

Portland Water District
Sebago Lake Monitoring Programs
Lower Bay Bacteria Monitoring
Presenting data from 1977 to 2018
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Introduction

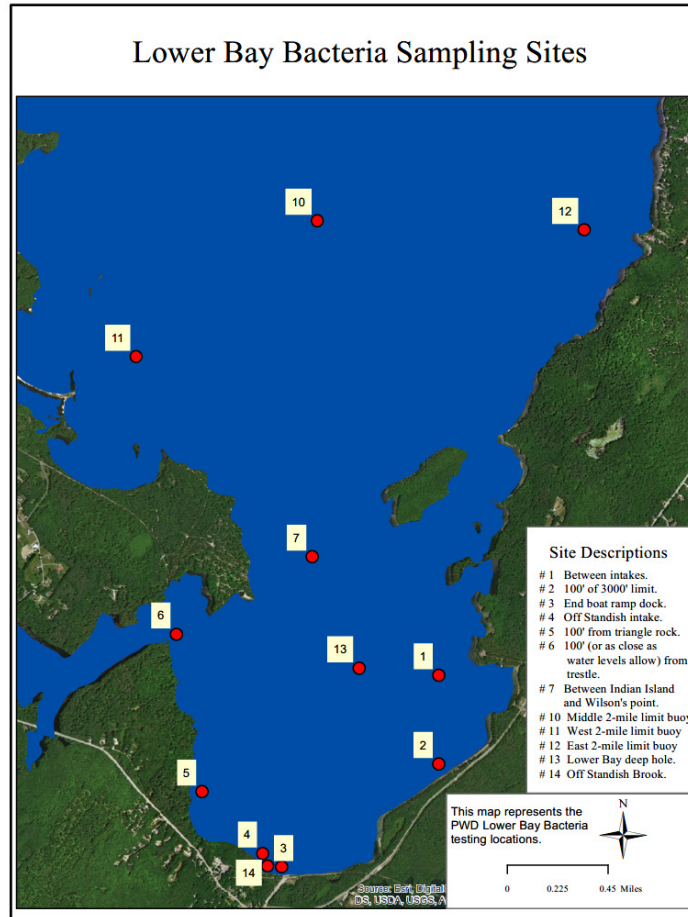
Sebago Lake is the primary drinking water supply for nearly 200,000 people in 11 Greater Portland communities. Lake water was first pumped to Portland in 1869, from an intake located in the southernmost part of the lake, referred to as Lower Bay. In 1907, the Portland Water District was chartered by the Maine Legislature to provide water and wastewater services to the region. Since its inception, the District has been actively monitoring and working to protect Sebago Lake.

In 1993, the District was granted a waiver to the filtration requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) based in part on the purity of the water and the effectiveness of watershed protection efforts. This waiver agreement requires ongoing monitoring of lake water quality. The District maintains more than 10 monitoring and surveillance programs throughout the watershed and lake. In general, as one moves closer to the intakes, more samples are collected and tested for more parameters.

This report summarizes results of the Lower Bay Bacteria Monitoring Program. The purpose of the program is to monitor fecal coliform and *E. coli* bacteria levels at various sites around Lower Bay, ensure levels are within historic ranges, and if not, identify possible sources of contamination.

Methods

Bacteria sampling occurs once a month from May to October. Twelve locations in Lower Bay are monitored for fecal coliform bacteria (see map for locations). Samples are taken just below the water surface with sterile gloves and sterile collection vessels. Samples are taken during “normal” lake conditions and are not designed to monitor extreme storm events or abnormal water circumstances. Samples are analyzed according standard operating procedures outlined in Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater, 20th Edition (SM9223B and SM922D)



Results and Discussion

Fecal coliform bacteria refer to a group of microorganisms that are present in the gastrointestinal tracts of warm-blooded animals. Fecal coliform in water bodies can indicate the presence of fecal contamination and related disease-causing microorganisms such as *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli* 0157:H7 and hepatitis A. The presence of fecal contamination is an indicator that a potential health risk exists for individuals exposed to this water. The SDWA Surface Water Treatment Rule sets a limit for raw drinking water of less than 20 fecal coliform colony forming units (CFU) per 100ml in 90% of daily samples for the previous 6 months. Raw water samples are collected by Water Operations staff and analyzed for fecal coliform bacteria 5 days per week. Lower Bay bacteria monitoring is conducted in conjunction with these legally-required raw water samples. In addition to fecal coliform, *E. coli* is analyzed at each Lower Bay bacteria site for purpose of comparing *E. coli* levels with swimming beach sites.

The most significant sampling sites are summarized below.

Intakes

Bacteria concentrations from the sampling location above the water intakes pipes are among the lowest in Sebago Lake. The average fecal coliform concentration above the intakes from 1977 to 2018 is 0.40 cfu/100 ml. The data table (Figure 1) is a frequency distribution of all samples taken from 1977 through 2018 and the number of fecal CFU per 100 ml of lake water.

Fecal (cfu/mL)	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	279	80.6
1	44	93.2
2	15	97.5
3	5	98.9
4	1	99.2
5	0	99.2
6	0	99.2
7	0	99.2
8	0	99.2
9	0	99.2
10	2	99.7
11	1	100.0
12	0	100.0
13	0	100.0
14	0	100.0
15	1	100.3

Figure 1. 81% of fecal coliform bacteria samples taken above the intakes (site #1) from 1977 to 2018 have 0 cfu/100 ml and 100% of samples are below 16 cfu/100 ml.

Standish Boat Ramp

Samples collected at the Standish boat ramp have historically high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria. The average fecal coliform concentration at the Standish boat ramp is 3.0 CFU/100ml. The data table below is a frequency distribution of all samples taken and the number of fecal coliform CFU per 100 ml of lake water.

Fecal (cfu/mL)	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	135	65.1
1	37	83.0
2	12	88.8
3	7	92.2
4	2	93.1
5	3	94.6
6	0	94.6
7	2	95.5
8	1	96.0
9	2	97.0
10	1	97.5
>10	5	99.9

Figure 2. 99% of samples from the Standish boat ramp from 1997 to 2018 have fecal concentrations between 0 and 10 CFU.

Standish Brook Outlet

Bacteria concentrations near the outlet of Standish brook contain the highest concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria in the Lower Bay. The average fecal coliform concentration near the Standish Brook outlet from 1997 to 2018 is 2.8 cfu/100 mL. The data table below is a frequency distribution of all samples taken and the number of CFU per 100 ml of lake water.

Fecal (cfu/mL)	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	65.0	48.7
1	23.0	66.2
2	10.0	73.9
3	9.0	80.7
4	3.0	83.0
5	4.0	86.1
6	3.0	88.4
7	1.0	89.1
8	0.0	89.1
9	2.0	90.7
10	1.0	91.4
>10	10.0	99.1

Figure 3. 94% of fecal coliform bacteria samples taken near Standish Brook (site #14) from 1997 to 2018 have fecal concentrations between 0 and 10 CFU.

All data from 2018 are presented below in Figure 7. There were no sampling events in 2018 that exceeded the action level of 10 cfu/100mL.

Sample Site Location	5/30/2018		6/26/2018		7/30/2018		8/29/2018		9/25/2018		10/17/2018	
	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>	Fecal Coliform	<i>E. coli</i>
Between intakes	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0
100' of 3000' foot limit	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
End of boat ramp dock	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Off Standish intake	0	0	4	10	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0
100' off triangle rock	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
100' off trestle	0	0	4	0	2	1	2	5	2	0	0	0
Between I.I. and Wilsons Pt	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Middle buoy of 2 mile limit	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
East buoy of 2 mile limit	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
West buoy of 2 mile limit	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Lower Bay deep hole	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Off Standish Brook	0	1	5	2	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1

Figure 4. Total data set collected in 2018.

Conclusion

Fecal coliform bacteria levels around Lower Bay are very low for a multi-use lake. Traditionally the two sampling locations with the highest levels of fecal coliform bacteria are the outlet to Standish Brook (sampling site #14) and the Standish boat ramp (sampling site # 6). Among all sampling locations, these sites are closest to tributary stream inputs. They are also subject to human presence while people are launching boats. Although there is no bodily contact allowed, the high amount of activity in that area may contribute to fecal coliform occurrences.

Standish Brook has an urban watershed which drains residential and commercial watershed areas. Typical bacteria sources from a developed watershed are subsurface waste water disposal systems and pet waste contamination. The outlet to Standish Brook shows bacterial levels have been known to be ten-fold higher than most sampling locations in Lower Bay.

Overall, these values are considered low and comply with the maximum contaminant level for water treatment plant influent of 20 fecal coliform (cfu) per 100ml in 90% of samples. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that locations with elevated fecal coliform bacteria levels often correspond with areas within close proximity of human activity. This correlation should be taken into account when considering appropriate activities in Lower Bay and throughout Sebago Lake.