

BEACH - 2023

PTMSC has been participating in the Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication & Health (BEACH) program since 2004. It is part of a national program, funded by an EPA grant through the WA Dept of Ecology. BEACH water sampling ensures that the water at public beaches is safe for recreation. In Washington, 59 high-use beaches are sampled each week between Memorial Day and Labor Day. PTMSC samples at Fort Worden and works with the Jefferson County Dept of Public Health who oversees the water quality sampling in our area and their staff take samples at other popular beaches.

PTMSC volunteers collect water samples at three locations at Fort Worden. Our samples, along with others from around Puget Sound, go by courier to a lab for analysis. There they look for *Enterococcus faecalis*, a bacteria, associated with fecal contamination, that survives in salt water. (E. coli is the indicator with fresh water sampling.) When the average of the three samples exceeds 104 enterococci/100mL, a beach advisory is issued. Within 24 hours the lab determines if there is a chance of contamination and the water is not safe for human contact.

Advisory signs are posted between Memorial Day and Labor Day at popular recreational areas. If contamination is found, a **RED** sign is posted indicating the beach is temporarily closed. A **GREEN** sign indicates the water is safe. Water is not tested after Labor Day unless there has been a positive test. Fort Worden's waters tend to be very clean! You can check beaches for swimming closures at this website:

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/coastalAtlas/Tools/BeachClosure.aspx>

Why do we do this?

While we are not necessarily concerned about the health risks enterococcus poses to humans, it serves as an indicator that there may have been a sewage leak or spill. In that case, there could be other harmful bacteria or viruses in the water capable of making people very ill. If high enterococcus levels are found in our samples, we can reduce the chance of someone getting sick by posting an advisory or placing a ban on swimming at that particular beach.

2023

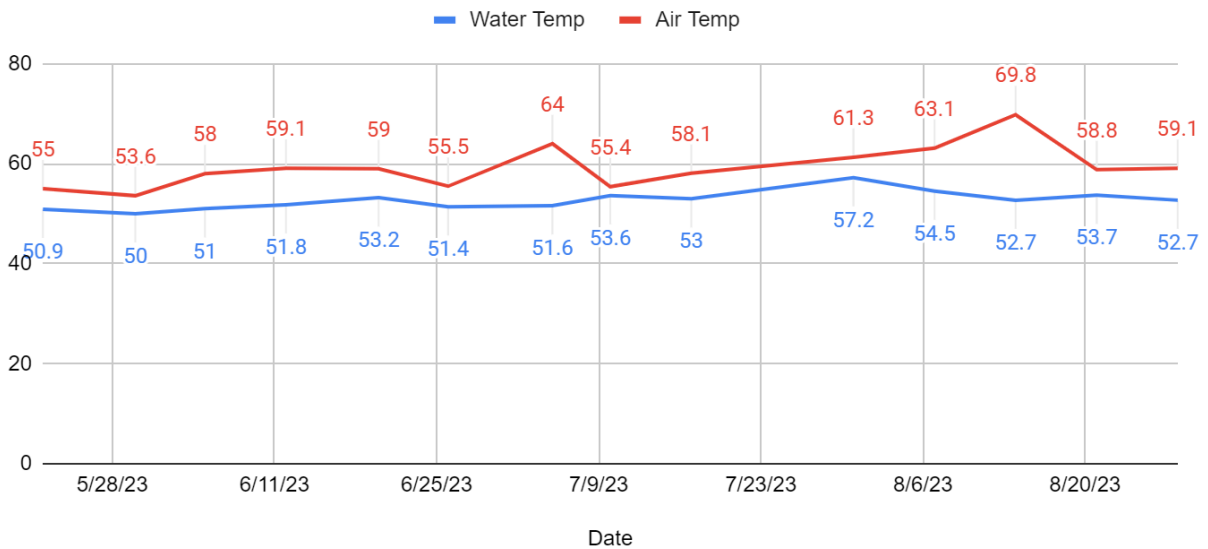
In 2023, two dedicated volunteers, Peggy Albers and Jassen Bowman, took turns each week collecting water samples from three locations at Fort Worden State Park from May 22 - Aug. 28. They recorded water and air temperature and water salinity, and counted the number of people, birds and dogs using the beach in the sampling area. This year, no hazardous conditions were



discovered; Fort Worden Beaches rarely reach action levels. We did have one scare - taken at a very low tide amidst a flock of birds - fortunately subsequent samples came back safe.

Air temperatures taken on the morning sampling days ranged from 51 - 69.8 F°. And the water temperature stayed between 50 and 57.2 F°.

Fort Worden Beach Water Temp and Air Temp (F°) May 22 - Aug 28, 2023



Annual reports from the previous summer season are usually published the following winter. You can find 2022 report at:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Research-Data/Monitoring-assessment/BEACH-annual-report>

Partner with Jefferson County Department of Public Health, and WA State Dept of Ecology and Health. Funded by the EPA.

Link: <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-quality/Saltwater/BEACH-program>