



The Boston Globe
Via email

August 15, 2025

To the Editor:

Regarding “*Bacteria now the bane at beaches,*” (published 8/14/25).

This article implies that combined sewage overflows are causing beaches to close in Boston. But state water quality [testing](#) shows that at least in Boston Harbor, that is not the case.

Boston’s Harbor beaches are actually the [cleanest urban beaches in the country](#), thanks to MWRA building a massive underground tank in Dorchester that stores stormwater runoff for later treatment at MWRA’s Deer Island plant.

While combined sewage systems still exist in the MWRA system, the [fecal bacteria counts](#) downstream of active combined sewage outfalls is actually lower than upstream—and often low enough for safe swimming.

The Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA supports reducing the amount of pollution entering all our water bodies, but the evidence shows that stormwater appears to be the source of most of the problem. Addressing the cleanliness of stormwater—or allowing it to seep into the ground where it falls—will make a greater impact on beach closures.

Kannan Vembu

Chair, Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA

*WAC is a citizens’ advisory committee to the MWRA on wastewater issues. We provide an independent forum for discussion of these matters. Environmental improvement, safety, cost and technical issues are all considered when formulating our recommendations.*¹ | Page