EPA's BEACH Report: Louisiana 2008 Swimming Season

May 2009

Introduction

The BEACH Act of 2000 requires that coastal and Great Lakes states and territories report beach water quality monitoring and notification data for their coastal recreation waters to EPA. The BEACH Act defines coastal recreation waters as the Great Lakes and coastal waters (including coastal estuaries) that states, territories, and authorized tribes officially recognize or designate for swimming, bathing, surfing, or similar activities in the water.

This fact sheet summarizes beach monitoring and notification data submitted to EPA by the State of Louisiana for the 2008 swimming season.

Due to the lingering impacts of Hurricane Rita, use of Cameron Parish beaches during the 2008 swimming season remained low relative to historic levels. Hurricane Ike further impacted Cameron Parish beaches in 2008, reducing use from mid-September through the balance of the 2008 swimming season, and eliminating access to Hackberry beach. Grand Isle State Park beaches were also closed for the majority of 2008 due to construction activities associated with beach restoration along the Park's shoreline to repair lingering damages from Hurricane Katrina. In early September 2008, Hurricane Gustav resulted in closure of the access road to Fourchon, which resulted in closure of the beach for the balance of the swimming season. Use at the remaining beaches during 2008 was at approximately historic levels.

Figure 1. Louisiana coastal parishes.

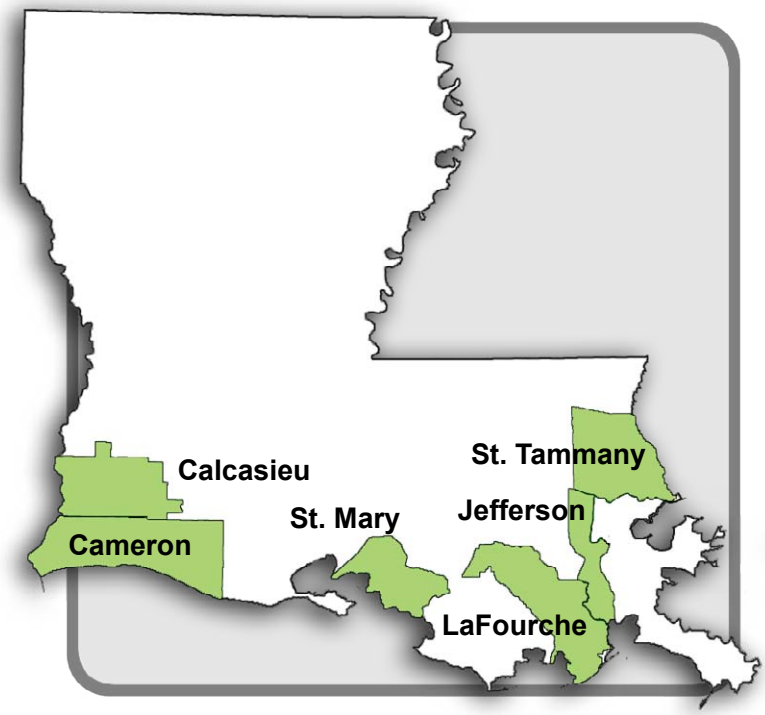

Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by parish for 2008.

Parish	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CAMERON	13	13	0
JEFFERSON	7	7	0
LAFOURCHE	4	4	0
ST. MARY	1	1	0
ST. TAMMANY	1	1	0
TOTALS	**26**	**26**	**0**

2008 Summary Results

How many notification actions were reported and how long were they?

Louisiana issues beach advisories when water quality standards are exceeded. All monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2008 swimming season. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations. This figure includes advisories issued when water quality criteria were exceeded and closures issued during beach construction or following hurricanes.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Louisiana's 2008 swimming season, actions were reported about 66 percent of the time (Figure 3). Advisories associated with an observed exceedance of water quality criteria accounted for 71% of notifications, with the balance from construction and post-hurricane closures. Adjusting for closures, water quality advisories were reported about 61% of the time.

How do 2008 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2008 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years. However, due to annual changes in monitoring tier assignments, these results cannot be directly interpreted. A thorough analysis of water quality trends is presented in the Program's annual report.

What pollution sources possibly affect investigated monitored beaches?

Louisiana has conducted sanitary surveys of all monitored beaches and continues to investigate possible sources of contamination at monitored beaches with high exceedance rates. However, no possible sources of pollution affecting Louisiana's investigated monitored beaches in 2008 were identified (Figure 4).

For More Information

For general information about beaches:
www.epa.gov/beaches/

For information about beaches in Louisiana, including the Program's annual report, Louisiana BEACH Grant Report, 2008 Swimming Season:
www.ophbeachmonitoring.com

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

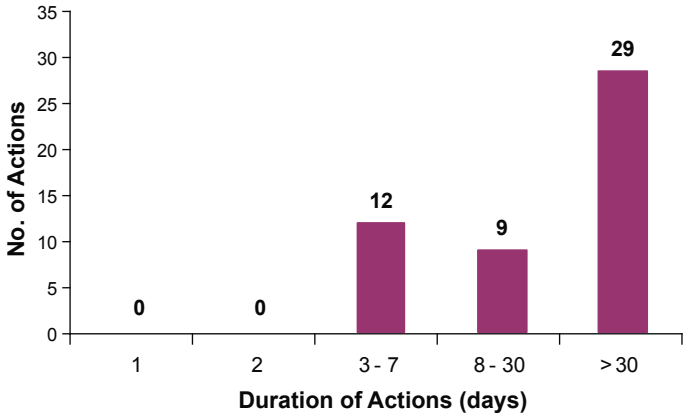

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

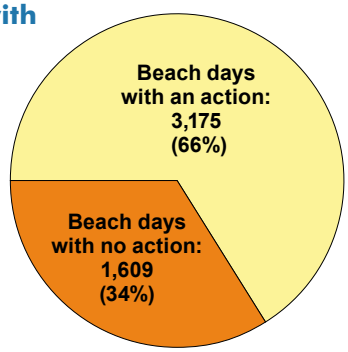

Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2006–2008.

	2006	2007	2008
Number of monitored beaches	22	26	26
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	1	18	26
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	5%	69%	100%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	<1%	38%	66%
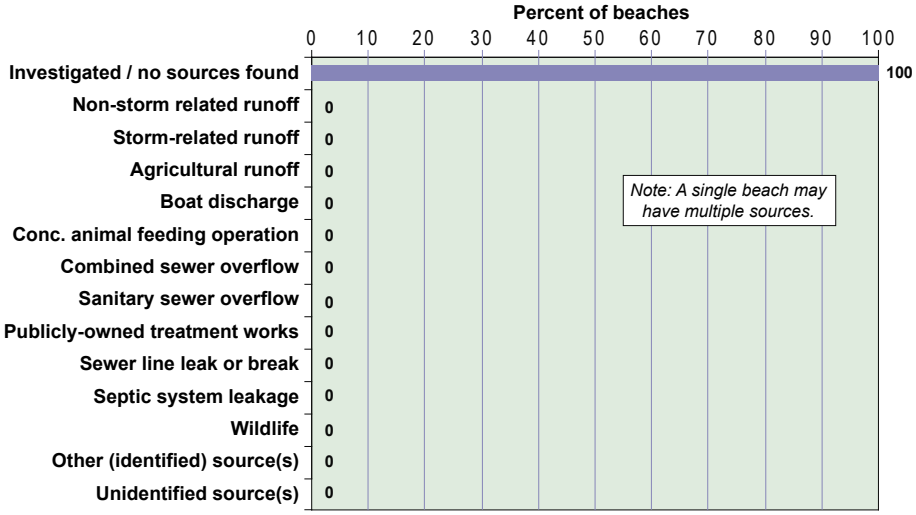
Figure 4: Percent of investigated monitored beaches affected by possible pollution sources (26 beaches).