

CHELMSFORD BATHING BEACH CLOSURE GUIDELINES

During the permitted beach season (June – August 2022), Heart Pond or Freeman Lake may be closed by the Chelmsford Health Department for the following reasons:

- No lifeguard(s) on duty
- Exceeding levels of E. Coli
- Harmful algal blooms (HABs)
- Exceeding levels of animal feces
- Dangerous wading conditions due to excess weeds

Please read below for more details on the reasoning for why each closure would occur.

For any questions, please contact the Chelmsford Health Department at (978) 250-5241.

No Lifeguard(s) on Duty

For public safety purposes, no lifeguard on duty results in an automatic closure of the beach. Swimming is prohibited at the public beaches when there is no lifeguard present. Swimming without a lifeguard could result in injury or drowning. A sign will be posted at the entrances to the bathing beach. Please **DO NOT** swim in Freeman Lake or Heart Pond without a lifeguard present, even if you do not see a sign posted.



Exceeding Levels of E. Coli

The Health Department tests for E. Coli on a weekly basis. E. Coli may cause severe gastrointestinal illness if ingested. If the levels of E. Coli are above the recreational water limit (235/100mL), the beach will be immediately closed, and the Health Department will notify the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. There will be a closure sign posted at the entrance to the bathing beach. After receiving notification of high E. Coli results and closing the beach, the Health Department will collect another sample for testing the following day, weather permitting. Bacteria in the water may be impacted by rain and other weather events. As soon as the level of E. Coli tests below the recreational water limit, the beach will be reopened. If you see a sign regarding beach closure at Freeman or Heart Pond, please **DO NOT** swim in the water. Water test results, regardless of E. Coli levels, will be posted to the Town website once received by the Health Department.

Harmful Algal Blooms

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) occur most often in the late summer or early fall. HABs can be toxic to humans and animals, and therefore the Health Department will close the bathing beach when there is a suspected bloom. HABs can be detected by visual inspection when a scum mat is evident on the surface of the water. Once a HAB is suspected, the Health Department will close the beach and contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH will then send out someone to do water tests. To reopen the beach, there must be two rounds of water samples at least one week apart, and the total cell count of the HAB must be below 70,000 cells/mL. When a HAB is present, a sign will be posted at the entrances to the bathing beach. The HAB may still be present even if a scum mat is not visible, so please be aware of signage of a beach closure. Please **DO NOT** use the water yourself or with animals when the water at Freeman Lake or Heart Pond is a green/blue color, even if no sign is posted.



Exceeding Levels of Animal Feces

Heart Pond or Freeman Lake may be closed when the Health Department determines that there are abnormally high amounts of animal feces in the water or on the beach. This is done for the health of swimmers and beachgoers. The Health Department will close the beach until the issue has been resolved. Closure signs will be posted at the entrance to the beach. If you see a sign regarding beach closure at Freeman or Heart Pond and can see animal feces, please **DO NOT** swim in the water or use the beach.

Dangerous Wading Conditions due to Excess Weeds

Heart Pond or Freeman Lake may be closed when the Health Department determines that the wading/swimming area is overwhelmed with aquatic plants. The major concern is that those who are swimming or wading in the water may get caught in the aquatic plants and have trouble swimming or be at risk for drowning. The Health Department will close the beach until the issue has been resolved. Closure signs will be posted at the entrance to the beach. If you see a sign regarding beach closure at Freeman or Heart Pond, please **DO NOT** swim or wade in the water.