

Permitted bathing places also provide the swimmer with these measures of safety and convenience:

- **Posted signs give swimmers information about bathing loads, steep slopes, diving areas, deep water, underwater hazards, and whether lifeguards are on duty.**
- **Restrooms, platforms, diving boards, docks, and walkways are kept clean and in good repair.**
- **Diving areas are identified, with adequate water depth shown to provide for safe diving.**
- **Shallow areas are clearly marked as not being safe for diving.**
- **Glass items and dogs are not allowed in the bathing area or the beach.**
- **Restrooms with the proper number of units are provided. These are located as near to the bathing area as possible to ensure easy use.**
- **Places to dispose of trash and garbage are provided. The garbage must be disposed of at least weekly.**
- **Muck or silt is not allowed to be present from the shoreline to a depth of five feet. The spread of plants in the water is also controlled.**
- **Water currents are not faster than three feet per second.**

The swimmer also can be certain that the area has been thoroughly inspected at least twice a year. All the information gathered about a freshwater swimming area can be found at the local county health department.

There are over 200 permitted freshwater bathing areas in Florida. To ensure your swimming safety, please use and enjoy them.

If you have any questions, please contact the Bureau of Water Programs at (850) 245-4240. For more information, visit the web page at www.doh.state.fl.us and select "Swimming Pools" from the subject list.



Permitted Freshwater Bathing Places: A Safer Place to Swim



Bureau of Water Programs

The Florida Department of Health has the authority by state law to permit freshwater bathing areas. These areas include rivers, lakes, ponds, and streams. When compared to unregulated freshwater bathing areas, a permitted one has many benefits for you and your family. Swimming at a permitted bathing place assures swimmers that the water quality at the site has been properly tested, that the water is clear, and that the area is free of chemicals or physical objects that may cause injury or harm.

Sanitary Surveys

Permitting public bathing places is a vital part of minimizing public health risks. In fact, the process indicates that a sanitary survey was made before an area is opened for bathing. The survey also determines whether the area is clean and identifies both present and future sources of contaminants, including:

- residential areas with septic tanks
- water and wastewater treatment plants
- sewage outfalls
- industrial waste drainage and outfalls
- drainage from farming
- sanitary landfills
- open dumps
- animal holding pens
- wildlife, and
- areas where erosion is likely.

In addition to identifying contaminants, the survey indicates the maximum bathing load, a number that specifies how many people can safely use the area for bathing at one time.

Bacteriological Surveys

As part of the permitting process, surveys are also completed to see if there are signs of harmful bacteria in the water. These bacteriological surveys occur before the permit is approved. After permit approval, at least three samples of water are collected from the proposed bathing area for the first three days of each week for three consecutive weeks. These water samples are then tested for certain kinds of bacteria that indicate that animal or human waste may be making the water unsafe.

Site Plans

Before a freshwater bathing area is opened, site plans must be submitted to the health department. These plans show that steps have been taken to protect public health and the safety of swimmers. Freshwater bathing area site plans provide details about:

- location
- contours of the shoreline and bottom
- restrooms
- boat docks/mooring places
- diving areas or slides, and
- other details from the sanitary survey.

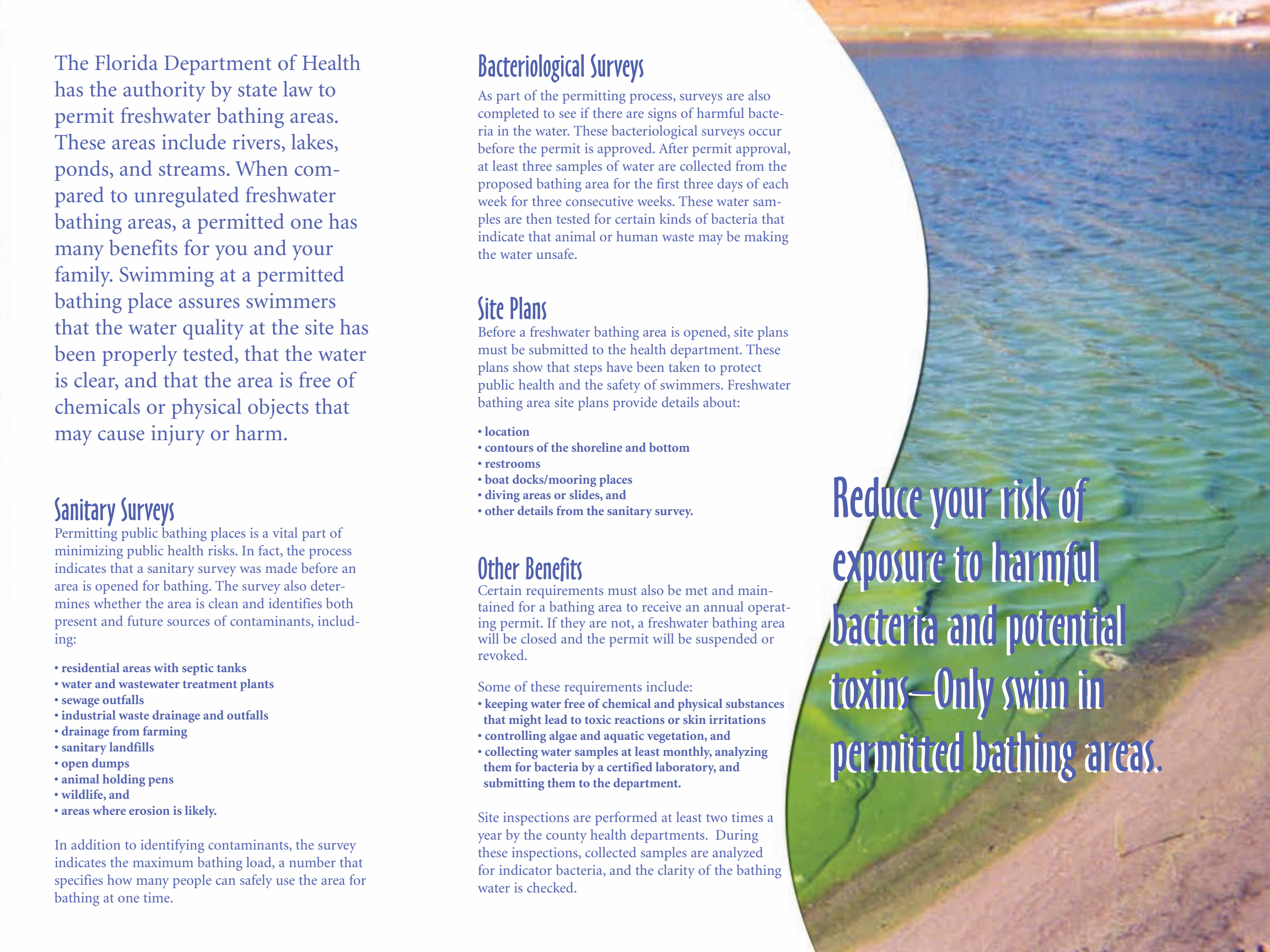
Other Benefits

Certain requirements must also be met and maintained for a bathing area to receive an annual operating permit. If they are not, a freshwater bathing area will be closed and the permit will be suspended or revoked.

Some of these requirements include:

- keeping water free of chemical and physical substances that might lead to toxic reactions or skin irritations
- controlling algae and aquatic vegetation, and
- collecting water samples at least monthly, analyzing them for bacteria by a certified laboratory, and submitting them to the department.

Site inspections are performed at least two times a year by the county health departments. During these inspections, collected samples are analyzed for indicator bacteria, and the clarity of the bathing water is checked.



Reduce your risk of exposure to harmful bacteria and potential toxins—Only swim in permitted bathing areas.