

EPA's BEACH Report: North Carolina 2011 Swimming Season

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Introduction

The Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act of 2000 authorizes EPA to provide grants to coastal and Great Lakes states, territories, and eligible tribes to monitor their coastal beaches for bacteria that indicate the possible presence of disease-causing pathogens and to notify the public when there is a potential risk to public health. The BEACH Act requires that recipients of those grants report their coastal beach monitoring and notification data to EPA. This fact sheet highlights the data submitted to EPA by the State of North Carolina for the 2011 swimming season.

2011 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

North Carolina monitored 240 coastal beaches in 17 counties during the 2011 swimming season (Figure 1 and Table 1). When monitoring results at swimming beaches show that levels of specific indicator bacteria in the water exceed applicable water quality standards, North Carolina officials issue a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming.

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2011, of the 240 coastal beaches that North Carolina monitored, 19 (8 percent) had at least one notification action. This is approximately the same as in previous years (Figure 2).

Figure 1. North Carolina coastal counties.

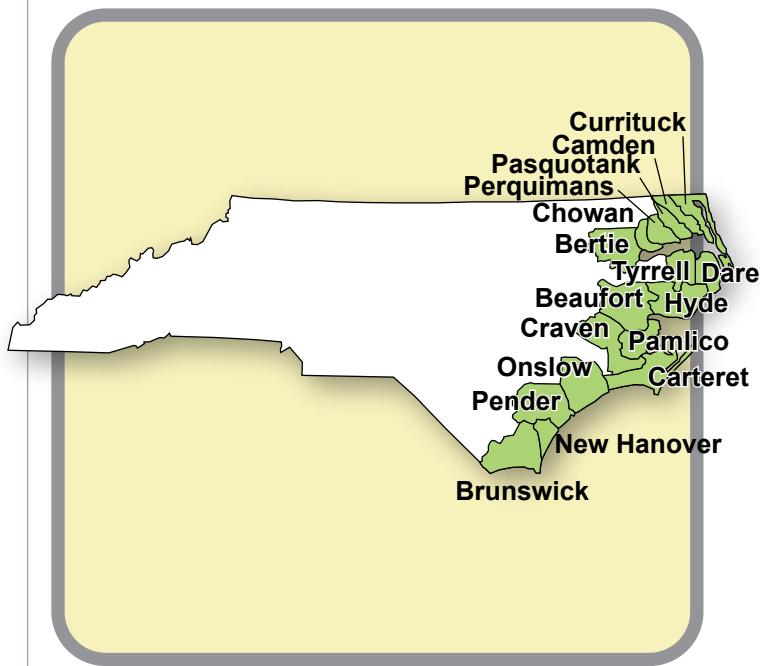


Table 1. Number of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2011.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BEAUFORT	10	10	0
BERTIE	1	1	0
BRUNSWICK	39	39	0
CAMDEN	2	2	0
CARTERET	53	53	0
CHOWAN	1	1	0
CRAVEN	8	8	0
CURRITUCK	9	9	0
DARE	57	57	0
HYDE	5	5	0
NEW HANOVER	21	21	0
ONSLow	16	16	0
PAMLICO	9	9	0
PASQUOTANK	1	1	0
PENDER	6	6	0
PERQUIMANS	1	1	0
TYRRELL	1	1	0
TOTALS	240	240	0

Figure 2: Percent of beaches with one or more notification actions

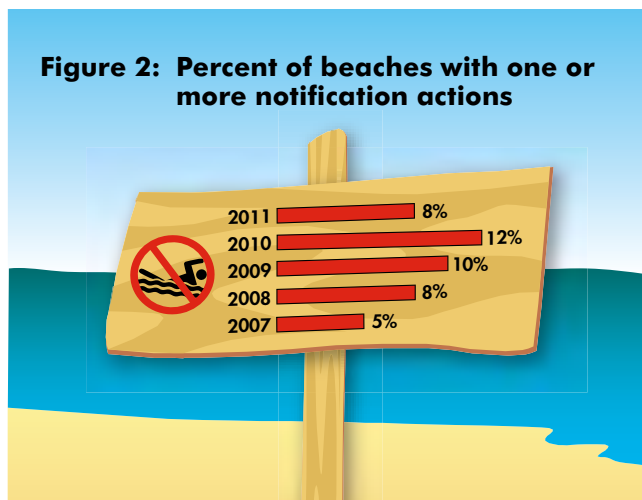
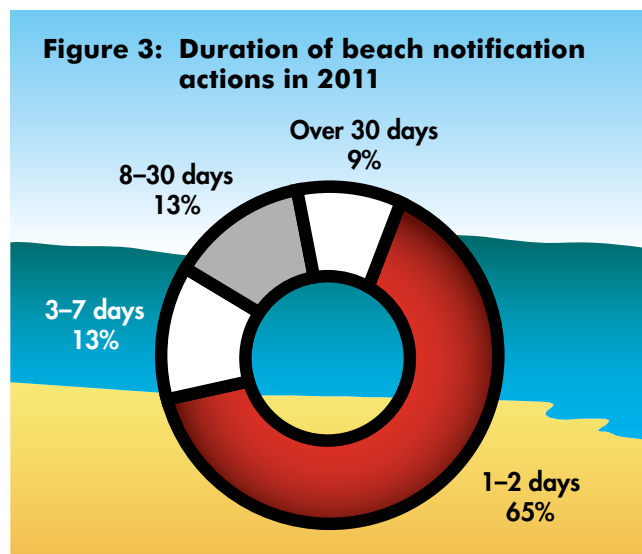


Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions in 2011



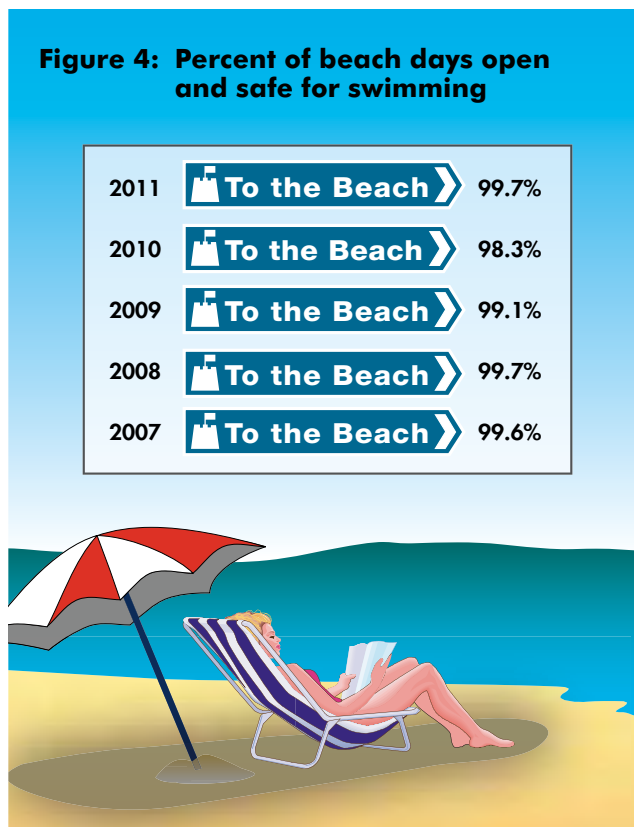
How many notification actions were issued and how long did they last?

North Carolina issued 23 notification actions during the 2011 swimming season. Typically North Carolina lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. For the majority of actions (65 percent) water quality returned to normal and beaches were deemed safe for swimming within one or two days (Figure 3).

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

EPA calculates the total available beach days and the number of beach days with notification actions to better track trends over time. Total available beach days are determined by multiplying the length of the beach season by the number of

Figure 4: Percent of beach days open and safe for swimming



beaches in the state. For 2011 EPA calculated that 61,360 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the 240 monitored North Carolina beaches. North Carolina reported notification actions on 173 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming over 99 percent of the time. This continues the trend of consistently high percentages of open beach days at state beaches (Figure 4).

For More Information

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For general information about beaches visit:
<http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/>.

For information about a specific beach visit:
<http://watersgeo.epa.gov/beacon2/>.