PRESS RELEASE
December 28, 2020

SEASONAL RAIN ADVISORY ISSUED
BY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – With the current rainfall in the forecast, the Santa Barbara
County Environmental Health Services Division reminds residents about health issues
associated with storm water runoff. Storm water is untreated rain water that flows through
the drain system into creeks, the ocean, and other waterways. Contact with storm water
may increase the risk for certain types of illnesses such as rashes, fever, chills, ear
infections, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Unlike the municipal sewer system, water carried by a storm drain system is not treated. To
minimize potential health risks, it is recommended that people do not swim, play or surf in
the ocean and creeks for at least three days following a rain event. Beachgoers should also
avoid areas near the outfall from drainpipes and creeks that enter the ocean following a rain
event as storm water runoff may carry high levels of bacteria and pollutants.

Sport harvesters should wait at least 10 days after a significant rain to harvest shellfish.
High bacterial levels, pesticide, herbicide and motor oil grease flushed into the ocean with
the storm runoff may contaminate the shellfish beds. When raw or undercooked
contaminated shellfish is eaten, serious illnesses such as gastroenteritis, septicemia,
salmonellosis, and hepatitis may result. Adequate cooking of shellfish will destroy harmful
bacteria, but may not be effective in killing viruses. In addition, cooking does not eliminate
chemical and metal pollutants in the shellfish.

The County of Santa Barbara implements a variety of programs to protect public health and
enhance environmental quality of County watersheds and beaches. Working to improve
water quality by reducing or treating sources of pollution is a multi-faceted task.
To find out what is being done to improve water quality and how you can help, visit
www.sbprojectcleanwater.org

-30-