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Dirty Beaches by Donna Davis

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Brian Cauley loves to fish here at Alligator Point Beach. But he was shocked to hear this beach fails E-P-A standards almost one third of the time, making it one of the dirtiest beaches in the state.

"It's sad. It's sad. It's sad anytime to hear the environment is impaired you know," says Cauley.

This beach is just one included in a report by the Clean Water Network which looks at EPA tests at Florida counties. Every coastal county in Florida saw beach closings last year. In fact, there were more than 3,345 closings and health advisory days in 2004. That's less than the year before, but Linda Young of Clean Water Network says doesn't put much faith in the numbers.

"The places they monitor are least likely to be polluted," says Young.

You can't tell by looking if the water is clean. County health departments test the water once a week or so. But if the water exceeds epa standards for bacteria, they don't have to close the beach for a few days. Young says that needs to change.

"When a test is taken and a violation is found, it should be closed immediately," says Young.

Young says the underlying problems are: more people, over development and an aging infrastructure that results in sewage spills and storm water run-off. So, the next time you want to cool off during the dog days of summer, remember the beach may not be your safest solution.