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Department
Environmental Conservation

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

DEC Releases 2020 Water Quality Data for Ports and Waterways

For Immediate Release: February 24, 2021

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The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has published [preliminary water quality data for selected Alaska harbors, ports, and water corridors](#). These are all waters used by a range of vessels including tankers, cargo ships, cruise ships, fishing vessels, and recreational boaters.

DEC has conducted water sampling in select harbors since 2015, and in 2020 added Southeast shipping/traffic lanes and additional harbors.

“The additional testing was already planned before the summer started, and the absence of cruise ships in 2020 gave us an opportunity to get baseline data for Alaska’s port and shipping corridor water quality without the presence of 1.2 million visitors,” said Randy Bates, Water Division Director. “The data will be helpful as we begin drafting a new general permit for commercial passenger vessels.”

Sixteen ports and harbors from Ketchikan to Nome and 20 sampling sites along major Southeast shipping/traffic lanes were sampled for fecal bacteria, ammonia, copper, nickel, zinc, pH, salinity, and dissolved oxygen. These parameters are typically found in the discharges of vessels or are needed to understand their toxicity to aquatic life.

Fecal coliform bacteria were found to be above the levels for safe consumption of raw seafood-mollusks for certain sampling sites in the areas around Homer, Hoonah, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Nome, Petersburg, Seward, Valdez, and Ward Cove. Fecal coliform is found in the fecal matter of many warm blooded species and is a good indicator for human health concerns when testing water quality. Zinc, copper, and nickel were above chronic (long term) exposure levels for aquatic life at Knik Arm near Anchorage. While these metals are essential for life and naturally present in water, high levels can be toxic.

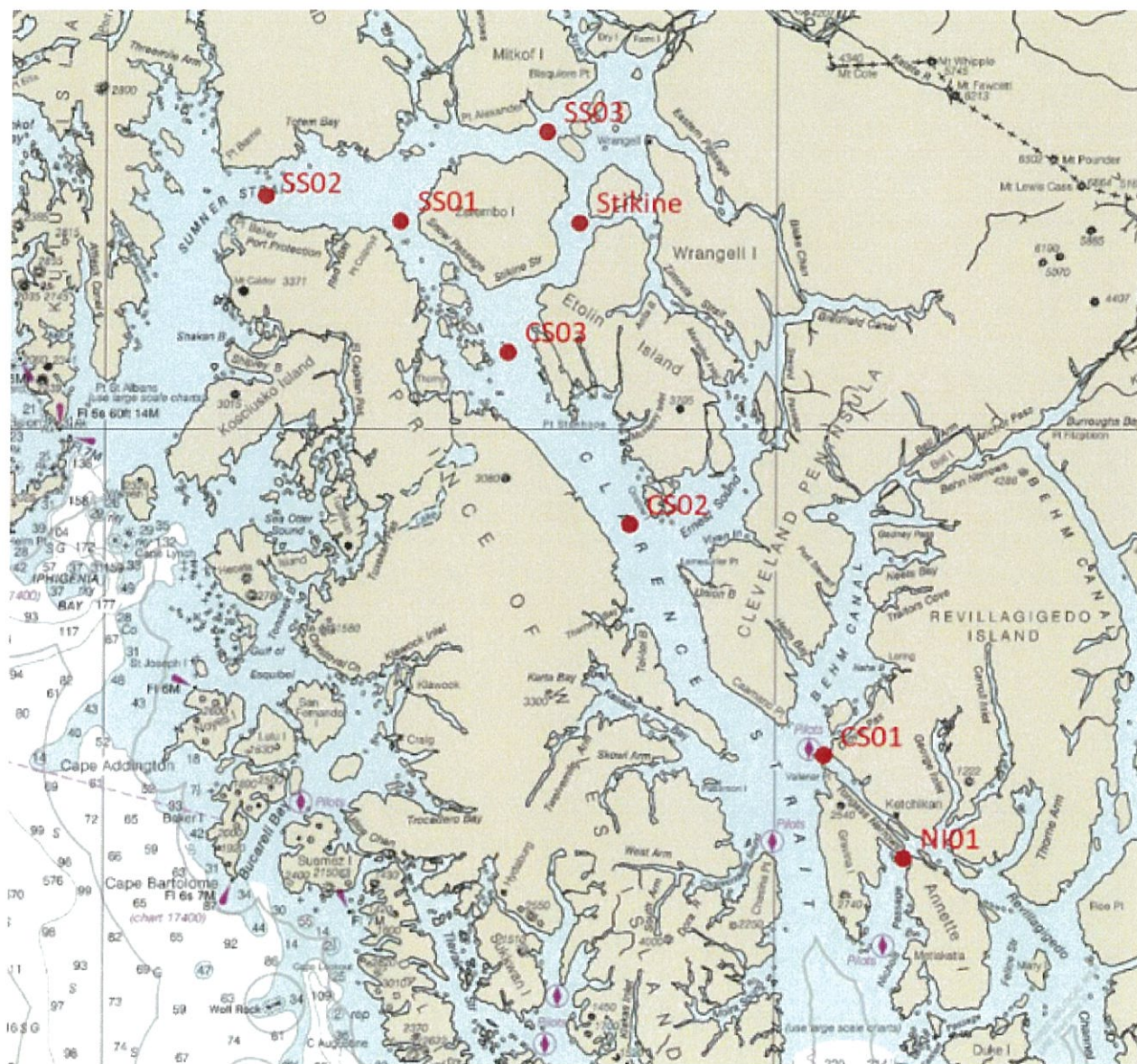
“We will use the results of this testing to help communities determine the sources of contamination and how they can be addressed to help keep their local waterbodies healthy for their residents,” said Bates.

The 2020 data is preliminary and it is not possible to assess the water quality at the testing locations based solely on these results. Water quality testing is planned for the same locations for the summer of 2021, and DEC will release this summer’s data following the conclusion of the testing season.

Port Locations sampled in 2020	Number of sites
Anchorage	6
Auke Bay	2
Dutch Harbor (Unalaska)	6
Haines	6
Homer	6
Hoonah	8
Juneau	11
Ketchikan	12
Kodiak	6
Nome	6
Petersburg	6
Seward	6
Sitka	10
Skagway	7
Valdez	6
Ward Cove	6
Whittier	6
Wrangell	6



Locations of the 12 northern Shipping Lanes sampling sites.



Locations of eight south Shipping Lanes sampling sites.

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