

National Beach Guidance and Required Performance Criteria for Grants, 2014 Edition

Summary

EPA has published online an updated *National Beach Guidance and Required Performance Criteria for Grants (Beach Guidance)*. This guidance aims to get safer standards in place for recreational waters and pave the way for improved beach monitoring and public notification of beach advisories or closures. The grant requirements in this 2014 *Beach Guidance* document will be incorporated in beach grants awarded to states and tribes henceforth, and supersede those grant requirements in our previously issued 2002 document.

Background

In 1997, EPA created the beach program to assist state and local environmental and public health officials in reducing the risk of disease to swimmers at our nation's beaches. Since then, EPA and the states and tribes have made significant progress in protecting public health at our nation's beaches. We established the infrastructure for state and local beach monitoring and notification programs to warn beachgoers when water quality is unsafe. We also made great strides in improving the quality and quantity of information available to the public on beach waters.

The updated *Beach Guidance* describes the required performance criteria that an eligible coastal or Great Lakes state, territorial, tribal, or local government has to meet to receive grants to implement coastal recreation water monitoring and public notification programs under section 406(b) of the Clean Water Act, as amended by the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 (BEACH Act).

EPA's Goals for the Revised Document

EPA revised the 2002 guidance to meet two main goals: 1) to get safer standards in place for coastal recreational waters, and 2) to pave the way for improved beach monitoring and public awareness of water quality problems.

The 2014 *Beach Guidance* establishes performance criteria consistent with the Clean Water Act requirement for states and tribes to adopt new or revised recreational water quality standards. EPA approval of new or revised state and tribal standards will put in place public health protections from EPA's 2012 Recreational Water Quality Criteria (RWQC).

The recommendations and requirements in the 2014 *Beach Guidance* raise the bar for beach monitoring and public awareness. Following the recommendations in this guidance will lead states and tribes into a new era characterized by improvements in identifying sources of fecal pollution, disseminating information to the public, and supporting site-specific solutions for protecting public health.

Key Changes from the 2002 Document

EPA published draft revisions to the *Beach Guidance* in April 2014 that included numerous changes from the 2002 edition, and asked for comments. The comments received focused mainly on concerns about EPA proposing that grantees be required to use the Beach Action Value recommended in the 2012 RWQC document to trigger beach advisories.

The final version of the 2014 *Beach Guidance*:

- Requires grant recipients to develop a schedule to adopt new or revised recreational

water quality standards pursuant to Clean Water Act section 303(i)(1)(B).

- Requires grant recipients to develop a schedule for identifying and applying EPA's Beach Action Value, or justifying an alternative value, to trigger public notification of beach advisories or closures.
- Updates science on pathogens, health concerns, and fecal indicator bacteria.
- Makes sanitary surveys a central part of states' and tribes' risk-based evaluation and classification of their beaches.
- Provides detailed guidance on how states and tribes can develop their List of Beaches.
- Strengthens the link between prioritizing beaches and developing a tiered monitoring plan that reflects those priorities.
- Summarizes the major findings of EPA's 2010 review of scientific studies on beach monitoring.
- Updates monitoring procedures to include quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) for same-day results.
- Expands discussion on integrating predictive models, which facilitate same-day notification, into a monitoring plan.
- Provides guidance on when to issue or remove a notification.
- Discusses new public notification and communication tools that support same-day notification, such as social media, email, websites, and text messages.
- Adds specific requirements to the performance criteria, such as posting monitoring data on a website to ensure its wide public availability.

What about beaches that are not along the coast or Great Lakes?

States that are not eligible for BEACH Act grants are not required to comply with these

requirements, but the 2014 *Beach Guidance* contains a wealth of information and many best management practices that those states might

still want to follow. While the BEACH Act does not apply to inland waters, the general approach and principles in this guidance would also be applicable to inland beaches, although some modifications might be appropriate.

For More Information

For more information on the *National Beach Guidance and Required Performance Criteria for Grants*, please contact Rick Hoffmann (202-566-0388 or hoffmann.rick@epa.gov).

To view the guidance document go to:
<http://www2.epa.gov/beach-tech/national-beach-guidance-and-required-performance-criteria-grants>

For general information about beaches go to:
<http://www2.epa.gov/beaches>

For information about a specific beach go to:
<http://www2.epa.gov/beaches/find-information-about-your-beach>

To find your EPA Regional or state beach program representative go to:
<http://www2.epa.gov/beaches/state-and-local-beach-programs>