

WATER QUALITY WARNING AT MATOSINHOS BEACH MARKS PROGRESS, BUT URGENT ACTION STILL NEEDED

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Children playing and bathing in the polluted Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos, in Matosinhos

The Surfrider Foundation welcomes the recent decision by local authorities to install a warning sign near the Ribeira de Riguinhos/Carcavelos, at Matosinhos Beach, advising against bathing due to water contamination risks. This directly responds to demands made by Surfrider over the past year, and marks a significant first step in protecting public health.

INDEPENDENT MONITORING SHOWS POOR WATER QUALITY

Due to the several reported pollution risks in Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos over the years, Surfrider Foundation Porto has been conducting independent water sampling analysis at this location since 2023. The newly released Technical Report on the Water Quality Assessment at Matosinhos beach shows continued and persistent contamination of *E. coli* and *Intestinal enterococcos* at this location, exceeding the legal values defined by Decree-Law 135/2009.

This poses a real threat to bathers and water sports enthusiasts: contact with polluted water can cause skin irritations, otitis, gastrointestinal infections and even respiratory problems.

“The installation of a warning sign is a positive first move, and we congratulate the authorities for acknowledging the danger,” said Luís Leite, from Surfrider Foundation Portugal. “However, the data suggests that without structural changes and improved monitoring, beach users will continue to be exposed to contaminated water.”

Key findings of the report:

- Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos acts as an entry point for pollution at Praia de Matosinhos.
- Independent water analysis showed *E. coli* and *Intestinal enterococci* concentrations significantly exceeding legal thresholds in over 96% of the collections at Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos.
- Most of the collected samples at Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos show *E. coli* and *Intestinal enterococci* levels over 3400 and 10000 times higher than legal limits, respectively.
- Official data may underestimate health risks due to the “dilution effect” caused by sampling away from the pollution source.
- Bathers and children often swim and play in or near polluted sites.

[ACCESS THE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

YEAR-ROUND MONITORING

Currently, official testing is limited to the official bathing season, that goes from mid-june to mid-september, leaving significant data gaps during the autumn and winter months, precisely when pollution peaks are more likely to occur due to increased rainfall and stormwater runoff. These off-season events contribute to long-term environmental degradation and pose ongoing risks to surfers, water sports practitioners, and local communities who use the ocean year-round.

“People have a right to timely, clear information about the water they swim in. Transparency is not optional when public health is at stake.” Leila Teixeira, from Surfrider Foundation Portugal.

AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP, BUT MORE ACTIONS ARE NEEDED

Recurring pollution events at Matosinhos Beach raise growing concerns about the health risks faced by swimmers and local ocean users. While the newly

installed signage is an important milestone in risk communication, Surfrider calls for more robust and long-term solutions, including:

- **Addition of a new official sampling point** at Ribeira da Riguinha/Carcavelos.
- **Conduction of year-round analysis** at strategic locations.
- **Creation of a dynamic alert system** to inform the public in real time.
- **Public accountability and transparency** in the publication of water quality data.
- **Long-term solutions** to eliminate the sources of pollution, including upgrades to wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

About Surfrider Foundation Portugal

Surfrider Foundation Portugal is part of the European network of the Surfrider Foundation Europe, an NGO created in 1990, that works to protect the oceans, the coastline, the waves and their users. For 30 years, with a team of experts and 50 volunteer branches in 12 European countries, the association has been working with stakeholders (citizens, private and public sectors) on several major issues: aquatic waste, coastal development, climate change, water quality and user health. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/>

CONTACT :

Leila Teixeira | National Coordinator of Surfrider Foundation Portugal | portugal@surfrider.eu



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www.surfrider.eu