PRESS RELEASE

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GENERAL RAIN ADVISORY FOR COUNTYWIDE BEACHES ISSUED BY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – With heavy rainfall expected across the region today and forecasted rainfall continuing into next week, Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services wants to remind residents about potential health risks associated with storm water runoff at countywide beaches. Storm water is untreated rain water that flows through the drain system into creeks, the ocean, and other waterways. Contact with storm water while swimming or surfing may increase the risk for certain types of illnesses such as rashes, fever, chills, ear infections, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Unlike the municipal sewer system, water carried by a storm drain system is not treated. To minimize potential health risks, it is recommended that people do not swim, play or surf in the ocean and creeks for at least **three days** following a rain event. Beachgoers should also avoid areas near the outfall from drainpipes and creeks that enter the ocean following a rain event as storm water runoff may carry high levels of bacteria and pollutants.

Sport harvesters should wait at least 10 days after a significant rain to harvest shellfish. High bacterial levels, pesticide, herbicide and motor oil grease flushed into the ocean with the storm runoff may contaminate the shellfish beds. Adequate cooking of shellfish will destroy harmful bacteria, but may not be effective in killing viruses. In addition, cooking does not eliminate chemical and metal pollutants in shellfish.

The County of Santa Barbara implements a variety of programs to protect public health and enhance environmental quality of County watersheds and beaches. Working to improve water quality by reducing or treating sources of pollution is a multi-faceted task.
To find out what is being done to improve water quality and how you can help, visit www.sbprojectcleanwater.org.

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