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## Local & State

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SECTION B

### Beaches are cleaner, tests show

But environmentalists say pollution findings in a national study remain chilling for some Florida shorelines.

By JOHN KENNEDY  
TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF

TALLAHASSEE — Volusia County beaches were closed or under health advisories a relatively modest 45 days last year, while Brevard County had no reports of bacterial pollution as Florida shoreline contamination dropped from earlier record levels, a study released Thursday showed.

The Natural Resources Defense Council said the combined statewide

figure of 3,345 days of closings or warnings was a 16 percent drop from 2003, when Florida's beaches were cited for nearly 4,000 days.

But environmentalists said the findings were still chilling.

"Florida beaches are critically important to our quality of life, to our economy, and I think this shows that we've got some serious problems to deal with," said Linda Young, southeast regional director for the Clean Water Network.

The nationwide survey is the 15th annual beach guide issued by the council, a New York-based environmental organization. For the first time, the council analyzed data that showed Florida beaches violated the public-health standard an average 3 percent of the times tested.

But a number of beaches far exceeded that level. Palm Beach County's Phil Foster Park failed 46 percent of its tests, Bayou Chico in Escambia County failed 36 percent, and South

Beach in Monroe County had samples reported substandard 30 percent of the time analyzed.

The tests are usually conducted weekly statewide.

Except for the Palm Beach County beach, all of the poorest-performing shorelines were on the Gulf of Mexico, chiefly in the Florida Keys and on the Panhandle coast.

Nationwide, across 35 states and

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