

International agency: Waters are safe for recreational use



Safe waters: Dr Lisa Indar, of the Caribbean Public Health Agency, is flanked by Premier Michael Dunkley and Health Minister Jeanne Atherden (Photo by Nicola Muirhead)

By Owain Johnston-Barnes

An international organisation has confirmed the accuracy of Government's testing of South Shore waters, stating that trends indicate the waters are safe for recreational use.

Representatives for the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) were contacted by the Government in June to conduct an independent study of the water quality around the Island's beaches and ensure the reliability of the Department of Health's weekly water quality results.

Dr Lisa Indar, of CARPHA, said that after analysing the Department's sampling and analytical methods and independently testing water samples, the organisation found the sampling methods were in compliance with standards and the laboratory results from both bodies were similar.

She also noted that a historical review of sample sites indicated that recreational areas were safe and fit for use, generally meeting the US EPA requirements.

"The EPA guidelines for water quality is based on testing the number of enterococci and the number of E. coli in the water," she explained. "When we looked at [Bermuda's] geometric data, at the geometric mean of your data, at no time over the last year, over the last five years, have any of your beaches crossed that mean."

Premier Michael Dunkley said Government has been working hard to tackle the issue of water quality, and bringing Dr Indar to Bermuda to evaluate testing efforts was just one step furthering public confidence in the Island's water quality.

Asked about other efforts being taken to remedy the issue, he said: "I think the people of Bermuda are well aware the challenges that we face since this report started to get into the media in spring of this year.

"At that time, Government was very quick to act, to assess the situation and put in short term, medium term and long term plans to deal with the challenge. Obviously, we are well aware that it didn't happen overnight and it won't be fixed overnight."

The Premier said the short term, medium term and long term plans are all still in effect, but Government wanted to ensure it was following proper testing procedures with the water samples and that Government results were accurate.

Minister for Health, Seniors and the Environment Jeanne Atherden noted several efforts in place to tackle the issue, including working to ensure proper disposal of grease and oil.

“We are continuing to make sure that the establishments in Hamilton are visited and inspected by a retired health inspector, now working with the Corporation of Hamilton, on the review of the effluence, and monitoring the compliance with the fats, grease and oil levels established by the Corporation of Hamilton,” she said.

“The KEMH was also inspected and meetings were held with relevant members of the Hospitals Board. The report of the inspections will be anticipated shortly.”

She also noted that the results of the Department’s water testing are available [online at the Department’s website](#).