

City Hall
Nine Dale Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930



CITY OF GLOUCESTER
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

TEL 978-281-9700
FAX 978-281-9738
mayor@gloucester-ma.gov

MAYOR GREG VERGA

TO: City Council
FROM: Greg Verga, Mayor
CC: Board of Health
DATE: April 28, 2023
RE: Good Harbor Creek Update

As outlined in the memo to the City Council from January 12, 2023, I am providing you an update on the administration's continued efforts to identify and resolve issues related to Good Harbor Creek.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has continued to do a significant amount of investigation starting at the end of January and through this spring. I have attached a map illustrating the completed investigation area. Below is a brief description of the work conducted, much of which was included in the next step recommendations from Woodard & Curran:

- Inspection of manholes on Hartz Street and Wise Place, no defects found
- Dye testing pressure sewer main on Thatcher Road, no detection of exfiltration into the marsh or waterway
- CCTV inspection and cleaning of the sewer main on Hartz Street, no defects found
- Installation of sewer flow meters on Hartz Street and Whitham Street to monitor for surcharging events, none occurred under any environmental condition
- Enterococci testing in 20 sites in the east and west creeks upstream from Good Harbor Beach footbridge, most yielded water quality results below the standards set for bathing beaches. DPW will continue to monitor and further investigate any areas that yielded higher results. *(It is important to note that the bacterial water quality standards set for "bathing beaches" does not apply to these areas upstream. We continue to use it as a baseline to try to determine what is happening throughout the system and where contaminants may be entering the system.)*

The initial review of the data continues to suggest that there is no one identifiable source of contamination and the testing results vary with location and changing weather patterns. The internal working group has now reengaged with Woodard & Curran to synthesize the data further and prepare it for a public presentation (via Zoom) to take place the week of May 15th, which will include an opportunity for Q&A. We will provide the City Council, and the public, with the details of when and how to participate as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the Health Department began its regular, in accordance with MA Department of Public Health regulations, testing of Good Harbor Creek this week in an effort to prepare for the summer season and compare data with that continuously collected by DPW. The results from the test taken on Wednesday, April 26, 2023 detected <10 CFU. As a reminder, in marine waters, the accepted level of Enterococci for a single sample is 104 colony forming units (CFU) per 100 milliliters (cfu/100 ml) of bathing water or below. For this reason, you will notice that the "Creek is Closed" sign on Good Harbor Beach has been covered. The Health Department will continue to test Good Harbor Creek weekly throughout the summer. The Health Department will begin testing the other local bathing beaches the week of May 22nd in preparation for the start of the summer season.

We continue to take additional steps to be sure we are looking at all potential sources of contamination. The DPW and the Health Department are working together to review the files and the status of several septic systems in the Good Harbor Beach area. The administration has requested funding assistance through the state budget process for additional testing and analysis for avian-derived bacteria to determine the impact birds are having on the bacteria levels in the Creek. We are also working with the MA Department of Environmental Protection as they review our data and look forward to meeting with them in the coming weeks.

I am committed to continuing this investigation and providing updates to the council and the public on a regular basis. I look forward to you joining us at the upcoming presentation.