

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS A...

### **BMD (Beach-Mile-Day):**

A BMD is a useful measure of beach availability for recreation per year. It is a product of the number of miles of coastline and 365 days (the number of days the beach may be available for recreation in California). The BMD is a useful measure for comparing the health of beaches from year to year.

### **Closure:**

A beach is posted with a "Beach Closed" sign as a result of a sewage spill or repeated incidences of exceedances of bacterial standards from an unknown source. A closure is a notice to the public that the water is unsafe for contact and that there is a high risk of getting ill from swimming in the water. In most cases, the ocean is closed to swimming and other water contact recreation while the beach area is open for other recreational activities.

### **Posting:**

A beach is posted with a sign "Beach Warning" when at least one bacterial standard has been exceeded, but there is no known source of human sewage. The posting of warning signs alerts the public of a possible risk of illness associated with water contact. The placement of signs may be short term when a single bacterial indicator standard is exceeded or more permanent where monitoring indicates repeated contamination (e.g., from a storm drain). Warnings may also be posted where sources of contamination are identifiable and can be explained as not of human origin (e.g., resident marine mammals or seabirds).

### **Rain Advisory:**

A rain advisory is often issued when it rains because it is known from past experience that rainwater carries pollution to the beach. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts usually exceed the State standards for recreational water use. For this reason, county health officials usually recommend that beach users should not swim or surf during rain and three days after a rainstorm. Rain advisories are issued by radio or newspaper during rainstorms to warn people to avoid areas where rainwater flows onto the beach and may not be based on the actual evidence of contamination.

