

# New York County Continues to Study Bacteria Found on Long Island Beach

- By David Steinkraus
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After several years of investigations into the cause of high bacteria levels at a Long Island (New York) beach, the Nassau County Legislature is considering a treatment system for its stormwater drainage.

The latest investigation ended after the state looked at eight residential onsite systems as possible causes of the pollution. But after studying the systems for several months, the state concluded they are not sending wastewater into a stream that flows into the Long Island Sound at Glen Cove.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation has not ruled out onsite systems leaking wastewater into the groundwater, reports *Newsday*.

In the spring, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency collected samples from stormwater and groundwater discharge pipes. A DNA analysis will tell investigators whether the coliform bacteria found at the beach is from humans or animals.

Meanwhile, the county will spend \$200,000 to study the feasibility of installing a treatment system for stormwater.

“We’re going to evaluate all kinds of remedies because obviously the (Department of Environmental Conservation) study didn’t really provide the smoking gun that we were looking for as far as the source of the contamination,” Brian Schneider, deputy county executive for parks and public works, tells *Newsday*. “We’re shifting focus more toward the treatment at the endpoint of the drainage system, before it hits the beach.”

Nassau County is on the western end of Long Island and borders New York City. To its east is Suffolk County, which last year passed a number of laws to attack nitrogen pollution in its nearshore waters.

Approximately 360,000 homes in Suffolk County rely on cesspools for wastewater disposal. That is about 75 percent of all homes in the county. In

August 2017, the town of East Hampton became the first community in the state to require low-nitrogen wastewater systems for all new construction and for buildings that undergo substantial renovation. Several other communities did the same.

In December 2017, the county executive signed a law banning cesspools in all uses. Cesspools were banned for new construction in 1973, but they were still allowed to replace an older cesspool. In May 2017, the county Legislature approved a grant program to help people pay for the cost of converting their onsite systems to low-nitrogen systems.