

EPA's BEACH Report: Alabama 2012 Swimming Season

September 2013

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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 Alabama for the 2012 swimming season.

2012 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

Alabama monitored 25 beaches in two counties during the 2012 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, Alabama officials issue a beach advisory warning people of possible risks of swimming.

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2012, of the 25 coastal beaches that Alabama monitored, nine (36 percent) had at least one notification action. This is a increase over previous years, primarily due to several widespread storms hitting the coast during the swimming season (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Alabama coastal counties

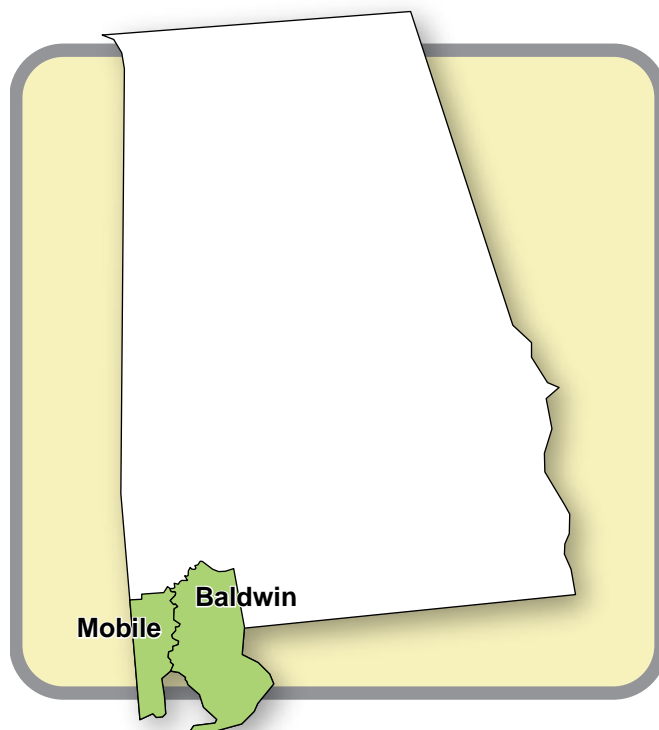


Table 1. Number of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2012.

| County | Total Beaches | Monitored | Not Monitored |
|---------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| BALDWIN | 21 | 21 | 0 |
| MOBILE | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 25 | 25 | 0 |

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

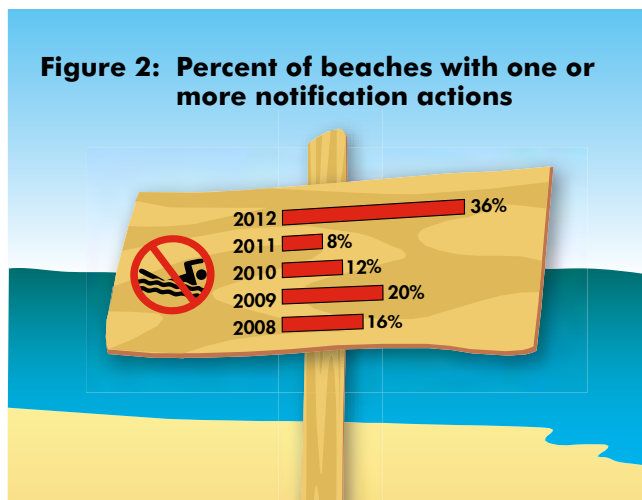
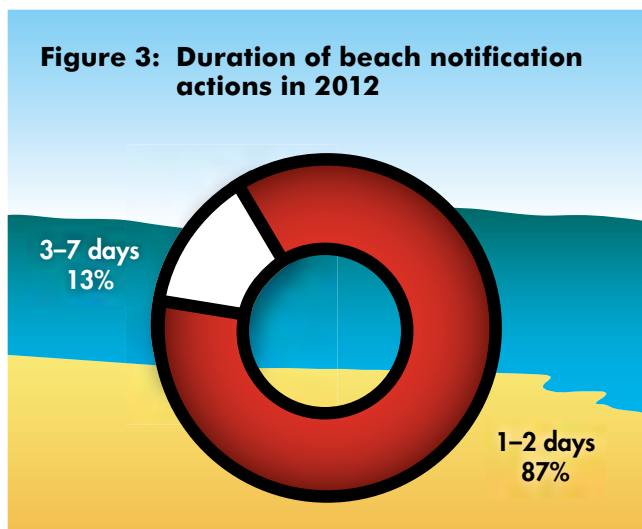


Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions in 2012



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

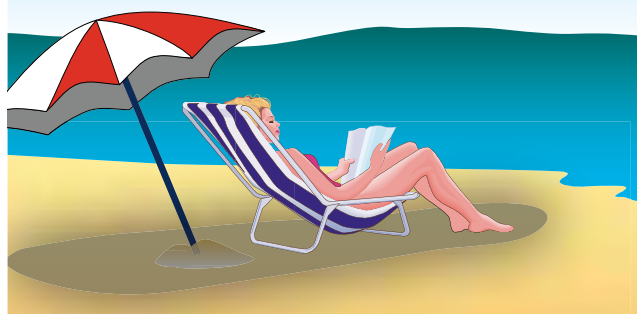
Alabama issued 15 notification actions during the 2012 swimming season. Typically Alabama lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. For 13 of the 15 actions (87 percent) water quality returned to normal and beaches were deemed safe for 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

| | | |
|------|--------------|-------|
| 2012 | To the Beach | 99.5% |
| 2011 | To the Beach | 99.8% |
| 2010 | To the Beach | 99.9% |
| 2009 | To the Beach | 99.7% |
| 2008 | To the Beach | 99.8% |



beaches in the state. For 2012 EPA determined that 3,825 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the twenty-five monitored Alabama beaches. Alabama reported notification actions on 21 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming about 99.5 percent of the time. This continues the annual trend of consistently high percentages of open beach days at beaches in Alabama (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/>.