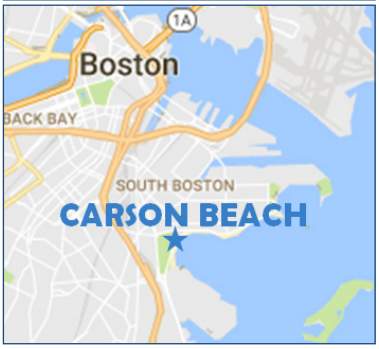
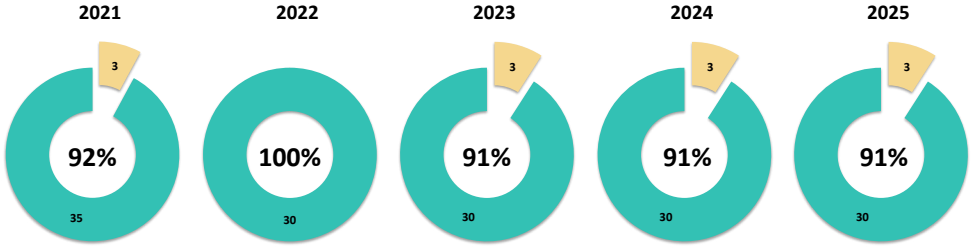
Carson Beach

Water quality at South Boston's Carson Beach meets swimming standards nearly all the time.







In the last five years, 91% to 100% of water samples have met swimming standards at Carson Beach. To meet the standard, a single sample must have *Enterococcus** levels of less than 104 counts in 100 milliliters (mL) of a beach water sample. Water samples are collected at two locations at Carson Beach and analyzed in a laboratory to determine the *Enterococcus* counts. Dark teal represents the proportion of samples meeting the standard, 104 counts per 100 mL of water or less; light yellow represents the proportion with higher than 104 counts per 100 mL of water. Small numbers in the charts represent the number of samples collected each year.

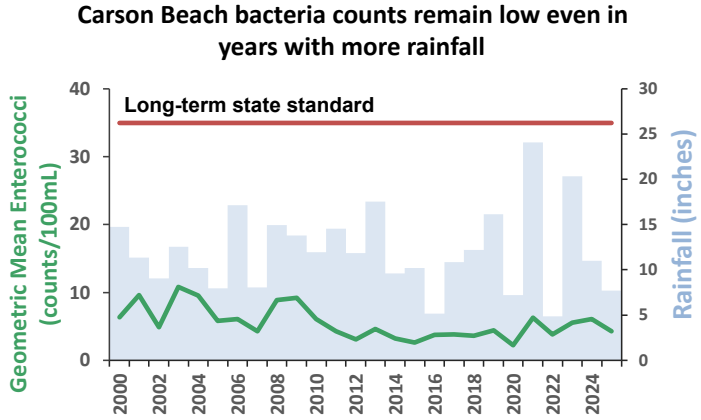
* *Enterococcus* is a bacteria used as an indicator of fecal contamination in ocean water

Beach Posting Program



Water quality at Carson Beach is monitored throughout the swimming season in compliance with Massachusetts Department of Public Health beach testing guidelines, approximately from Memorial Day to Labor Day of each year. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation manages the beach posting program at Carson Beach, displaying blue flags at the beach when bacteria levels meet single sample limits (less than 104 counts of *Enterococcus* per 100 mL of water), and red flags when bacteria levels fail to meet the limit. Red flags are also flown following extreme weather events. The main source of high bacteria levels at Carson Beach in dry weather is from animal waste (usually birds and dogs). After heavy rain, high bacteria levels can also be caused by stormwater runoff or combined sewer overflows (CSOs). However, these overflows are rare, as MWRA's South Boston CSO storage tunnel, completed in 2011, has virtually eliminated CSO discharges to Carson Beach in all but the largest storms (those storms that occur, on average, only once every 25 years).

Historical Beach Water Quality and Rainfall



Enterococcus is a bacterial indicator of human and animal waste in marine waters, and its presence helps environmental managers determine if conditions may be unsafe for swimming. In addition to the single sample standard above, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection requires that long-term *Enterococcus* levels are below a long-term standard of 35 counts per 100 mL of water in all recreational swimming areas. Long-term averages at Carson Beach have historically been well below this threshold, even in seasons with heavy rain.

For up-to-date information, please visit the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's beach water quality dashboard.
For questions about this fact sheet, email the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority at web.enquad@mwra.com.
Last updated 11/6/2026.