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## **CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND**

**PRESS RELEASE:**  
For immediate release

Contact: Tybee Island City Hall  
(912) 786-4573

### **Tybee Island Southern Beaches Swimming Advisory Lifted**

Tybee Island, Ga. – (August 12, 2011) The swimming advisory issued yesterday for beaches on the south end of Tybee Island was lifted earlier this afternoon by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and beach goers are free to swim.

To ensure the health and safety of beachgoers all over the State of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, has a beach water quality testing program that provides test reports at 26 different beaches along the Georgia coast. As water contamination can arise from any number of both natural and man-made conditions, this continuous testing helps to catch any water problems quickly before any extended health problems can affect humans swimming in these areas.

“We’re delighted to announce that the threat of high levels of bacteria has passed and beach-goers are free to enjoy the surf at their leisure,” said Jason Buelterman, Mayor of Tybee Island. “Although any threat to our waters is a serious concern, it is typical for coastal waters to experience bacterial threats occasionally throughout the year. This is the first closure we’ve experienced at South Beach in several years.”

In fact, Tybee has an excellent record, suffering from very few beach advisories placed by the GaDNR. The beach most frequently affected is near the Polk Street crossover on the north end of the island, where a close proximity to the bird wildlife sanctuary and the resulting bird waste can sometimes result in a high bacteria count. There have been large areas affected in past years by the large numbers of birds in the marsh and back river which resulted in beach advisories for beaches on the back river side of the island. It is likely that the recent beach advisory placed on Tybee’s south beaches resulted from this same contamination, combined with recent heavy rains, an extended period of very high temperatures and a recent cycle of higher tides, causing the contaminated waters to be washed down and pulled out of the back river area during the movement of water back out to sea during low tide.

The GaDNR testing takes place at five different crossovers on Tybee, and thus, swimmers can rest assured that contamination at one location is unlikely to show up as contamination at another. Even though the recent advisory was for 11th Street to 18th Street crossover beaches, any beach area not named in an advisory can still be used for swimming.

Testing also takes place on a 24 hour cycle; water taken up for testing does not get reported until the next day. This delay goes both ways – swimmers could be in contaminated waters for a little while before an

**P.O. Box 2749 – 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328-2749**  
**(866) 786-4573 – FAX (866) 786-5737**  
**[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)**



advisory is issued, and contamination may be cleared up before an advisory is actually lifted. A dramatically contaminated beach will be closed rather than having an advisory posted.

If a point source, like a leaking sewage pipe, can be identified as the cause for a bacterial elevation, repairs and mitigation can be undertaken immediately. Expensive genetic testing can be undertaken to determine if bacteria have originated from human waste, other animals, or bird waste. Sewage leaks can usually be spotted quickly for repair without that expense and added delay. However, without such an identifiable point source, Mayor Buelterman said, "The only response is to wait for the tides to restore the balance of our waters."

GaDNR has a web site that posts test results for all Georgia beaches daily, at <http://www.coastalgadnr.org/node/2130>. The City of Tybee keeps a section of their home page dedicated to a set of links regarding water conditions, and the link to the Coastal Resources Division test results page can always be found there as well at <http://www.cityoftybee.org>. In addition, the City highlights any unusual beach conditions there and on the City of Tybee Island Facebook page and Twitter feed. The status of any beach advisories will be reflected at each of these sites shortly after notification is received from the DNR.

*About Tybee Island, GA.: The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches, and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Post Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year's Days off the Walter W. Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.*

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