United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA's BEACH Report: Wisconsin 2012 Swimming Season

September 2013

EPA 820-F-13-052

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 Wisconsin for the 2012 swimming season.

2012 Swimming Season Monitoring and Notification Actions

Wisconsin reports 193 coastal beaches in 15 counties. Wisconsin monitored 117 of these beaches in 13 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, Wisconsin 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. In some cases, advisories and closings are issued preemptively (i.e., without having actual bacteria monitoring results) due to storms or other conditions that might affect swimmer safety.

Figure 1. Wisconsin coastal counties

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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
ASHLAND	7	7	0
BAYFIELD	19	17	2
BROWN	9	3	6
DOOR	53	31	22
DOUGLAS	16	12	4
IRON	5	5	0
KENOSHA	7	5	2
KEWAUNEE	5	2	3
MANITOWOC	17	9	8
MARINETTE	6	0	6
MILWAUKEE	13	9	4
OCONTO	1	0	1
OZAUKEE	12	7	5
RACINE	7	2	5
SHEBOYGAN	16	8	8
TOTALS	**193**	**117**	**76**

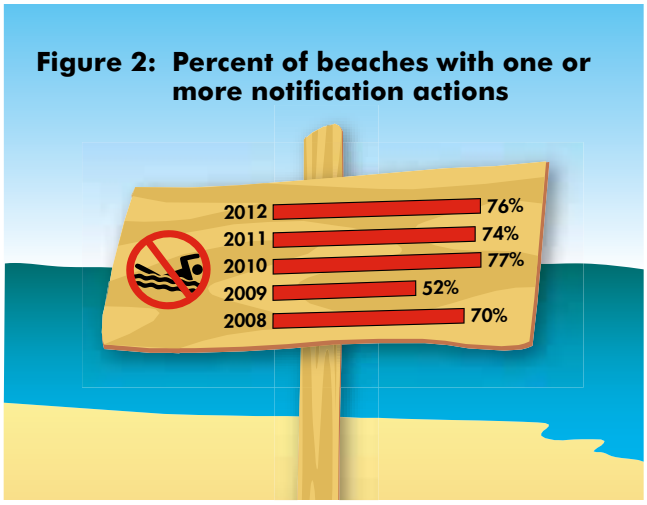

Figure 2: Percent of beaches with one or more notification actions

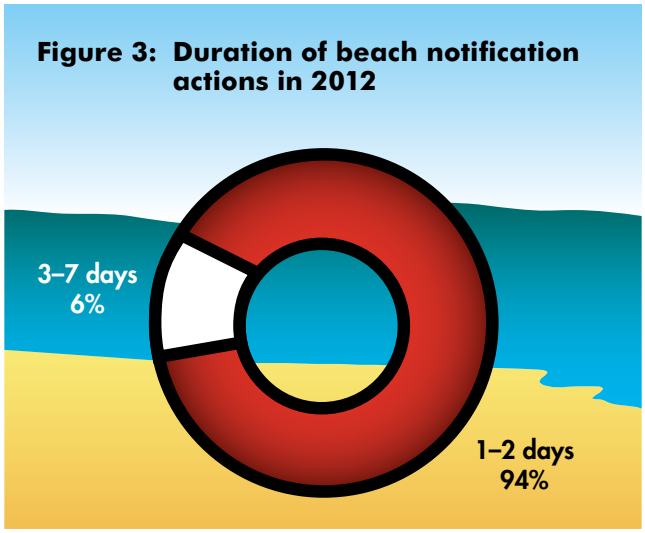

Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions in 2012

How many beaches had notification actions?

In 2012, of the 117 coastal beaches that Wisconsin monitored, 89 (76 percent) had at least one notification action (Figure 2). This is approximately the same as in most previous years with the exception of 2009.

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

Wisconsin issued 556 notification actions during the 2012 swimming season. Typically Wisconsin lifts an action when follow-up monitoring indicates that water quality complies with applicable standards. For the majority of actions (94 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

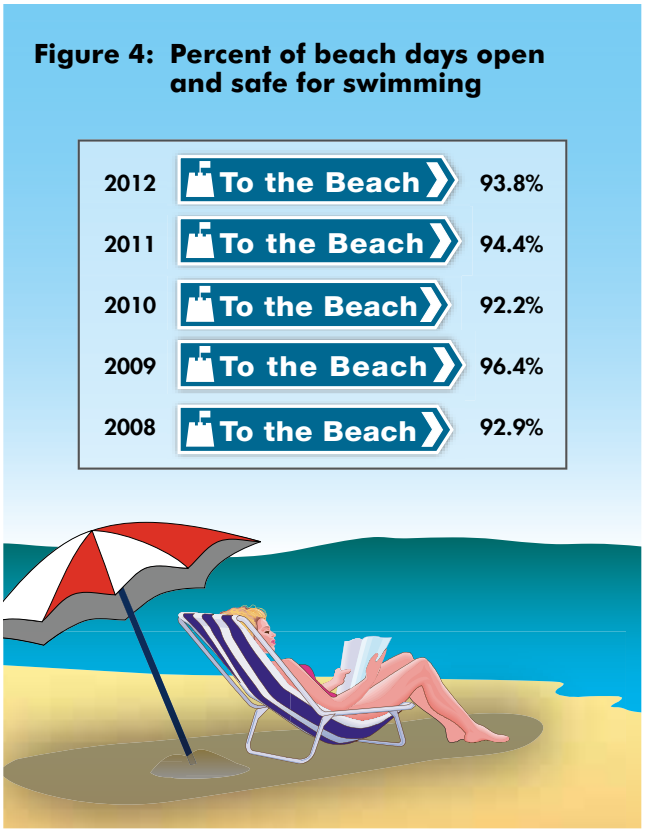

Figure 4: Percent of beach days open and safe for swimming

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 11,149 beach days were associated with the swimming seasons of the 117 monitored Wisconsin beaches. Wisconsin reported notification actions on 696 days, meaning that beaches were open and safe for swimming about 94 percent of the time. This continues the trend of consistently high percentages of open beach days at beaches in Wisconsin (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/.