

EPA's BEACH Report: Washington 2011 Swimming Season

September 2012

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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 Washington for the 2011 swimming season.

2011 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

Washington monitored 81 coastal beaches in 12 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, Washington officials issue a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming or close the beach to public swimming until further monitoring finds that water quality complies with applicable standards.

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2011, of the 81 coastal beaches that Washington monitored, 9 (11 percent) had at least one notification action (Figure 2). This is approximately the same as in previous years.

Figure 1. Washington coastal counties.

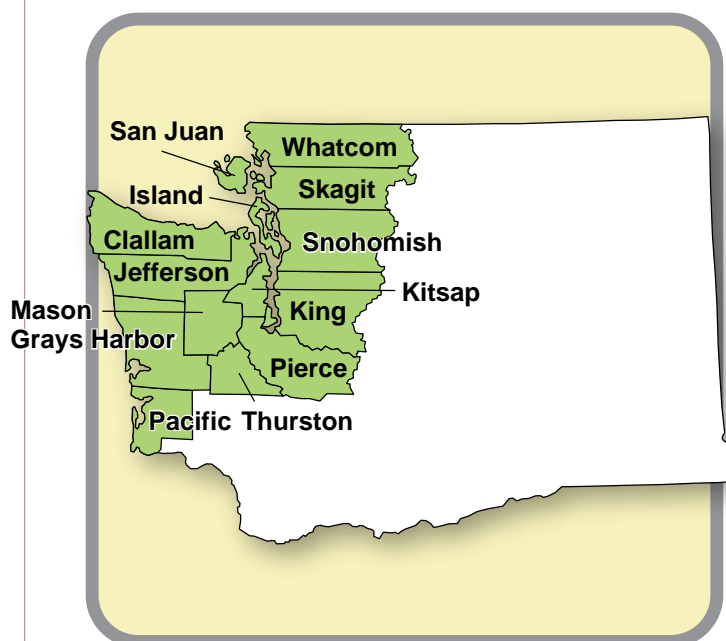


Table 1. Number of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2011.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CLALLAM	88	10	78
GRAYS HARBOR	68	4	64
ISLAND	110	3	107
JEFFERSON	121	6	115
KING	97	11	86
KITSAP	191	15	176
MASON	71	5	66
PACIFIC	57	0	57
PIERCE	123	11	112
SAN JUAN	220	0	220
SKAGIT	68	2	66
SNOHOMISH	40	7	33
THURSTON	42	12	40
WHATCOM	59	5	54
TOTALS	1,355	81	1,274

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

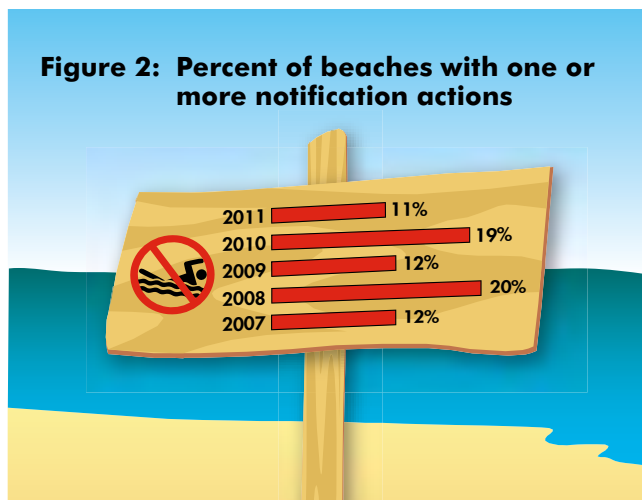
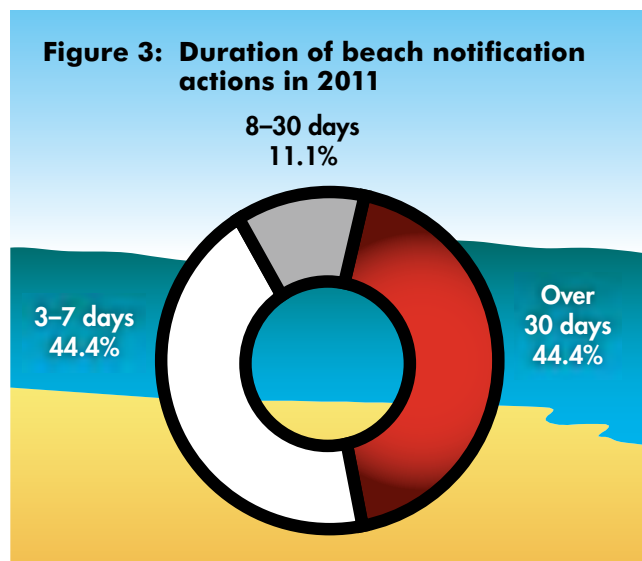


Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions in 2011



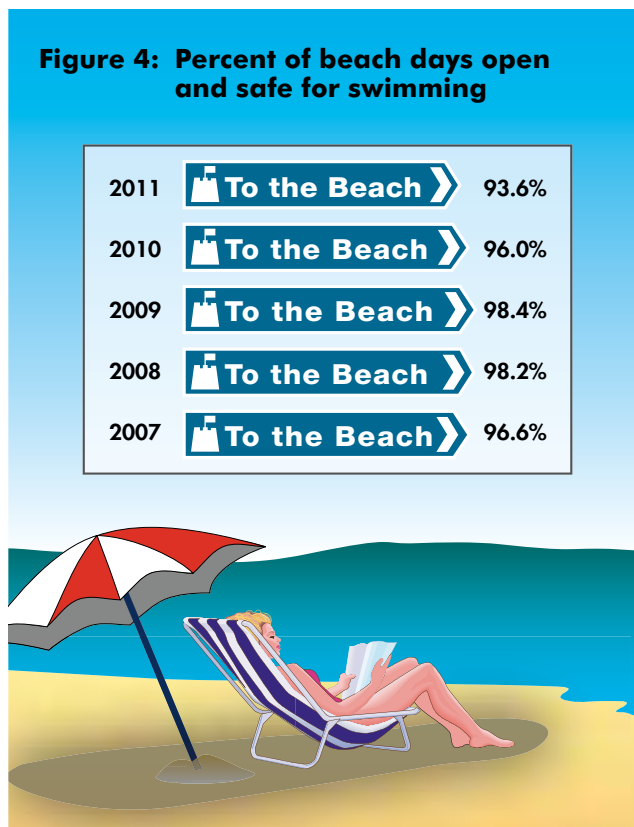
How many notification actions were issued and how long did they last?

Washington issued nine notification actions during the 2011 swimming season. Typically Washington lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. For approximately half of the actions, water quality returned to normal and beaches were deemed safe for swimming within a week or less (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

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



multiplying the length of the beach season by the number of beaches in the state. For 2011 EPA calculated that 6,840 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the 81 monitored Washington beaches. Washington reported notification actions on 439 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming approximately 94 percent of the time. This continues the trend of consistently high percentages of open beach days (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/>.