



Oh buoy, a clean beach

The water's fine at Pier 4 since city's goose blockade floated into use

BY JOHN BURMAN

Buoys strung on a line seem to be making the beach at Hamilton's Pier 4 Park a better place to play.

There has been an improvement in water quality since the line was strung last summer to keep geese from swimming into the beach lagoon and doing what all geese do after eating.

Pier 4 is the first Hamilton beach where an intervention was tried in an effort to improve water quality and keep the beach open more often.

"Looking at the test results after the line went out and this year, the results look positive," Eric Matthews, manager of the health protection branch of the city's public health unit said yesterday.

So far this year, after 11 weeks of testing, the Pier 4 beach has been closed five weeks. In the same time period last year, with 10 weeks of testing it was closed eight weeks.

"It is a positive direction for the water quality," said Matthews, adding the city is holding off deciding whether to string wires over the beach to discourage geese and gulls. They are waiting until the current project is fully evaluated.

As the temperature soars and thoughts turn to splashing at the beach, Matthews' thoughts turn to the biggest problem: Bayfront Park.

That beach is posted as unsafe more often than most beaches in the area because it regularly tests positive for high E. coli bacteria.

A beach is posted when an average of greater than 100 E. coli bacteria are found per 100 ml of water. E. coli bacteria are an indicator of fecal contamination from human and animal sources.

It also indicates that other harmful micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses and parasites may also be present.

Beaches can be affected by

surface water runoff from agricultural land, storm water runoff and sewers, waterfowl and animals and environmental conditions like wind, rain, sunlight and air and water temperature. Water quality can change quickly due to weather conditions.

Matthews said Bayfront Park is a concern because the shore is shaped like a cul-de-sac and water circulation through the area may be poor.

And he says a lot of birds use the beach, too. Both Pier 4 and Bayfront were closed in the city's latest beach results released July 17.

Hamilton Conservation area beaches were listed safe the same day.

Hamilton's Lake Ontario beaches are the stars, says Matthews.

"I think the last time one was posted was August 2004," He said. "We are lucky to have those beaches."

Both the Beachway North and

South beaches in Burlington are reported safe for swimming as of yesterday. So are Kelso Conservation area and Oakville's Coronation Park.

Oakville's Bronte Beach and Prospect Park Old Beach in Halton Hills were posted unsafe yesterday as was Coronation Park West beach in Oakville due to heavy algae growth.

The Niagara health unit watches 33 beaches on lakes Ontario and Erie and the Welland and Niagara rivers.

But it seems to be the beaches in St. Catharines that get closed. This week, Jones Beach — which opened earlier this summer for the first time in 10 years — and Garden City Beach are both closed. Lakeside and Charles Daly Park are open.

St. Catharines is working towards eliminating combined storm and sanitation sewers to help eliminate the problem.

jborman@thespec.com
905-526-2469



TED BRELLISFORD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Buoys put in the water at Pier 4 Park by the city seem to be keeping the geese out and therefore the bacteria levels down.