

COAST

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bacteria can also indicate the presence of viruses and other harmful organisms associated with human or animal wastes.

But a representative of the Clean Water Network, which released the ranking in Florida, blamed the advisories statewide on stormwater plants and leaky sewage plants.

"Pollution does not only hurt the people who want to enjoy Florida's waters, but it also hurts our economy," said Linda Young, Southeast regional director for the Clean Water Network.

David Brumbaugh, environmental manager for the Franklin County Health Department, referred calls to the Florida

Department of Health.

Bart Bibler, chief of the Bureau of Water Programs at the Florida Department of Health, said he had seen neither the report nor the ranking.

The ranking could not immediately be verified with beach-water-quality data on the department's Web site. The ranking stated that Alligator Point was unsafe for swimming 29 percent of the time, but the department's data showed that weekly advisories were posted 61 percent of the time in 2004.

The *Democrat* found similar underreporting for advisories at Carrabelle Beach.

Alan Pierce, Franklin County's director of administrative services, said he is not sure what weight to place on the advisories.

"It may be unfair to say all of Alligator Point is unsafe based on the limited sampling done or testing done," Pierce said. "(Health officials) are aware they don't

have extensive testing being done."

Dekle Beach in Taylor County also was on the ranking. Mashes Sands in Wakulla County, which was under advisory for 25 percent of 2004, didn't make the ranking.

The Florida Department of Health is paying for a study to determine the possible sources of bacteria at Mashes Sands. The results, which had been expected this summer, have been delayed until October, Bibler said.

He said the department has not requested funding for additional studies of bacteria sources. He said the Florida Department of Environmental Protection may be the one to fund such studies because it regulates stormwater and wastewater plants.

Advisories were issued Thursday against swimming at Carrabelle Beach, Mashes Sands and Shell Point in Wakulla County.

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