

# Children's Pool may be closed until year's end

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**T**he city's Department of Environmental Health says it has no intention of re-opening Children's Pool Beach until tests show that the level of fecal coliform at the site has significantly dropped.

"The tests are still coming back ten times as high as they should," said Chris Gonaver, division chief for the Department of Environmental Health.

He said it could be January before the area re-opens.

The beach was closed to swimmers on Sept. 4 when high levels of fecal coliform were found in its water and soil. The

bacteria is commonly found in the feces of warm-blooded animals such as seals. The city concluded that the seals were probably responsible for causing the buildup of the potentially harmful bacteria.

Gonaver said the bacteria can cause swimmers and others directly exposed to it to become ill.

Meanwhile, the city of San Diego Microbiology Lab at the Alvarado Water Treatment Plant continues the slow and difficult process of preparing samples from Children's Pool for more sophisticated testing at a Virginia laboratory. Gonaver said each of

25 samples from the beach is being sorted into ten segments, or isolates. The 250 resulting isolates will soon be shipped to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and researchers there will try to determine if any of the isolates are harmful strains of the E. coli bacteria. The high-tech testing will cost the city about \$7,000.

"There are a lot of types of E. coli and certainly we're all familiar with the type found in beef," Gonaver said, referring to the strain that can make humans extremely sick and even die.

However, there is a type that naturally resides in the human intestines and is quite helpful in digesting food.

Gonaver said the isolates will be ready to send to Virginia in about two weeks. The testing could take another two months.

The Sept. 4 closure was the first time the area had to be closed because of contamination from seal feces. Terri Williams, deputy director of the Coastal Parks Division of the Park and Recreation Department, said earlier this month that "no one knows exactly why this is happening." She said the seals may eventually have to be scared away from the area with noise.