



EPA's BEACH Report: Maine 2008 Swimming Season

May 2009

Introduction

The BEACH Act of 2000 requires that coastal and Great Lakes states and territories report to EPA on beach monitoring and notification data for their coastal recreation waters. The BEACH Act defines coastal recreation waters as the Great Lakes and coastal waters (including coastal estuaries) that states, territories, and authorized tribes officially recognize or designate for swimming, bathing, surfing, or similar activities in the water.

This fact sheet summarizes beach monitoring and notification data submitted to EPA by the State of Maine for the 2008 swimming season.

The Maine Healthy Beaches (MHB) Program began in 2002 and has recruited new coastal beaches into the program each year. This is a voluntary program for Maine communities which are supported by the MHB Program staff and partnering agencies.

The MHB Program experienced a lower number of advisories and closures in 2008 compared to 2007. Several beaches have demonstrated improved water quality over the past few years due to the MHB Program special studies, sanitary surveys, and actions taken at the local level. The biggest improvements have been a result of addressing malfunctioning subsurface wastewater disposal systems (i.e. septic systems) and improvements to stormwater systems.

The MHB Program has also been assisting towns with further assessment of the freshwater tributaries contributing to poor beach water quality and identification of pollution sources. This effort has brought together local and state officials, partnering state agencies, non-profits and citizens with a focus of shared resources and problem solving. The MHB Program is committed to continuing this focus with priority towns, and improving beach management tools including routine assessment, notification, and data analysis.

Figure 1. Maine coastal counties.

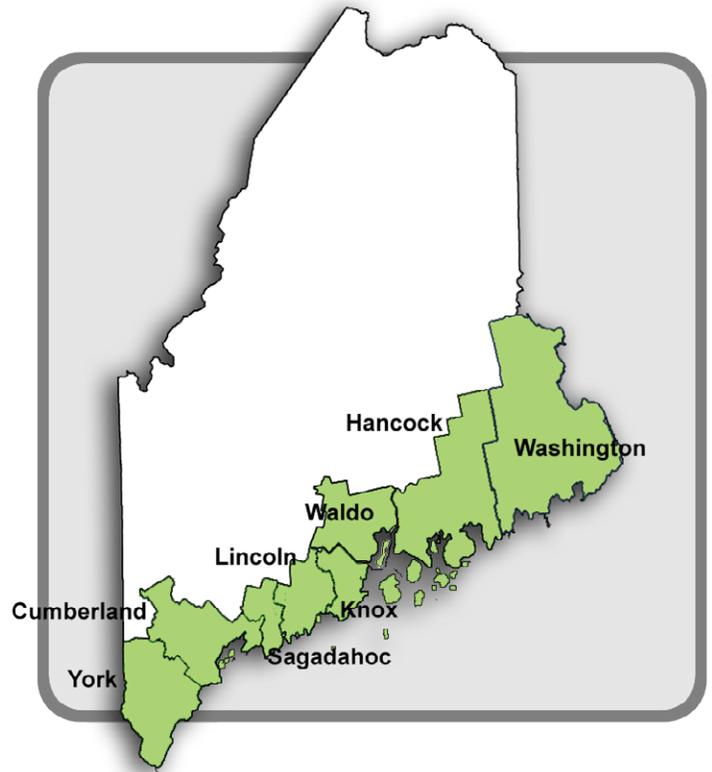


Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2008.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CUMBERLAND	9	9	0
HANCOCK	5	5	0
KNOX	3	3	0
LINCOLN	1	1	0
SAGADAHOC	7	7	0
WALDO	2	2	0
YORK	33	33	0
TOTALS	60	60	0

2008 Summary Results

How many notification actions were reported and how long were they?

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Maine's approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the ocean water. A total of 22 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2008 swimming season. About 38 percent of Maine's 34 notification actions lasted two days or less. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Maine's 2008 swimming season, actions were reported about 3 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2008 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2008 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly impact investigated monitored beaches?

Maine reports that the MHB Program is actively working toward identification and remediation of pollution sources with the affected communities through special studies and sanitary surveys. The nonpoint sources of pollution affecting Maine's coastal beaches have not been quantified.

For More Information

For general information about beaches:
www.epa.gov/beaches/

For information about beaches in Maine:
www.MaineHealthyBeaches.org

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

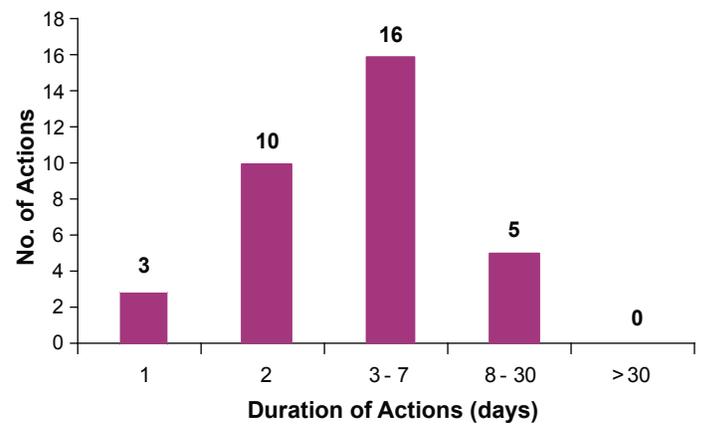


Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

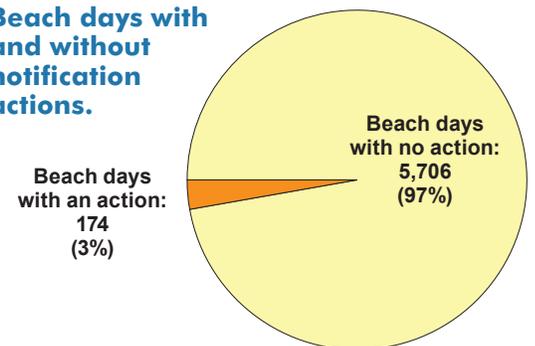


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2006–2008.

	2006	2007	2008
Number of monitored beaches	43	58	60
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	19	30	22
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	44%	52%	37%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	4%	3%	3%