



THE AWARD PROCESS

Blue Flag is an international award program for sustainable management of beaches, marinas, and tourism boats. The program is administered at the national level by National Operators (NO) and evaluated by a National Jury to ensure national regulation is followed before being awarded by an International Jury.

Beaches must comply with 33 criteria covering environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services.

Water quality criteria include frequency of testing, microbiological thresholds, lab certifications, physical characteristics, and more. Applicants are required to collate and report on these criteria. Many organizations collect and manage the criteria independently such as local health departments or state environmental protection agencies. Below are questions to ask Water Quality professionals to help determine qualification and answer application questions.

WATER QUALITY QUESTIONS

- WHICH ORGANIZATION COLLECTS AND TESTS WATER QUALITY SAMPLES ON MY BEACH?
- WHICH LOCATIONS ALONG THE BEACH ARE SAMPLED?
- HOW FREQUENTLY ARE THESE LOCATIONS SAMPLED?
- WHAT MICROBIOLOGICAL PARAMETERS ARE SAMPLED FOR AT LOCATIONS?
- IS THE SAMPLING REPORTED AS A GEOMETRIC MEAN OR AS A SINGLE SAMPLE?
- DOES THE WATER QUALITY PROGRAM SUBMIT AN EPA ANNUAL MARINE SURVEY?
- ARE ANY PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS COLLECTED AT TIME OF MICROBIOLOGICAL SAMPLING, SUCH AS PH, SALINITY, OR TEMPERATURE?
- HOW MUCH DOES TESTING FOR ENTEROCOCCI AND E.COLI COST?
- CAN THE BEACH WATER QUALITY PROGRAM SAMPLE FOR E.COLI DURING ROUTINE VISITS?
- WHAT OTHER LABS HANDLE WATER QUALITY SAMPLING?
- WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL FOR FLOATABLES, ODOR, OR OIL FILM ON THE WATER?
- WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL FOR RED TIDES OR HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS, IF RELEVANT?
- ARE THERE ANY KNOWN SOURCES OF POLLUTION NEAR THE BEACH?
- ARE THERE ANY OUTFLOWS LOCATED ON THE BEACH?
- ARE THERE SAMPLES TAKEN AT THESE SOURCES OF POLLUTION OR OUTFLOWS?