

# Sauble not posted lightly

## Owen Sound Sun Times

June 15, 2012

By Denis Langlois

E. coli bacteria levels that prompted public health officials to post Sauble Beach as unsafe for bathing were the highest ever recorded for this time of year at the beach, medical officer of health Dr. Hazel Lynn said Friday.

She said the decision to post the beach and warn people to stay out of the water ahead of an expected sunny, warm weekend was not made lightly.

"It's my responsibility to protect the health of the public," she said in an interview after a meeting of the Grey Bruce Health Unit board in Owen Sound.

"I don't have a policeman there making sure you stay out of the water, but I wouldn't swim in it myself and I wouldn't have my granddaughter swim in it and I don't think anyone else should."

Tests taken from the beach Tuesday and sent to a laboratory in London revealed levels of E. coli bacteria that exceed by about 10 times "acceptable" standards set by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The levels indicate "fecal contamination," safe water program manager Andrew Barton said Thursday.

The beach will remain posted until new samples indicate levels have returned to the acceptable range. The next time public health can test the water is Monday. It usually takes two business days to get results back.

"I'm a little concerned about the forecast for rain on Sunday and Monday, so we will probably be out testing again on Wednesday as well," Barton said Friday.

Lynn said E. coli can cause disease and make people ill.

Water samples were taken by the health unit in waist-deep water, she said, and bacterial counts are even higher closer to shore.

"An adult that goes out 20 metres and swims and showers off when they come in and they don't swallow the water and they don't have their hands in their mouth, maybe not anything (will happen). However, it's more children playing near the edge" that is a concern, she said.

Lynn told the public health board that heavy rain and waves can lead to higher bacteria levels in the water.

But she said faulty septic tanks in the area could also be to blame.

South Bruce Peninsula Coun. Janice Jackson, who represents the Sauble Beach ward, was quick to shoot down that suggestion, saying the high bacteria levels "has nothing to do with sewage systems."

She said it is "regrettable" to suggest otherwise. There is no proof that septic tanks at Sauble Beach have caused problems with the lake water, she said.

The need for a municipal sewage treatment system at Sauble Beach has long been controversial.

There was once a plan to install a major water and sewer pipeline in the area.

South Bruce Peninsula council budgeted \$85,000 in 2012 to pay a company to do pollution testing at Sauble. Samples will be taken from the beach and 100 private wells. It will also determine if the bacteria in the water is from humans.

Meanwhile, Jackson said the unsafe for bathing posting should not deter people from enjoying Sauble Beach this weekend.

Most people don't go in the water anyway, she said.

She said the posting is "terrible for business."

Beach information is posted at [www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca](http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca).

*Article ID# 3586075*