

Clean Ocean Action
Rally for The Bayshore

Borough of Highlands Council Meeting
November 04, 2026



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Joe Ahart: Community Science & Outreach Coordinator

Clean Ocean Action



- Established in 1984
- Leading national and regional voice working to protect waterways and the ocean from pollution
- Goal - Improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters off the New Jersey/New York coast
- Science, Law, Research, Education, and Citizen Action for ocean protection

KM1

COA's Rally for the Waterways

KM2

Poo-llution Trackdown with a difference

Why?

To **protect** the water quality of coastal watersheds - public health, recreational uses, shellfish harvesting

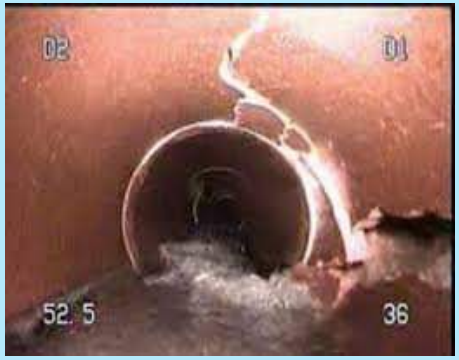
How?

- Fecal pollution **detection** by testing for Fecal indicator bacteria (FIB)
  - Do the samples meet water quality standards (NJDEP) for the designated use
- **Track down** what causes this pollution (aka more upstream testing)
  - Pollution sources – animals, pet wastes, human, wildlife
- What **actions** can be taken by communities, municipalities, and individuals to improve and restore the water quality?

KM1

Rally for the Waterways – since 2016

Tracking down “POO-llution” in Coastal Watersheds











Rally Mantra - Watershed Mindfulness

*The understanding that **we** are connected to, and responsible for, our vast network of waterways that ultimately lead to the ocean, and that **we** should **take action** to protect them.*



Rally Framework
"Find-it, Fix-it, No-Blame"

- Identify and Eliminate Pollution Sources
- Collaborative Solutions driven by Science
- All-around efforts – education, engagement, water quality improvement
- Break the chronic POLLUTION CYCLE

Commonalities/Consistencies in Approach

- Problem identification – review history
- Inform local municipalities and garner support
- Assess data needs, data gaps, collaborate and design a monitoring plan
- Engage local community support
- Scientific rigor – from sampling to testing
- Share the results
- Determine next steps collaboratively to solve the pollution problem

  - *Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) - NJDEP*
  - *Trained Community Scientists for sampling*
  - *Inhouse Water quality laboratory and trained COA staff*
  - *NJDEP and other certified labs*

Find It, Fix It, No-Blame Game

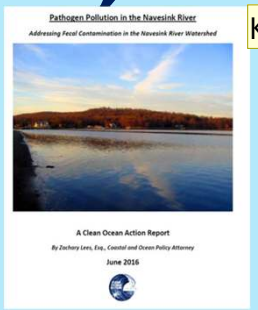
2016 – Rally for the Navesink

2017 – Rally for Deal Lake

2020 – Covid! Rally for Barnegat Bay

2023 – Rally for Two Rivers

2026 – Rally for the Bayshore KM3

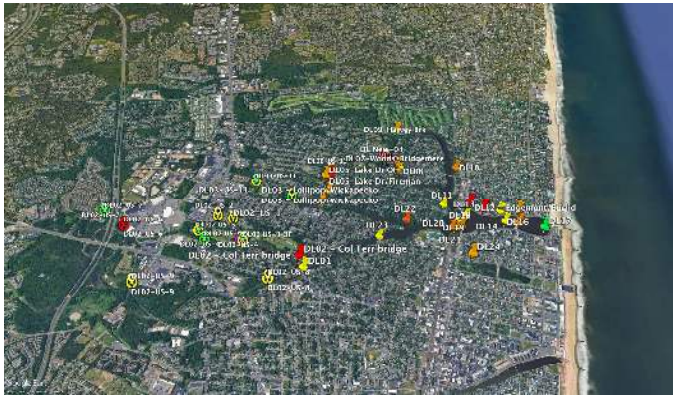


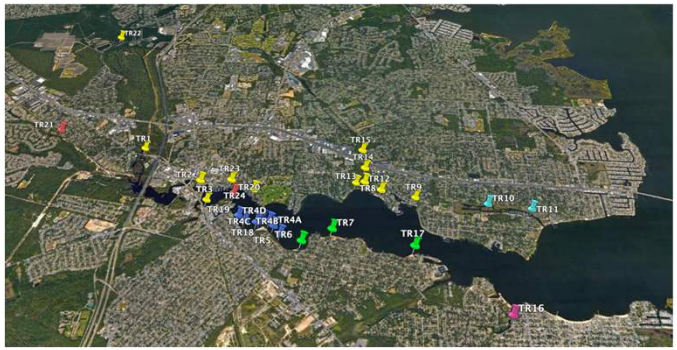
KM1

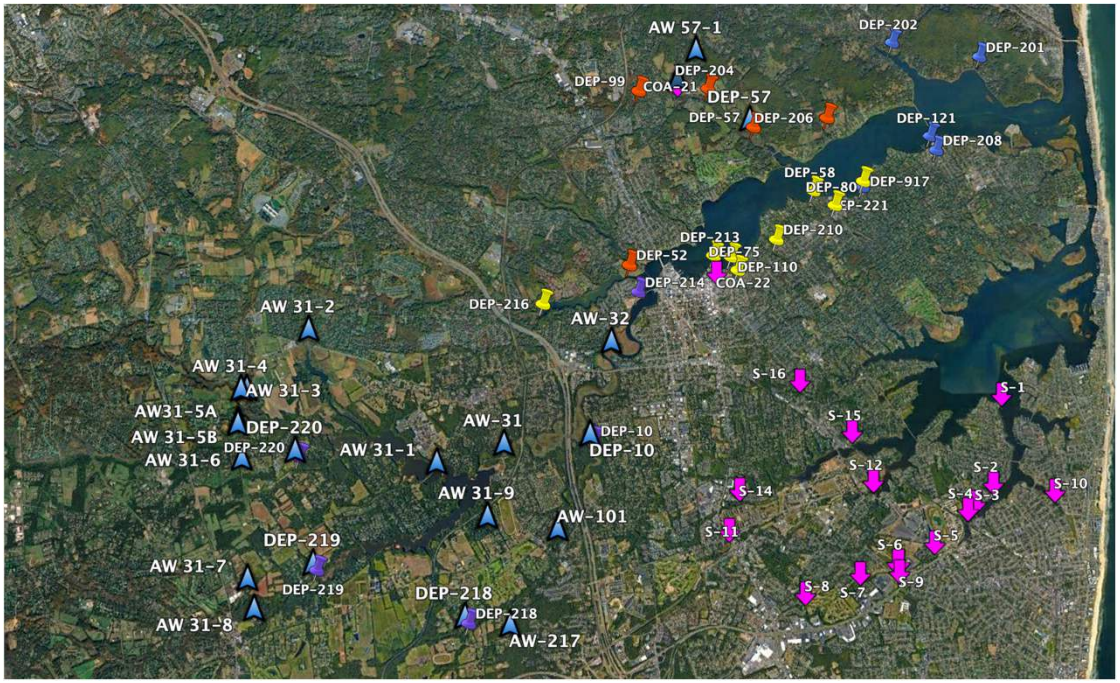
1. FIND
   - Bacteria source track down and monitoring with adherence to data quality
   - Rally the Community Scientists and **inhouse WQ lab**
2. FIX
   - Outreach and collaboration with **municipal entities** and **elected officials** to fix sources of pollution
   - Rally the Action
3. Break the chronic cycle of pollution
   - Advocate and implement sustainable solutions that stick!
   - Rally the Solution(s)
4. Watershed Mindfulness
   - Science, data, community science, municipal engagement, **community and K-12 education** and outreach, Eco-Fest
   - Rally Stewardship

KM

KM1


DL02 - Col Terr bridge
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TR4A
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TR4C
TR4D
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TR23
TR24


AW 57-1
DEP-202
DEP-201
DEP-204
DEP-99
COA-21
DEP-57
DEP-57
DEP-206
DEP-121
DEP-208
DEP-58
DEP-80
DEP-917
P-221
DEP-213
DEP-210
DEP-52
DEP-75
DEP-110
DEP-214
COA-22
DEP-216
AW 31-2
AW-32
AW 31-4
AW 31-3
S-16
S-1
AW31-5A
DEP-220
AW-31
S-15
AW 31-5B
DEP-220
AW 31-1
DEP-10
DEP-10
AW 31-6
S-12
S-2
S-14
S-10
S-4
S-3
AW 31-9
AW-101
S-11
DEP-219
S-5
AW 31-7
S-6
DEP-219
S-8
S-7
S-9
DEP-218
DEP-218
AW 31-8
AW-217





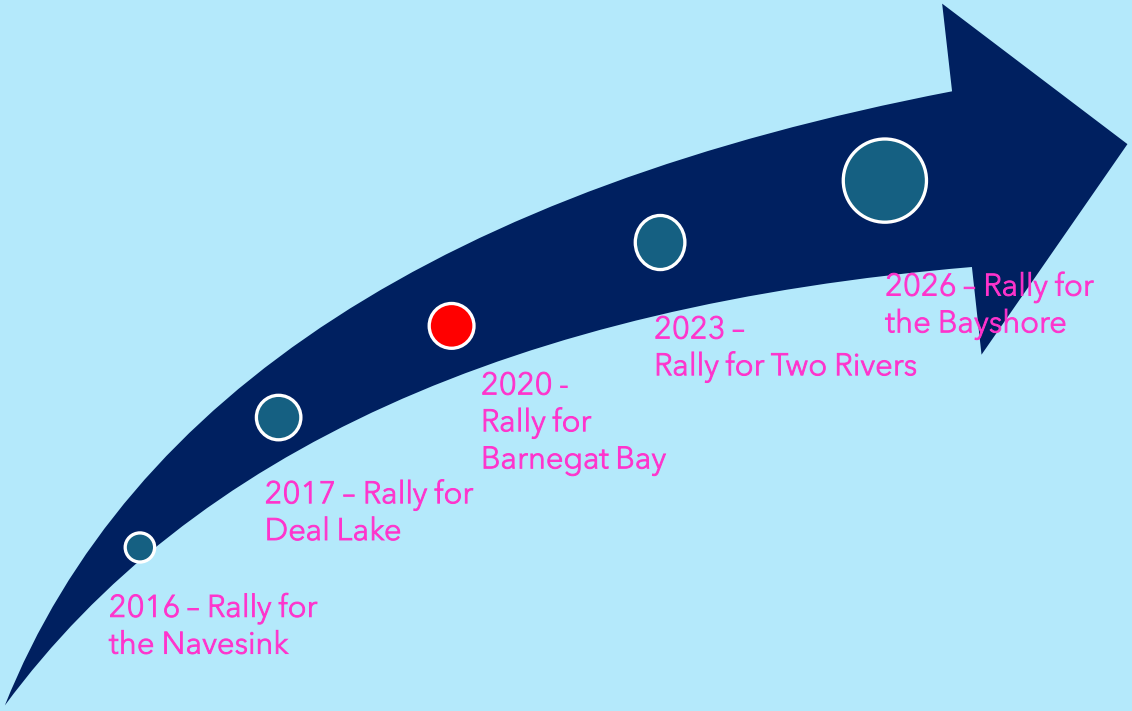








Collaborative Rally Accomplishments



Healthy Waterways is a Continuum

- Identified upstream pollution sources
- Prioritized hotspots
- Source track down - miles of pipes, manholes, catch basins assessed
- Enabled municipal infrastructure investigations, fixes, improvement plans
- Environmental Commissions, Green Teams, Focused sub-committees
- Improved advocacy and community engagement
- Improved water quality in many waterways – Eliminated sources

KM1

High fecal bacteria levels trigger swim advisories, closures at New Jersey beaches

While Enterococci bacteria themselves usually do not cause illness, their presence acts as a warning sign that more dangerous viruses or bacteria could be lurking in the water.

- ☑ **Four New Jersey beaches closed Thursday to swimming after high bacteria readings**
- ☑ **Forty-eight ocean, bay and river beaches remain under swimming advisories**

High Bacteria Levels Spark Beach Closures Along The Jersey Shore: See Where

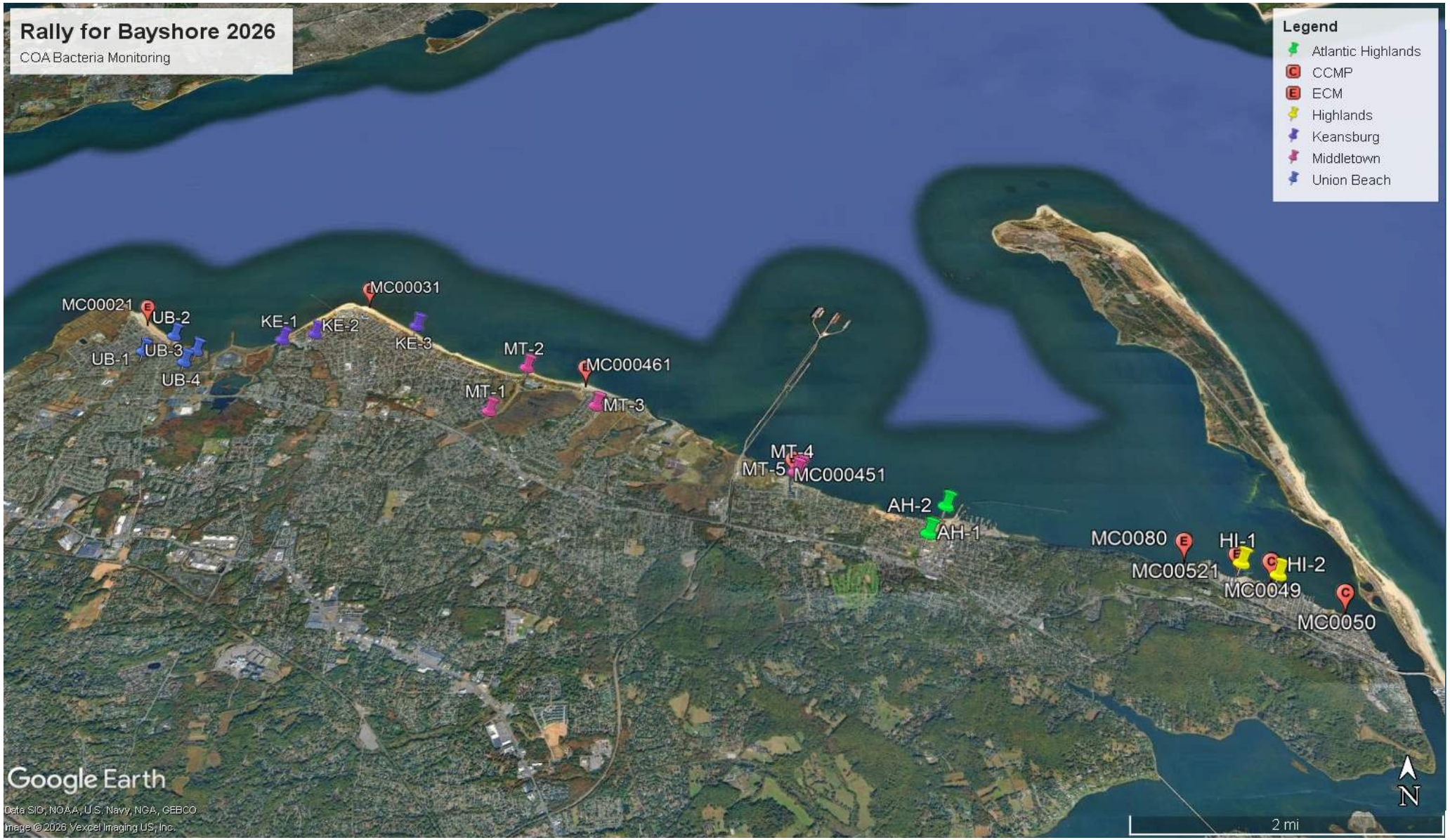
The closures come after heavy rain drenched parts of the Garden State earlier in the week and led to severe flooding along the shore.

Nearly 2 dozen N.J beaches under advisories for high levels of bacteria



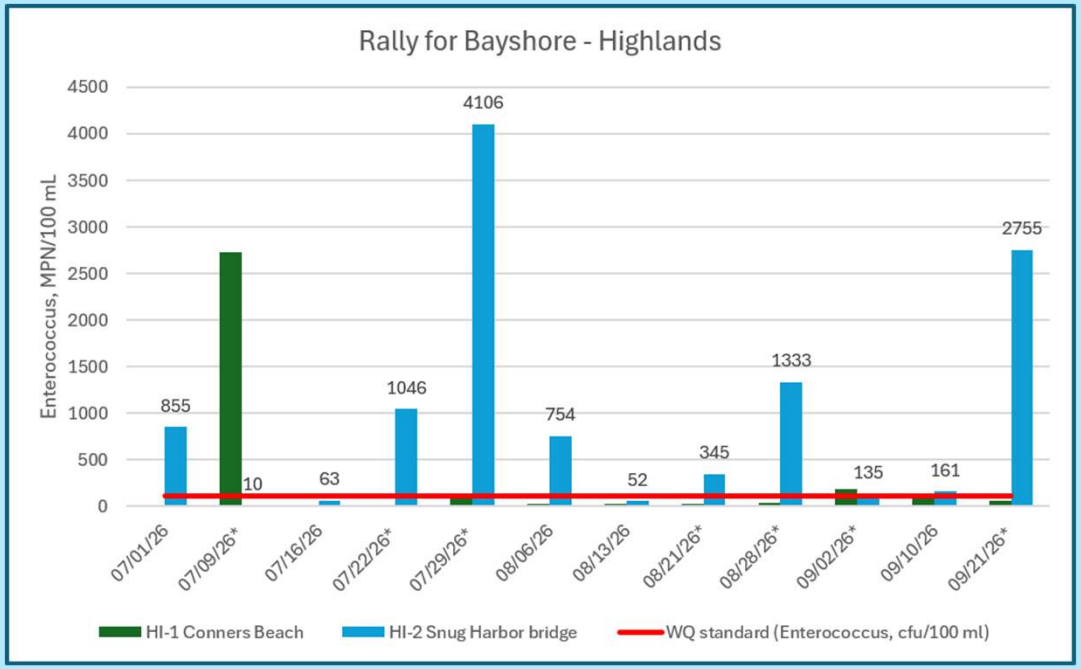
COA determination - Rally for the Bayshore

- Chronic and routine bacteria exceedances in the Bayshore Area
- Bayshore can benefit from the Rally for the Waterways Program


Rally for Bayshore 2026
COA Bacteria Monitoring
Legend
Atlantic Highlands
CCMP
ECM
Highlands
Keansburg
Middletown
Union Beach
MC00021
UB-2
UB-1
UB-3
UB-4
KE-1
KE-2
MC00031
KE-3
MT-2
MC000461
MT-1
MT-3
MT-4
MT-5
MC000451
AH-2
AH-1
MC0080
MC00521
HI-1
HI-2
MC0049
MC0050
Google Earth
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image © 2026 Vexcel Imaging US, Inc.
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Rally for Bayshore Bacteria Monitoring 2026

- No. of sites – 16 (Bay and upstream tributaries)
- July – October 2026
- Weekly monitoring (July – Labor Day; biweekly thereafter)
- Ambient and wet weather
- Sample collection – trained COA staff and community scientist
- Enterococcus testing – IDEXX Enterolert Method (EPA/ASTM)
- COA inhouse Water Quality laboratory
- *Sample collection and analysis as per an existing Quality Assurance Project Plan for Rally for Two Rivers (QAPP approved by NJDEP)*



Safe swimming level – 104 cfu/100mL

Site ID	Highlands	Entero 070126	Entero 070926	Entero 071626	Entero 072226	Entero 072926	Entero 080626	Entero 081326	Entero 082126	Entero 082826	Entero 090226	Entero 091026	Entero 092126
HI-1	Conners Beach	10	2723	10	<10	75	20	20	20	31	183	97	63
HI-2	Snug Harbor bridge	855	<10	63	1046	4106	754	52	345	1333	135	161	2755
		09:28-hi	09:47-lo	10:03-hi	09:16-lo	08:24-hi	08:08 - lo	08:50 - hi	09:26 - lo	08:30 - hi	06:00 - lo	07:42 - hi	10:54-lo
		ambient	2-2.5 in. 48-72 h	ambient	0.5 in <24 h	0.5-0.6 in <24h	2.56 in> 48 h	ambient	0.6 in <12h	2-2.5 in <20 h	<0.5 in. <12 h	ambient	<0.25 in. <12 h

Summary

- Preliminary assessment
- Ambient and wet weather
- Results are concerning
  - Snug Harbor exceedances – (9 out of 12 events)
  - Bacteria levels eight to forty times higher
- Next steps – Rally for Bayshore-Highlands
  - Municipal partnership
    - Municipal liaison – COA collaboration
    - Public Works support
    - Environmental Commission, Stormwater Coordinator



KM1

Thank you!

Questions?

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