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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Hamsterly Beach Warning Advisory

July 21, 2011

What is the advisory?

Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks would like to inform the public that the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) medical health officer has posted a warning advisory of bacteriological counts readings at Hamsterly Beach in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.

The park and beaches will remain open to the public, however, the CRD would like to advise the public that swimming and wading in the water at Hamsterly Beach may be unsafe and is not recommended.

What is the potential hazard?

Bacteriological counts in these waters exceed acceptable limits and as a result swimming, wading or drinking from the water is not considered safe. Swimming in water with unacceptable bacteria levels can increase the risk of ear, nose and throat infection or stomach illnesses.

Why does the park remain open?

Public beaches are not technically "closed" to public access. A warning sign is posted advising the public that the water may be unsafe for swimming.

What is being done to safe guard the public?

VIHA monitors beaches regularly to protect swimmers from illnesses that may be linked to unacceptable bacteria levels.

Regional Parks posts warning signs at the beach and on the website which advise the public that the water may be unsafe for swimming at the direction of VIHA when:

- the geometric mean of the sampling results exceeds 200 fecal coliform per 100 ml of water, or
- when circumstances warrant.

These sampling results indicate a higher risk of infection. Warning signs remain posted until sample results are once again within acceptable limits. (Source: VIHA)

What causes the high bacteria levels?

It is most likely fecal coliform from Canada Geese droppings on the beach.

What is Regional Parks doing to control geese populations in the park?

The beaches are raked on a regular basis to remove goose droppings. Regional Parks has contracted a professional dog handler to move the geese to areas away from the beaches in a humane and environmentally sensitive manner.

Where can I find out more information about the VIHA beach report?

VIHA posts a beach report at their website:

http://www.viha.ca/mho/water/beach_reports.htm