United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA's BEACH Report: Mississippi 2012 Swimming Season

September 2013

EPA 820-F-13-050

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 Mississippi for the 2012 swimming season.

2012 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

Mississippi monitored 22 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, Mississippi officials issue a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming.

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2012, of the 22 coastal beaches that Mississippi monitored, 21 (96 percent) had at least one notification action (Figure 2). This increase was due to Hurricane Isaac which caused widespread flooding and debris hazards at practically all the beaches along the Mississippi coast.

Figure 1. Mississippi coastal counties

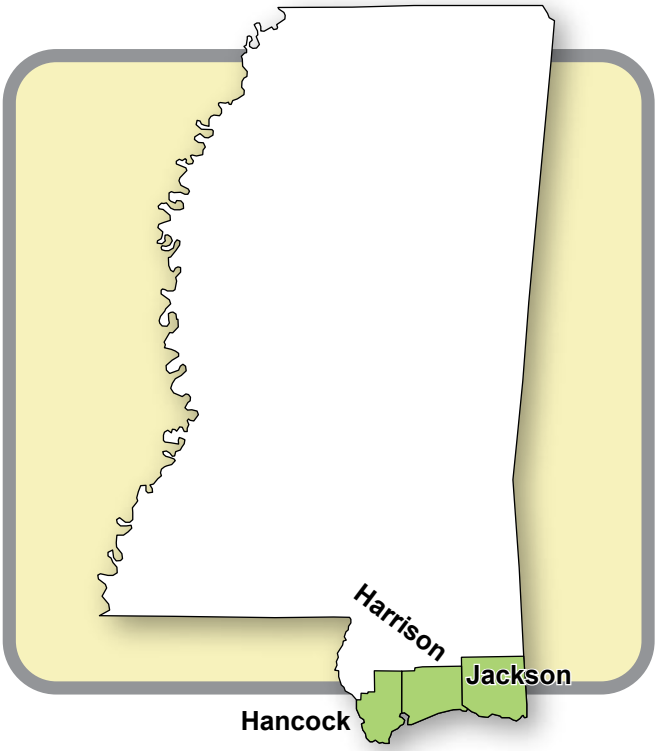
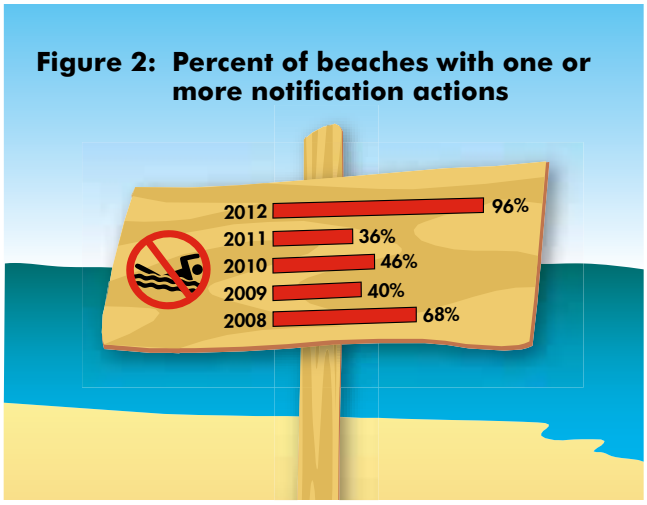
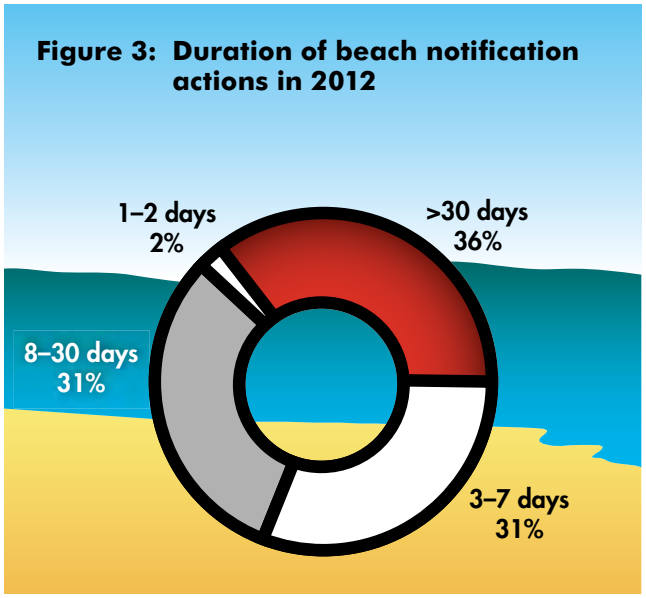


Table 1. Number of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2012

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
HANCOCK	4	4	0
HARRISON	13	13	0
JACKSON	5	5	0
TOTALS	**22**	**22**	**0**



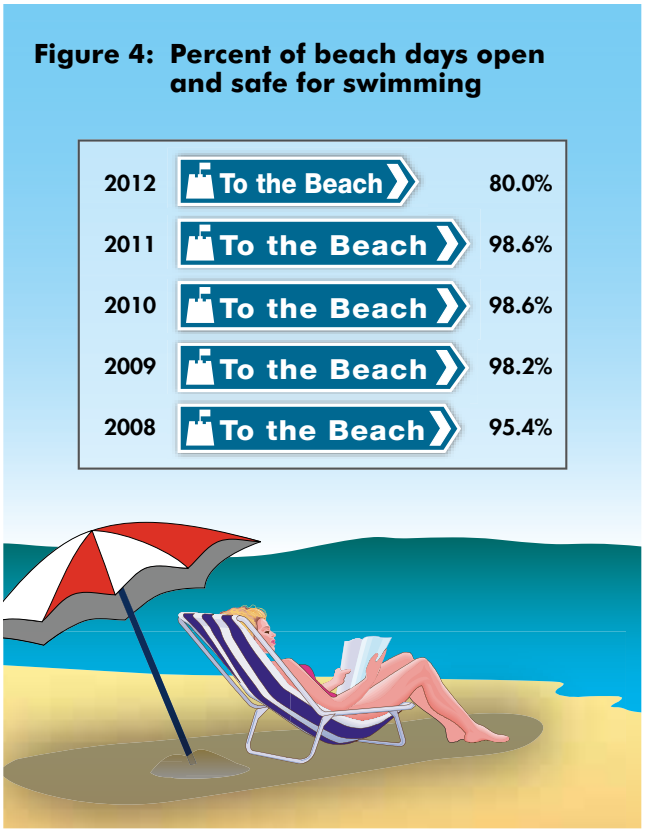


How many notification actions were issued and how long did they last?

Mississippi issued 36 notification actions during the 2012 swimming season. Typically Mississippi lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. Twenty-one of the actions were triggered by Hurricane Isaac which hit the Mississippi coast on August 29. Beaches were closed between 14 and 60 days, depending on the location. Figure 3 displays action durations for all the actions issued in the swimming season.

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 beaches in the state. For 2012, EPA calculated that 4,686 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the 22 monitored Mississippi beaches. Mississippi reported notification actions on 929 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming about 80 percent of the time. This lower percentage is reflective of the impact of Hurricane Isaac (Figure 4).

For More Information

For information about the Mississippi beach program contact:
Emily Cotton
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Tel: 228-432-1056
e-mail: Emily_Cotton@deq.state.ms.us

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/.