



# EPA's BEACH Report: 2009 Swimming Season

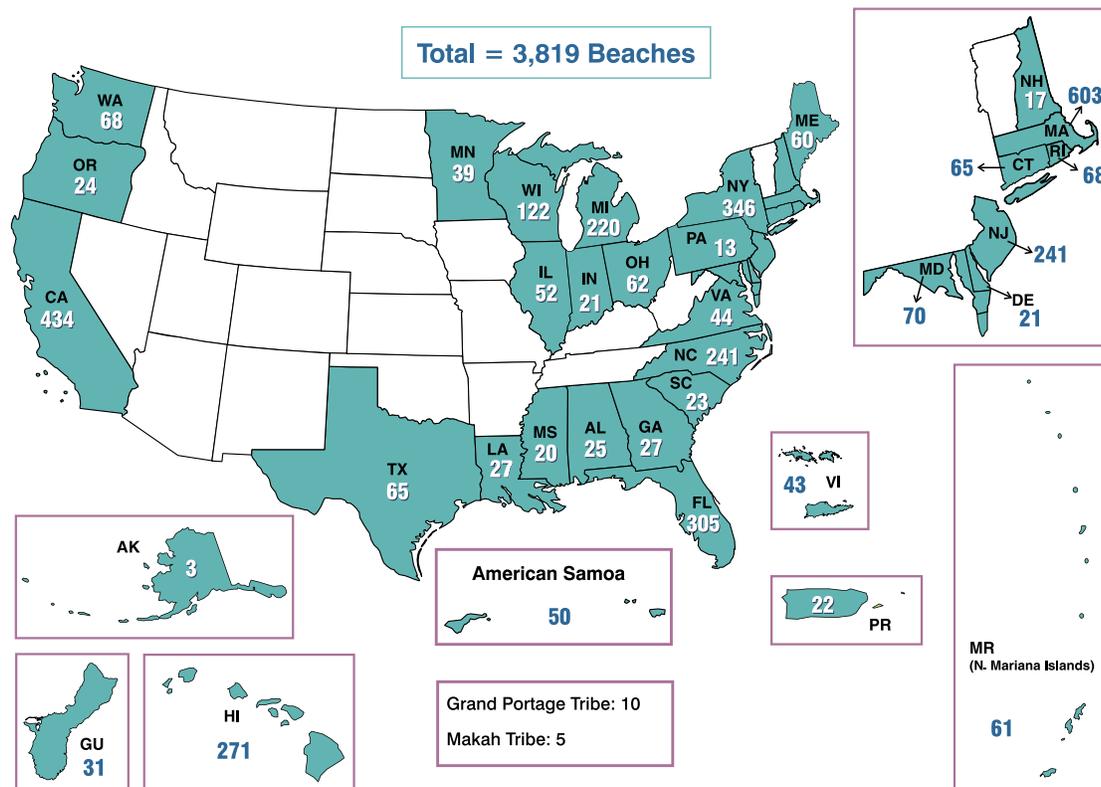
May 2010

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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, and that EPA maintain an electronic database of that data, accessible to the public, so that they can make informed choices about where to swim. To further our commitment to reducing the risk of exposure to disease-causing pathogens at recreational beaches, EPA is posting the latest data about beach closings and advisories for the 2009 swimming season. This fact sheet also highlights recent developments in EPA's Beach Program.

Figure 1. Coastal states with 2009 monitored beach data.



## 2009 Swimming Season Results

When monitoring results at swimming beaches show that levels of certain bacteria in the water exceed standards, states, territories, and tribes may notify the public by issuing a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming, or they may close a beach to public swimming. The data reported here consist primarily of precautionary advisories and closures issued as a result of local monitoring.

### How many beaches had notification actions?

For the 2009 swimming season, all thirty coastal states, five territories, and two tribes reported their beach monitoring and notification data to EPA (Figure 1). In 2009, of the 3,819 coastal beaches that were monitored, 1,642 (43 percent) had at least one advisory or closure (Figure 2). The increase in beaches with actions can be attributed to increased monitoring, a wetter swimming season in the Northeast, and the inclusion this year of actions due to county-wide preemptive rainfall advisories.

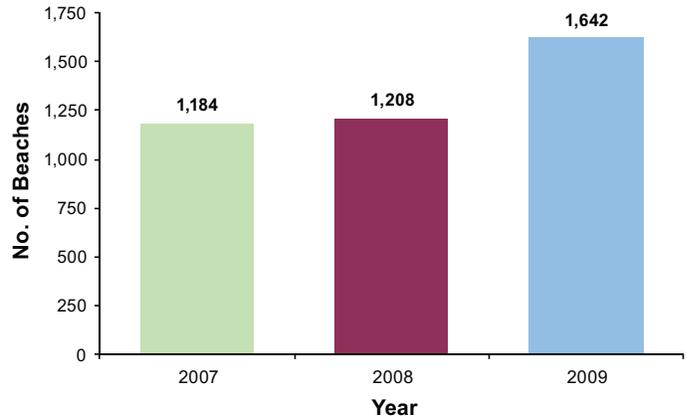
### How many notification actions were reported and how long were they?

States and territories reported 6,203 notification actions during the 2009 swimming season. Most (88 percent) lasted a week or less (Figure 3). Sixty percent (3,719 actions) lasted just one or two days.

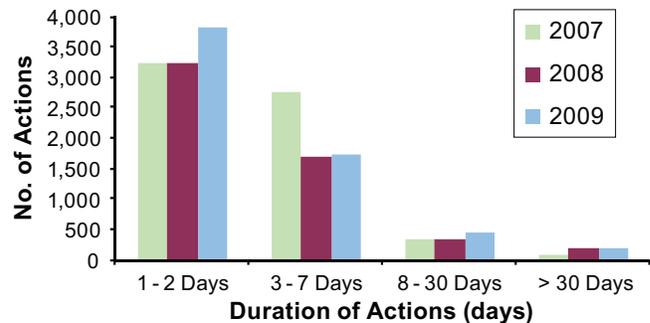
### What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

EPA calculates the total available beach days and the number of beach days with advisories or closures to better track trends over time. To calculate total available beach days, we sum the length of each state's and territory's beach season multiplied by the number of beaches in the state or territory. For 2009, EPA determined there were a total of 764,377 beach days associated with the swimming seasons of 3,819 monitored beaches. Notification actions were reported on 36,043 days (Figure 4), meaning that beaches were under an advisory or closed about 5 percent of the time, similar to the previous three years (Table 1).

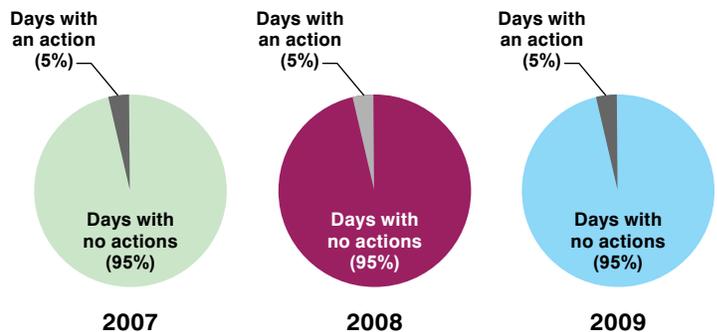
**Figure 2: No. of beaches with notification actions from 2007 to 2009.**



**Figure 3: Duration of beach notification actions from 2007 to 2009.**



**Figure 4: Percentage of beach days under notification actions from 2007 to 2009.**



**Table 1. Data collected on beaches, advisories, and closings.**

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Number of monitored beaches</b>	3,771	3,647	3,740	3,819
<b>Number of beaches affected by advisories or closings</b>	1,201	1,184	1,210	1,642
<b>Percentage of beaches affected by advisories or closings</b>	32%	32%	32%	43%
<b>Percentage of beach days affected by advisories or closings</b>	5%	5%	5%	5%

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BEACH Act

2010 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BEACH Act of 2000. In one decade, EPA implementation of the BEACH Act has substantially enhanced the capacity of state and local partners to design and implement beach programs to protect the health of swimmers in our coastal recreation waters. Each of these 37 states, territories, and tribes has significantly improved its monitoring and public notification at beaches since 2000, with the number of monitored beaches increasing from about 1,000 in 1997 to more than 3,800 in 2009. In addition, all these 37 states, territories and tribes have water quality standards for bacteria that are as protective of human health as EPA's current bacteria criteria—three times the number in 2000.

## EPA Beach Program Activities

### *Funding to State Programs*

Since 2001, EPA has made available nearly \$92 million in grants to 37 coastal and Great Lakes states, territories and tribes. The funds are designed to help improve water quality monitoring and public information programs to alert beachgoers about the health of their beaches. Beach water quality monitoring helps to ensure that the public receives information on how to protect their health when visiting beaches. Results are used to issue warnings and closures if indicators of pathogens are at unsafe levels and to help identify actions needed to reduce pollution.

The Agency encourages eligible tribes to contact their Regional EPA beach coordinators to learn more about BEACH Act grants. For a list of Regional beach coordinators visit: [www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/contact.html](http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/contact.html)

### *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative*

The President's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative provides \$475 million to address the most significant problems in the Great Lakes, including a potential \$120 million in targeted grants to an expected 400 projects. Some of these projects will improve beach management and public health protection through identification and reduction of beach water contamination sources, improved beach water quality monitoring methods, near real-time beach water quality notifications, more accurate forecasts, and improved communication of beach health information to the public.

### ***Development of New or Revised Water Quality Criteria for Recreational Waters***

EPA is conducting critical science and research in order to publish new or revised recreational water quality criteria by October 2012. Last summer EPA completed data collection for two beach epidemiological studies, one in tropical waters and the other in marine waters impacted by urban runoff. EPA is also researching improved monitoring techniques such as rapid testing methods, compiling available predictive models, and investigating effective uses of sanitary surveys to diagnose and improve the health of beaches. The new or revised criteria recommendations EPA develops would replace the criteria recommendations issued in 1986 and will be used by states, tribes and territories in their adoption of new water quality standards to protect people from illness associated with fecal contamination in water.

### ***National Beach Conference***

EPA's Beach Program strives to ensure public health protection at beaches and to improve the accuracy and timeliness of notification actions. To support this goal, EPA is sponsoring its next National Beach Conference in the spring of 2011. This biannual conference brings together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from around the world to discuss water quality at beaches. Conference registration and additional information will be posted on our Web site, [www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/meetings](http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/meetings).

### **For More Information**

For general information about beaches visit:

[www.epa.gov/beaches/](http://www.epa.gov/beaches/)

For information about a specific beach:

[www.epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/](http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/)