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## Which Halifax area beaches closed the most this summer and why

Metro crunched the numbers to find out which beaches in Halifax Regional Municipality were closed the most in July and August.

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People sit near Black Rock Beach, which was closed the fourth most of beaches in HRM due to high bacteria levels this summer.

By: **Zane Woodford** Metro Published on Wed Aug 30 2017

With beach season coming to a close on Thursday, Metro has crunched the numbers to find out which beach in Halifax Regional Municipality was closed the most this summer.

It wasn't difficult: Kinsmen Beach in Lower Sackville never even opened, meaning it takes the dirty cake for the most days closed due to high bacteria levels with 61 as of Wednesday.

Birch Cove Beach on Lake Banook in Dartmouth and Government Wharf in Musquodoboit Harbour are tied for second place, with each one closed for 32 days this summer.

And rounding out the filthy podium is Kinap Beach in Porter's Lake, which was closed for a total of 18 days this summer.

**Why was the beach closed?**

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You won't be surprised to learn the probable cause of a lot of beach closures in Halifax.

It's poop ... or "nutrients."

HRM environmental performance officer Cameron Deacoff is in charge of testing the water at 23 beaches in the municipality.

He and his team don't investigate the source of bacteria at the beaches, but at Kinsmen Beach in Lower Sackville – which was closed all summer due to bacteria levels – Deacoff has an idea of the source.

"I haven't been there personally in quite some time, but every time I do go there, there's usually a pretty decent-sized population of ducks and geese in the area," he said, adding that there's also a lot of "pet waste" around the lake.

"Waste from animals of all types contributes nutrients and bacteria that would certainly elevate counts that are found in the beach sampling program."

At other beaches, it could be human "nutrients" causing the problem.

Near beaches outside the Halifax Water service area, where homes have septic systems that don't always function properly, the land is "saturated with nutrients," and those "nutrients" end up in lakes," Deacoff said.

At a beach like Birch Cove in Dartmouth – which tied for second-most days closed this year – the cause could be any number of sources, from rainwater washing down from the Mic Mac Mall parking lot, to weeds in the lake.

Deacoff's team tests the water at the beaches weekly in July and August, taking five samples at each one and sending them off for testing. When the results say the bacteria levels are higher than Health Canada guidelines allow, they shut them down – news releases and tweets go out, and signs go up.

HRM spokesperson Brendan Elliott said lifeguards are still on duty when the beaches are closed.

They recommend people don't swim, but they can't stop them. And if people do decide to swim, the lifeguards will still wade in to save them if necessary.

Thursday is the last day for supervision and testing at beaches in HRM.

**Which beaches were closed the most:**

Kinsmen Beach in Lower Sackville: 61 days.

Birch Cove Beach on Lake Banook in Dartmouth and Government Wharf in Musquodoboit Harbour: 32 days

Kinap Beach in Porter's Lake: 18 days

Black Rock Beach in Point Pleasant Park: 17 days

Dingle Beach in Fleming Park: 12 days

Lake Echo Beach in Lake Echo: 10 days

Albro Lake Beach in Dartmouth: 6 days

Oakfield Beach on Grand Lake and Springfield Lake in Sackville: 5 days

The other 13 water-tested beaches in HRM were open all summer.



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