
KEYS BEACH ADVISORY

Sept. 29, 2011

4:15 p.m.

Information from the Monroe County Tourist Development Council

To: Keys Accommodations (Front Desks and General Managers), VIS, Tourist Help lines

HEALTH ADVISORIES POSTED FOR HARRY HARRIS COUNTY PARK BEACH IN TAVERNIER, SOMBRERO BEACH IN MARATHON, HIGGS BEACH, SOUTH BEACH AND SMATHERS BEACH IN KEY WEST; ADVISORY DISCONTINUED FOR FORT ZACHARY TAYLOR STATE PARK IN KEY WEST

The Monroe County Health Department posted health advisories Sept. 29 for nearshore waters off Harry Harris County Park Beach in Tavernier, Sombrero Beach in Marathon, Higgs, South and Smathers beaches in Key West. The health department discontinued the health advisory posted Sept. 14 for nearshore waters off Fort Zachary Taylor State Park in Key West.

Water quality testing performed by the Monroe County Health Department indicated elevated levels of enteric bacteria at Harry Harris County Park, Sombrero, Higgs, South and Smathers beaches. The presence of enteric bacteria is an indication of fecal pollution, which may come from storm water runoff, pets and wildlife, or other sources. The bacteria may cause human illness, infections or rashes. The health department advises the public not to swim or engage in other water-related activities in nearshore waters at this location.

The advisory will remain in effect until tests indicate that bacteria levels at the affected beaches have returned to the acceptable range.

Water quality testing at South Beach show that bacteria levels in nearshore waters have returned to the acceptable range.

According to the health department, no other tested location in the Keys is under an advisory at this time. The department maintains there is no evidence of human health-related bacterial risks from snorkeling or diving on Keys coral reefs.

The Florida Department of Health maintains a toll-free, 24-hour recorded information line at 877-892-9585 or 305-293-1653.

The state health department has a water quality section on its website at <http://esetappsdoh.doh.state.fl.us/irm00beachwater/beachresults.aspx?county=Monroe> featuring a summary chart of tests at a number of Keys beach locations as well as other information.

For questions not answered by the recording or the website, contact Monroe County Health Department officials weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 305-289-2721.

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