Enterococci bacteria, though not harmful themselves, indicate the presence of fecal contamination and other potentially harmful bacteria in the water. These are known to cause vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, ear infections, and fever in recreational swimmers. Young children and people with compromised immune systems are especially susceptible. Beaches are monitored around the country to protect the public, but the Shaw Institute (formerly MERI), is the only organization that monitors beaches in the Blue Hill area, using the same protocols as the Maine Healthy Beaches program assessment parameters from EPA. According to the EPA, no single sample should exceed 104 Enterococci bacteria and monthly averages should not exceed 35. The KYC Swimming Dock is sampled every week, at high tide.