data from local and county health departments' testing for fecal indicator bacteria to track trends at Long Island Sound beaches over time. Grades are based on seasonal averages of tests that pass or fail the EPA safe swimming standards.

Leading Save the Sound's investigation is **Bill Lucey, Long Island Sound's new Soundkeeper.**

"When we find pollution hotspots around the Sound, I'm committed to investigating and tracking down their causes," **Lucey said.** "As we learn more, we'll keep the public updated about what happened at these beaches, and what can be done to make sure it doesn't happen again. Everyone around the Sound deserves to know their local beach is safe for swimming every day."

Lucey will soon begin regular boat patrols of Long Island Sound's bays and harbors. Save the Sound, which is a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment, is putting the new Soundkeeper on the water in anticipation of its upcoming merger with Soundkeeper, Inc.

Based on information gathered so far, the failures at Jennings Beach appear to correlate with rain events. Rain often leads to high bacteria counts as stormwater picks up pet waste from roads and yards, or overwhelms combined sewer systems resulting in discharges of raw sewage. Lucey and Save the Sound's water quality team believe the bacteria levels at the Bridgeport beaches may also stem from combined sewer overflows, but are conducting further research. The cause of the high bacterial counts at the West Haven beaches is not yet known.

"Beach conditions can vary dramatically from day-to-day, and high bacteria counts on a few days last summer don't necessarily mean bad conditions this year," **Lucey cautioned.** "The best way to get the latest testing results for your favorite beach is by contacting your local health department."

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*The Soundkeeper will be officially re-launched with a press conference and boat christening on Thursday, August 3 at Brewers Stratford Marina at 12:00 p.m. The public is invited to attend, and members of the press will be able to go out on the water with Mr. Lucey.*

*Save the Sound is reporting beach openings and closures for select beaches around the western Sound, including Seaside Park Beach, via social media this summer. Closures are often issued on a preemptive basis based on historical testing patterns, and do not necessarily reflect day-of bacteria levels. The reports can be found each weekend on Save the Sound's Facebook page each weekend this summer.*