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## PRESS RELEASE

### Prouty Beach Waterfront Temporarily Closed

Newport's Prouty Beach on Lake Memphremagog was temporarily closed Wednesday due to high levels of E. Coli discovered for the first time in five years. "Typically, Newport has enough rain activity to keep levels at Prouty Beach far below the safety threshold," says Parks & Recreation Director Jessica Booth. "This year, with dry weather and an active goose population inhabiting the park, we've seen our readings change."



In Vermont, measuring for Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria is the best way to gauge freshwater beach quality for human health. Generally, E. coli bacteria itself does not present a health issue, but its presence indicates that there may be other disease-causing germs in the water. High levels of E. coli doesn't necessarily mean a beach is unhealthy or polluted, but it is a general sign that water needs to be inspected and monitored closely for public safety.

Water at Prouty Beach is tested on a weekly basis in three areas where the public recreates most frequently. One sample in the most recent batch of three, tested higher than the EPA's guidance level for recreational water quality. "E. coli bacteria density should not exceed 235

colonies per 100 milliliters of water in swimming areas," explains Pedro Grondin, Chief Operator at the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. "Our last plate count for one of the areas at Prouty showed 372 E. Coli bacteria colonies. The other two samples totaled 56 colonies and 105 colonies which are far below the guidance level, but with accurate control results, we are confident the third result wasn't an error." Grondin is in the process of testing new samples submitted by the Parks & Recreation department as they continue monitoring the area. Tests take about 24 hrs to produce results.

Staff at Prouty Campground were disappointed to close the beach, but are not surprised that one particular sample area tested positive. E. Coli is by far the most common reason for beach closures in Vermont because bacteria from nearby animal feces and storm water gets washed into ponds and lakes frequently during the summer. Although rain events have been minimal this year, the Parks & Recreation staff have been dealing with a flock of nuisance geese on the waterfront since early June and their droppings may be to blame. "We spend countless hours cleaning up after them. On a typical day, we fill about two five-gallon pails with goose feces on a waterfront that only spans about 300 feet," says Jessica Booth. "It's part of our morning routine every day and despite our effort, it's a never-ending battle and it impacts water quality."

City officials hope to re-open the swimming area as early as the weekend if results come back negative and water quality returns to normal. Until then, Parks & Recreation staff encourage swimmers to stay out of the water near Prouty Beach and enjoy the lake safely on a boat, fishing on shore or sunbathing on the sand instead.