EPA's BEACH Report:
Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin for the 2008 swimming season.

In 2008, its sixth year of its beach program, Wisconsin evaluated and redistributed allocations to each of the contracting entities based on the number of high, medium, or low priority beaches, a minimum sample per beach, and an adjustment was made for travel reimbursement. The state contracted with 16 individual health departments in 13 counties to conduct the routine monitoring of 123 beaches along Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. There was continued utilization of secure on-line input forms to update information about beaches, monitoring stations, and personnel utilizing the Wisconsin Beach Health Website. Data entry protocols were redesigned to be more efficient. An automatic e-mail messaging service and a really simple syndication service (RSS Feed) provided daily updates on beach conditions to the public. Close to 200 customers signed-up for these updates for 540 beaches.

Three counties added their inland beach monitoring data to the Web site. Furthermore, several other counties adopted the inland beach monitoring programs using guidance developed from the coastal BEACH Act program. Popular swimming beaches at state parks and forests were tested at least 4 times each week with results posted.

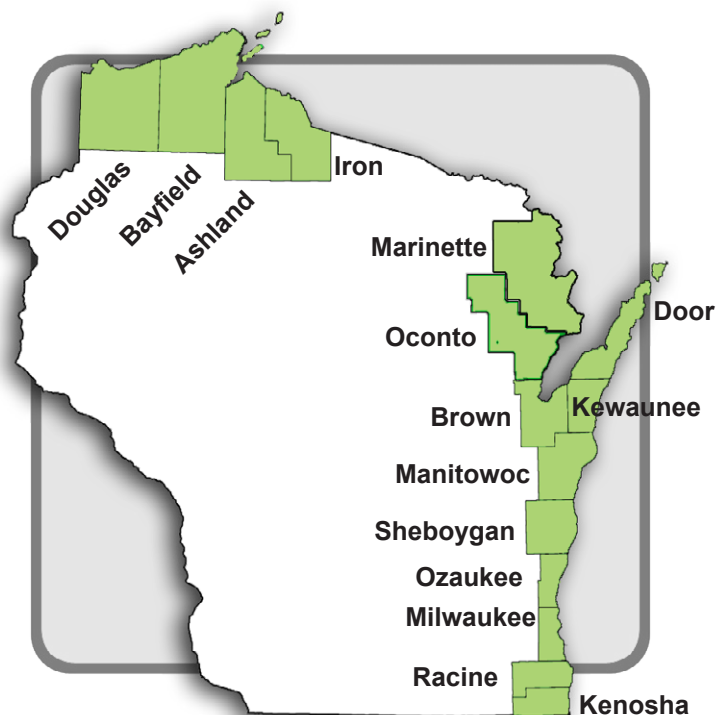**Figure 1. Wisconsin coastal counties.**

Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2008.
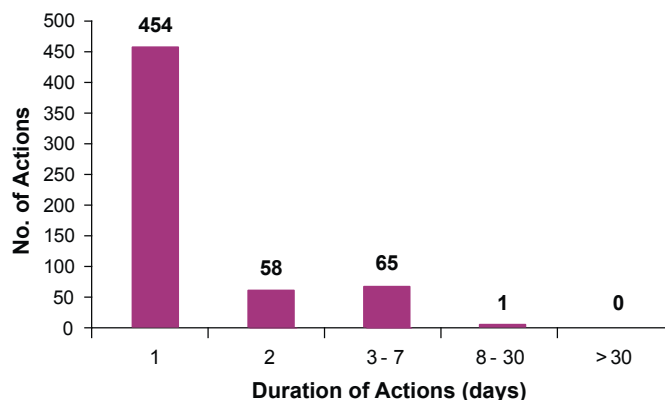
County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
ASHLAND	7	7	0
BAYFIELD	19	16	3
BROWN	9	3	6
DOOR	53	31	22
DOUGLAS	16	12	4
IRON	5	5	0
KENOSHA	7	5	2
KEWAUNEE	5	2	3
MANITOWOC	17	9	8
MARINETTE	6	0	6
MILWAUKEE	13	11	2
OCONTO	1	0	1
OZAUKEE	12	7	5
RACINE	7	2	5
SHEBOYGAN	16	10	6
TOTALS	**193**	**120**	**73**

2008 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Wisconsin's approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the water. A total of 84 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2008 swimming season. About 89 percent of Wisconsin's 578 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 Wisconsin's 2008 swimming season, actions were reported about 7 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 affect investigated monitored beaches?

Figure 4 displays the percentage of Wisconsin's investigated monitored beaches possibly affected by various pollution sources. In 2008, 100 percent of the beaches reported that possible sources were unidentified. Storm-related runoff was listed as a possible source of pollution at 18 percent of the beaches.

For More Information

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

For information about beaches in Wisconsin:
www.wibeaches.us

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

Beach days with an action: 883 (7%)

Beach days with no action: 11,479 (93%)
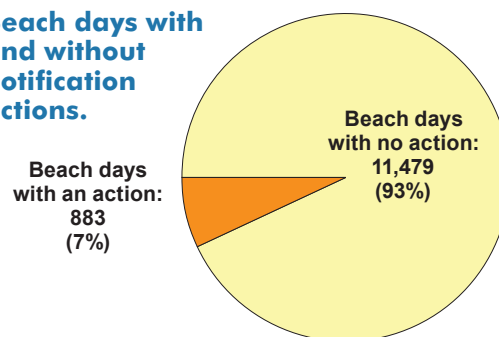
Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2006–2008.

	2006	2007	2008
Number of monitored beaches	117	118	120
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	83	85	84
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	71%	72%	70%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	11%	7%	7%

Figure 4: Percent of investigated monitored beaches affected by possible pollution sources (120 beaches).

Note: A single beach may have multiple sources.