

EPA's BEACH Report: Minnesota 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 Minnesota for the 2012 swimming season.

2012 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

Minnesota monitored 42 coastal beaches in three 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, Minnesota officials issue a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming.

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2012, of the 42 coastal beaches that Minnesota monitored, 26 (62 percent) had at least one notification action (Figure 2). This increase, compared to previous years, is due in part to a June 20 flood event that affected a large portion of the Lake Superior shoreline. The Minnesota Department of Health has identified Lake Superior beaches near Duluth as an area of concern due to increased runoff and sources of bacteria.

Figure 1. Minnesota coastal counties

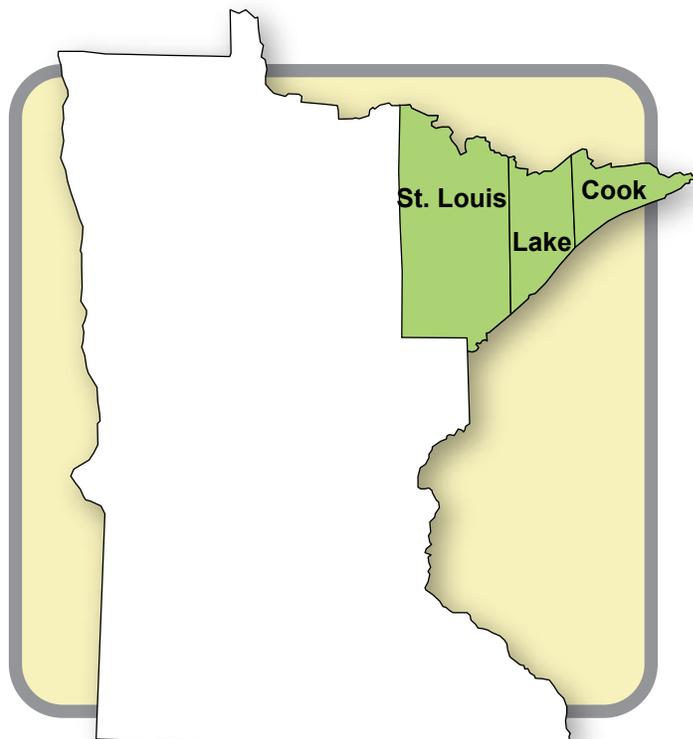


Table 1. Number of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2012

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
COOK	25	14	11
LAKE	23	11	12
ST. LOUIS	34	17	17
TOTALS	82	42	40

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

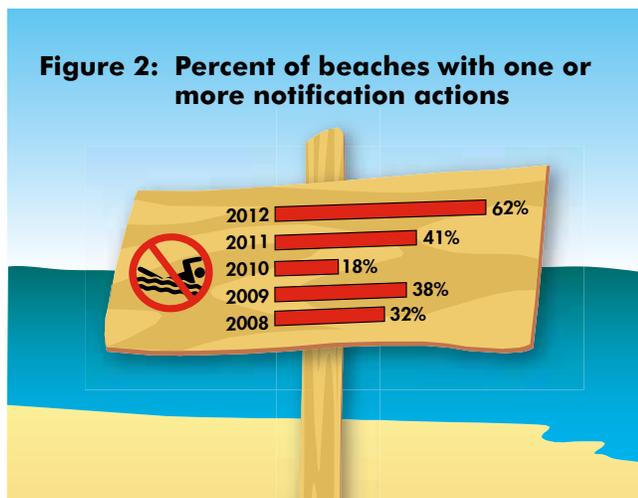
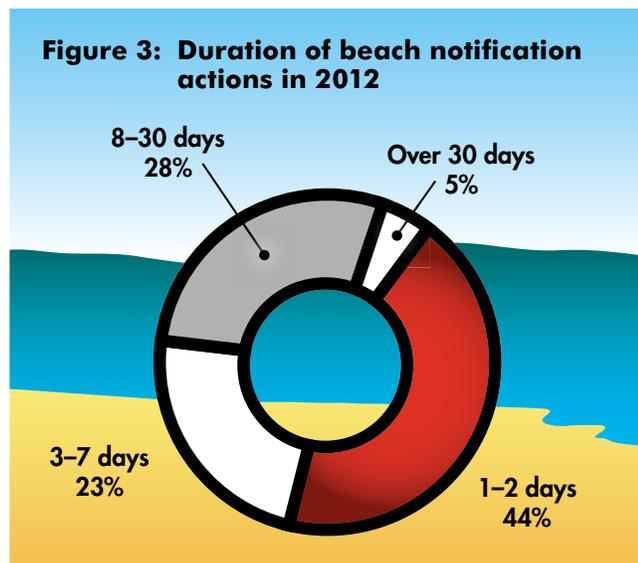


Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions in 2012



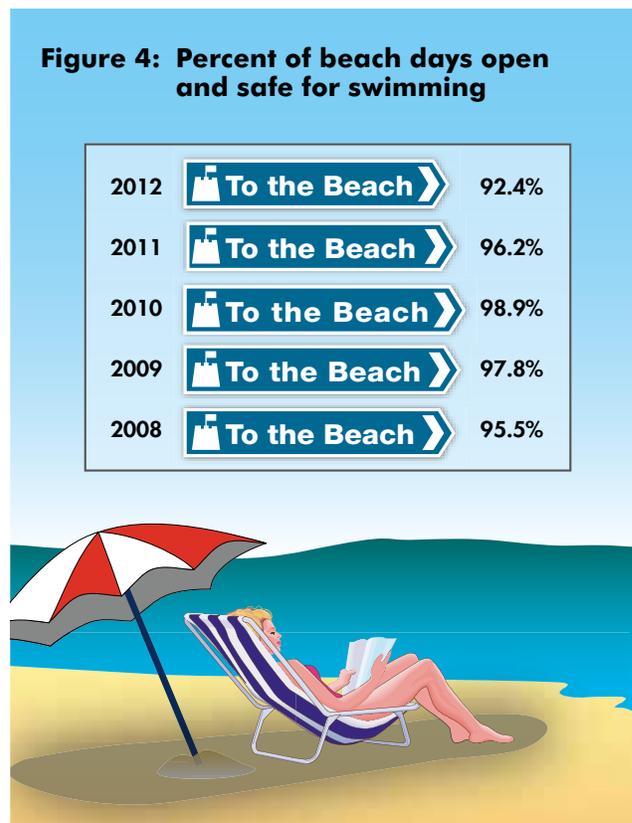
How many notification actions were issued and how long did they last?

Minnesota issued 57 notification actions during the 2012 swimming season. Typically Minnesota lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. For the majority of actions (67percent) 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 multiplying the

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



length of the beach season by the number of beaches in the state. For 2012 EPA calculated that 5,162 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the 42 monitored Minnesota beaches. Minnesota reported notification actions on 394 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming about 92 percent of the time. This lower percentage is due in part to the June 20 flood event that affected a large portion of the Lake Superior shoreline (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/>.