EPA's BEACH Report: Minnesota 2009 Swimming Season

May 2010

Introduction

The BEACH Act of 2000 requires that coastal and Great Lakes states and territories report to EPA on beach monitoring and notification data for their coastal recreation waters. 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 Minnesota for the 2009 swimming season.

Going to "The Lake" is one of the most popular summer activities along Minnesota's Lake Superior coastline. Whether visitors go to the beach to kayak, swim, surf, or look for agates, water quality can have a significant impact on a beachgoer's experience.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day each year, Minnesota conducts a program for monitoring the bacteria content of the recreational waters along the Minnesota Lake Superior shoreline that are publicly owned. A partnership effort between Minnesota's Pollution Control Agency, Department of Natural Resources, county health departments and private/public organizations in the region provides the citizens of Minnesota with specific and timely information regarding water quality conditions. Water is collected from each beach at least once per week during the season. Samples are analyzed for *E. coli* content and the results are made available to the public.

Minnesota has partnered with the Natural Resources Research Institute to develop the **www.MNBeaches.org** Web site. The Web site allows the public access to real time data and advisory information for all of Minnesota's Lake Superior beaches. It also allows the public to sign up to receive e-mail notification of advisories for beaches of their choice.

Figure 1. Minnesota coastal counties.

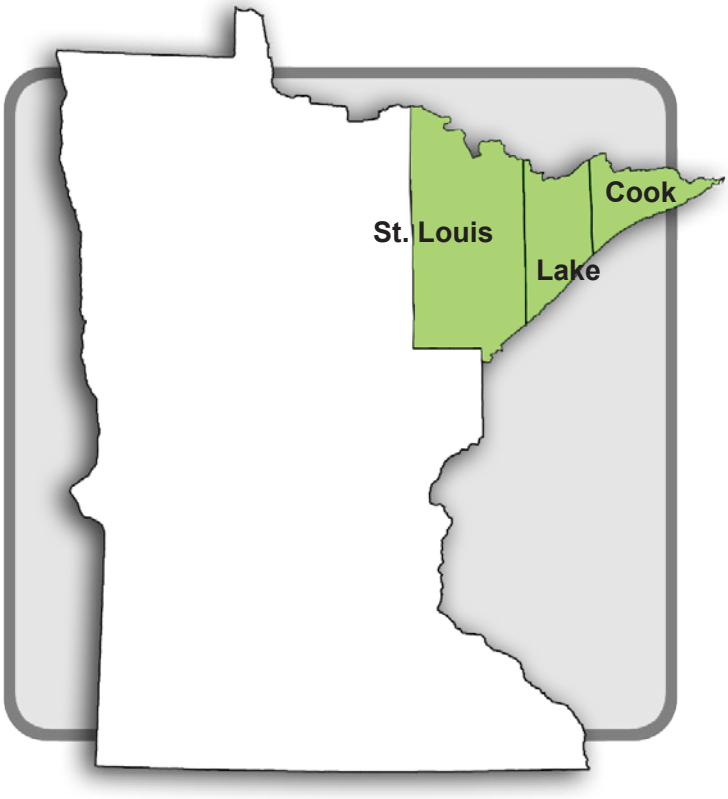

Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2009.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
COOK	22	11	11
LAKE	23	11	12
ST. LOUIS	34	17	17
TOTALS	**79**	**39**	**40**

2009 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Minnesota's approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the water. A total of 15 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2009 swimming season. About 70 percent of Minnesota's 30 notification actions lasted two days or less. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Minnesota's 2009 swimming season, actions were reported about 2 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2009 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2009 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly affect investigated monitored beaches?

Figure 4 displays the percentage of Minnesota's investigated monitored beaches possibly affected by various pollution sources. In 2009, all of the beaches where sources were investigated included storm- and nonstorm-related runoff, wildlife, and other/unidentified as possible sources of pollution.

For More Information

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

For more information regarding sample results for all monitored beaches in Minnesota go to **www.MNBeaches.org** or contact the MPCA at (218) 725-7724. You can also call the Agency's toll-free information line, 1-(800) 657-3864.

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

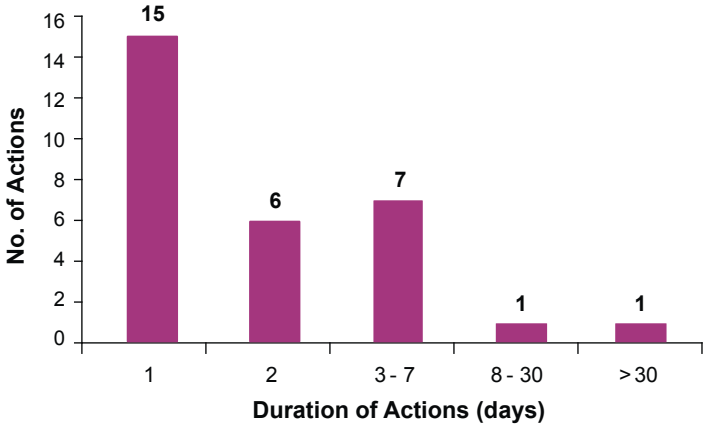

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

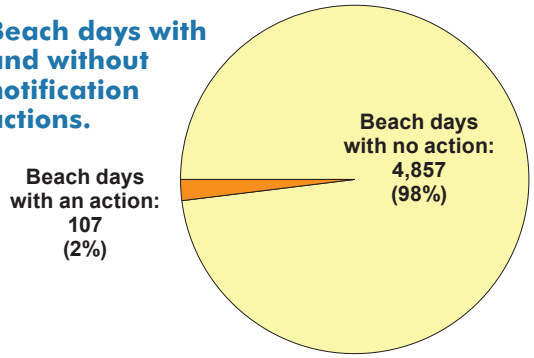

Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2007–2009.

	2007	2008	2009
Number of monitored beaches	39	40	39
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	18	13	15
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	46%	32%	38%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	4%	5%	2%
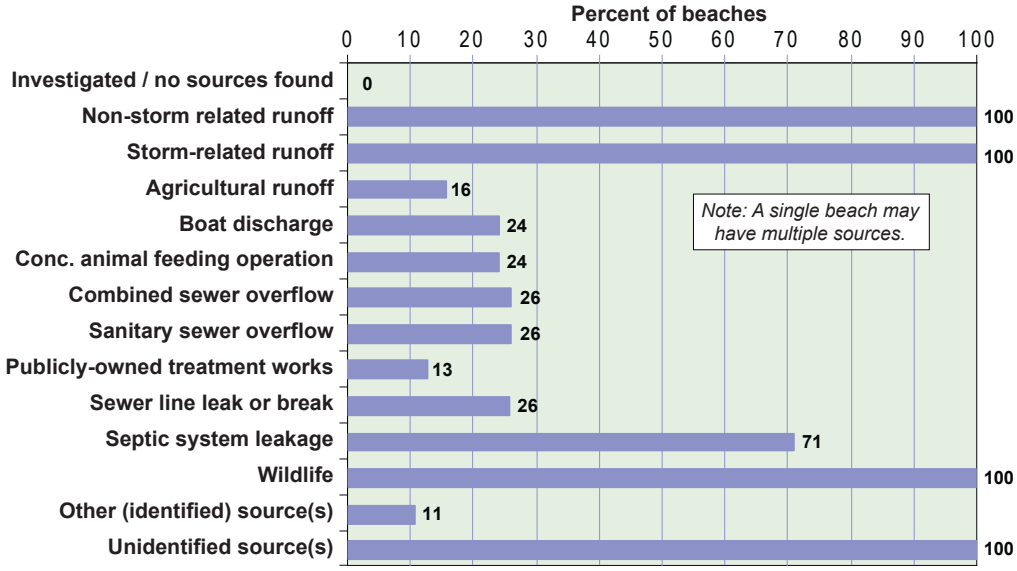
Figure 4: Percent of investigated monitored beaches affected by possible pollution sources (38 beaches).