



EPA's BEACH Report: Texas 2008 Swimming Season

May 2009

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 Texas for the 2008 swimming season.

The Texas Beach Watch Program collects water samples from 167 stations along the Texas coast in Aransas, Brazoria, Cameron, Galveston, Jefferson, Kleberg, Matagorda, Nueces and San Patricio counties. The Texas General Land Office contracts with universities, local governments and commercial laboratories to collect the samples and test them for the presence of Enterococcus bacteria. Samples are collected and tested weekly from May through September (the peak beach season) and every other week from October through April. In addition, weekly samples are collected at Gulf of Mexico beaches during March to coincide with Spring Break and the increased number of tourists.

The year 2008 saw a decrease in the number of advisory days during the beach season. In addition, the percentage of beaches and beach days affected by notification actions also decreased. The drought of 2008 has been classified as extreme to exceptional; however, water quality changes, while improving, were not significant.

All monitored recreational beaches in Texas now have public notification signage indicating whether contact with beach water is recommended based on the most recent testing.

Figure 1. Texas coastal counties.

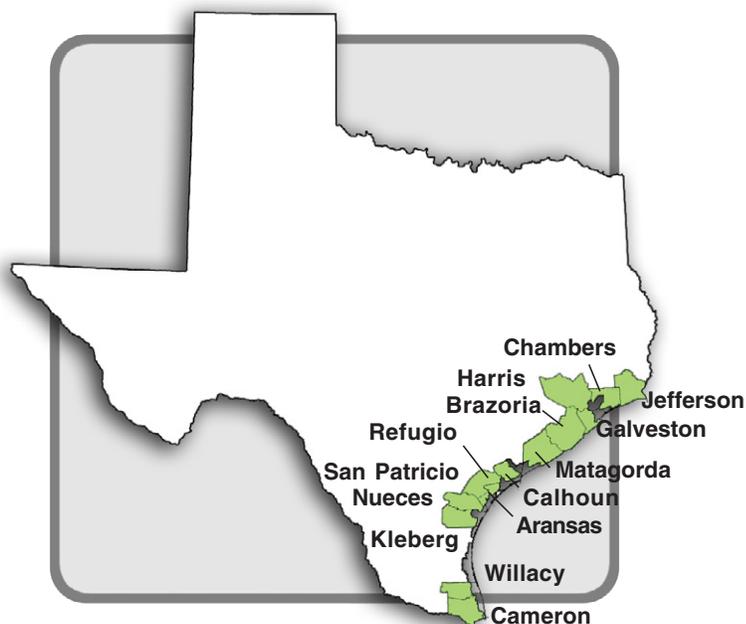


Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2008.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
ARANSAS	9	1	8
BRAZORIA	10	4	6
CALHOUN	18	0	18
CAMERON	12	9	3
CHAMBERS	2	0	2
GALVESTON	36	23	13
HARRIS	8	0	8
JEFFERSON	2	2	0
KLEBERG	7	4	3
MATAGORDA	12	3	9
NUECES	43	18	25
REFUGIO	1	0	1
SAN PATRICIO	6	1	5
WILLACY	3	0	3
TOTALS	169	65	104

2008 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Texas' approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the water. A total of 48 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2008 swimming season. About 92 percent of Texas' 156 notification actions lasted one day. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Texas' 2008 swimming season, actions were reported about 2 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2008 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2008 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly affect investigated monitored beaches?

In 2008, Texas beaches were not investigated for sources of pollution.

For More Information

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

For more information about water quality conditions go to: www.TexasBeachWatch.com.

Additional information regarding the Texas Beach Watch Program is available by contacting the Beach Watch Coordinator at beachwatch@glo.state.tx.us, or by calling the Texas General Land Office at 1-(800) 998-4GLO.

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

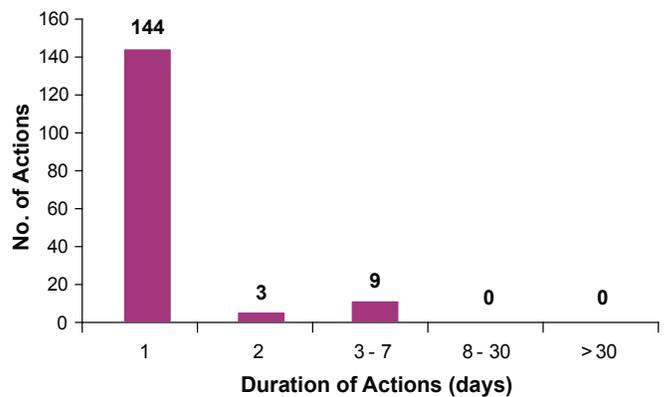


Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

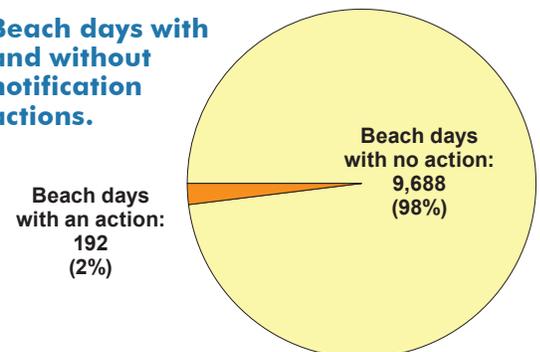


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2006–2008.

	2006	2007	2008
Number of monitored beaches	62	67	65
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	50	50	48
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	81%	75%	74%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	6%	5%	2%