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Del. beach water quality ties for first in nation

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Delaware was one of three states with the nation's best beach water quality on average in 2008, according to a yearly Natural Resources Defense Council report card issued today.

The state tied with New Hampshire and Virginia for the top spot, with only 1 percent of samples across 24 beaches exceeding state bacteria limits. The two Delaware sites with high readings -- Holts Landing State Park and Tower Road Bayside -- both are inland bay beaches, at the edge of waters long acknowledged to have pollution and circulation problems.

Nationwide, the NRDC found that 20,000 beach closings were ordered in 2008, a 10 percent decline from the previous year.

Nancy Stoner, an NRDC water quality expert, said the decrease appeared to be related to dry conditions in parts of the country and early closings of beaches because of state and local financial problems.

Four Delaware beaches earned four-star ratings and listings as one of the nation's 200 most popular beaches: Bethany Beach, Dewey Beach, Fenwick Island and Rehoboth Beach. The state failed to get a five-star rating, the highest, only because the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control tests water only weekly during swimming season.

"Those beaches all would have gotten five stars if they would have only monitored more than once a week," Stoner said.

Ocean City, Md., was one of the beaches awarded 5-star ratings.



Glenn Hall King, of the water resources division of DNREC, shows a water sample he took from the beach at Cape Henlopen State Park.