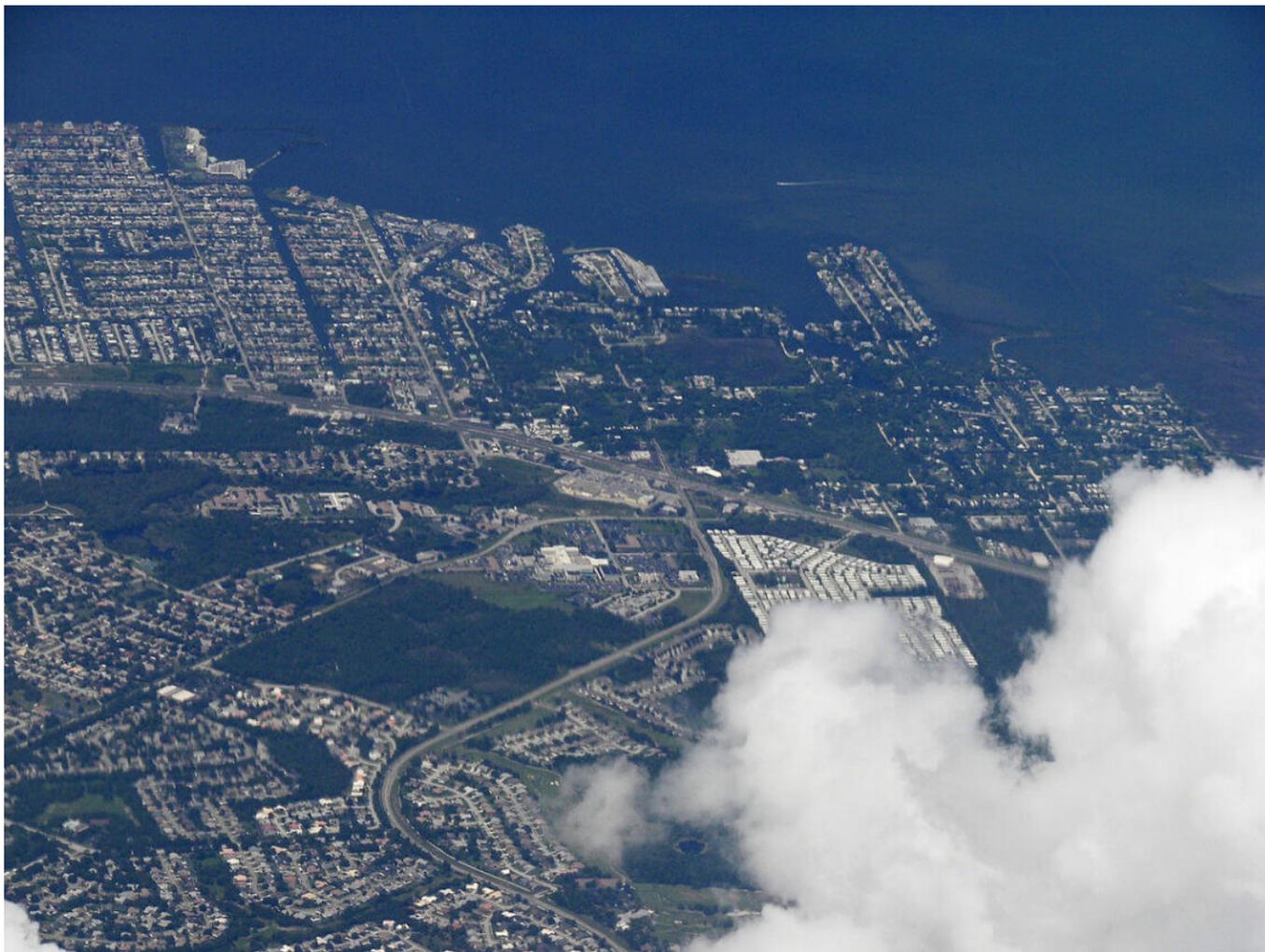


# We Are Losing Our Beaches Slowly But Surely

July 31, 2020



Hudson with the Robert J. Strickland Park in the background center on the coast. Photo from Wikipedia with link to license here: [GNU Free Documentation License](#),

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Florida's waters are becoming one large cesspool with a clean beach to swim in less and less likely to be found. Rain runoff is a contributor but all too often it is our aging sewage infrastructure, and again all too often the cause is

incompetence and carelessness of those working on and around the system.

We may have reached the tipping point where your chances are less than fifty-fifty of finding clean water nearby for swimming.

Read the complete article here in [the Tampa Bay Times](#).

*Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.*

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*– A river is like a life: once taken,  
it cannot be brought back © Jim Tatum*

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## **Environmental advocates spotlight dirty water at Florida beaches**

By [Zachary T. Sampson](#)

Published Jul. 27

A majority of Florida beaches tested for pollution in 2019 were unsafe for swimming on at least one occasion because of bacteria from sewage and stormwater runoff, according to a report from the advocacy group Environment Florida.

One of the beaches most frequently contaminated, the organization said, was at Robert J. Strickland Memorial Park in Hudson, potentially unsafe on 19 of 26 days when testing occurred. Elsewhere around Tampa Bay, several spots were cited by the advocates for cleanliness, including Indian Rocks Beach, Pass-a-Grille and the north beach at Fort De Soto Park, all of which had no documented problem days, according to the report.

“Swimming in contaminated water is just plain gross,” said Jenna Stevens, director of Environment Florida. “All too often, our beaches are plagued with pollution that can make swimmers sick.”

Statewide, the report says, 187 of 261 beaches tested last year had a day when water levels might have been unsafe for swimmers. Health officials routinely close beaches because of concerns over bacteria, which especially crop up after major rainfall.

Environment Florida said it analyzed data reported by the Florida Department of Health and looked at bacteria from fecal matter, such as E. coli. Polluted water, when swallowed or in contact with an open cut, can cause symptoms such as nausea, fever and skin rashes.

The study authors used what they said was the federal government’s “most protective” standard for beach water safety, considering bacteria levels high if at least 32 or every 1,000 swimmers might get sick.

They broke down beach pollution nationwide into regions: the Great Lakes, Gulf Coast, East Coast, West Coast. The Gulf Coast, according to the report, had the highest rate of polluted waters, with more than 80 percent of beaches potentially unsafe for swimming on at least one testing day.

Data provided by Environment Florida to the *Tampa Bay Times* show the report covers 28 beaches around Tampa Bay (in Pinellas, Pasco, Hillsborough, Manatee, Hernando and Citrus counties). Of those spots, two – Robert J. Strickland in Pasco and Palma Sola Beach South in Manatee – showed potentially problematic levels of bacteria in the water on more than 10 test days. Overall, the data include 1,073 test days, with a little more than 10 percent flagged for potentially problematic water pollution.

St. Petersburg City Council member Darden Rice, on a webinar

hosted by Environment Florida, discussed [spills in the city years ago that released up to a billion gallons of wastewater](#), some of it ending up in Tampa Bay. Rice said the problems, here and across the state, include old pipes and drainage systems that fail to meet the needs of Florida's swelling population and heavy rains...

*Times staff writers Josh Solomon and Emily L. Mahoney contributed to this report.*

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[ZACHARY T. SAMPSON](#)

Environment Reporter