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EPA's BEACH Report:
Maine 2007 Swimming Season

July 2008

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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 Maine for the 2007 swimming season.

The Maine Healthy Beaches (MHB) Program began in 2002 and has recruited new coastal beaches into the program each year. This is a voluntary program for Maine communities which are supported by the MHB Program staff and partnering agencies.

The Maine Healthy Beaches Program experienced the greatest number of advisories and closures in 2007 compared to previous seasons. The most significant factor contributing to this was an increase in reporting advisories and notification by towns and state parks through an updated database report function and intensified training and early season rainfall. Based on our 2006 review of the program and feedback from beach managers, town officials, and our state agency partners, updates and revisions were made strengthening the overall program. The MHB Program has been assisting towns with further assessment of the freshwater tributaries contributing to poor beach water quality and identification of pollution sources. This effort has brought together local/state officials, partnering state agencies, non-profits and citizens with a focus of shared resources and problem solving. The MHB Program is committed to continuing this focus with priority towns, and improving beach management tools including routine assessment, notification, and data analysis.

Maine had 48 beaches in 2007. However, certain beaches were divided into separate management areas for a total of 58 beach management areas.

Figure 1. Maine coastal counties.

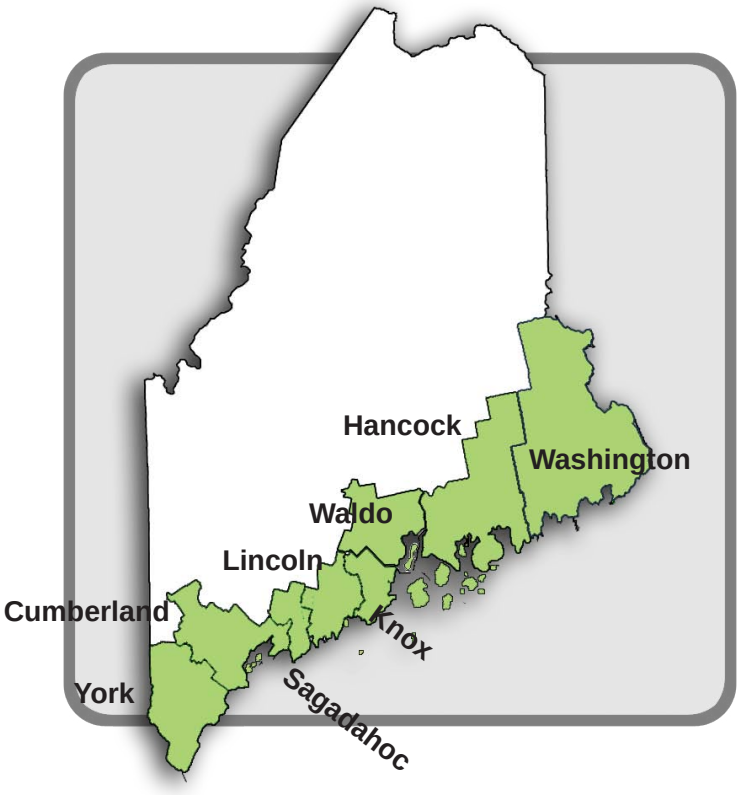

Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2007.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CUMBERLAND	9	8	1
HANCOCK	7	5	2
KNOX	5	3	2
LINCOLN	1	1	0
SAGADAHOC	8	7	1
WALDO	1	1	0
WASHINGTON	2	0	2
YORK	35	33	2
TOTALS	**68**	**58**	**10**

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2007 Summary Results

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

Maine's approach is to issue a beach advisory when water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach that warns people to avoid contact with the ocean water. A total of 30 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2007 swimming season. About 52 percent of Maine's 50 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 Maine's 2007 swimming season, actions were reported about 3 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2007 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2007 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources impact monitored beaches?

Maine reports that the MHB Program is actively working toward identification and remediation of pollution sources with the affected communities through special studies and sanitary surveys. The nonpoint sources of pollution affecting Maine's coastal beaches are covered in Figure 4. However, they have not been quantified.

For More Information

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

For information about beaches in Maine:
www.MaineHealthyBeaches.org

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

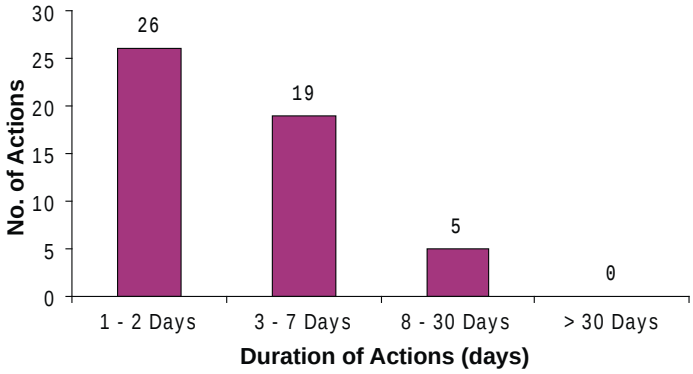

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

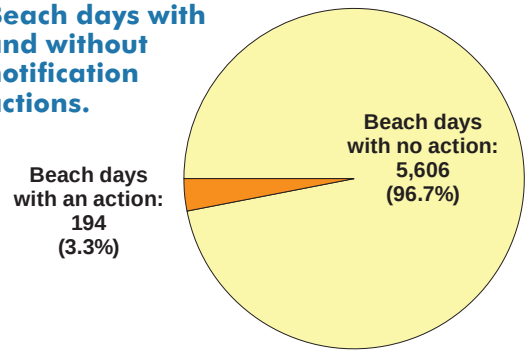

Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2005–2007.

	2005	2006	2007
Number of monitored beaches	48	43	58
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	14	19	30
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	29%	44%	52%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	2%	4%	3%
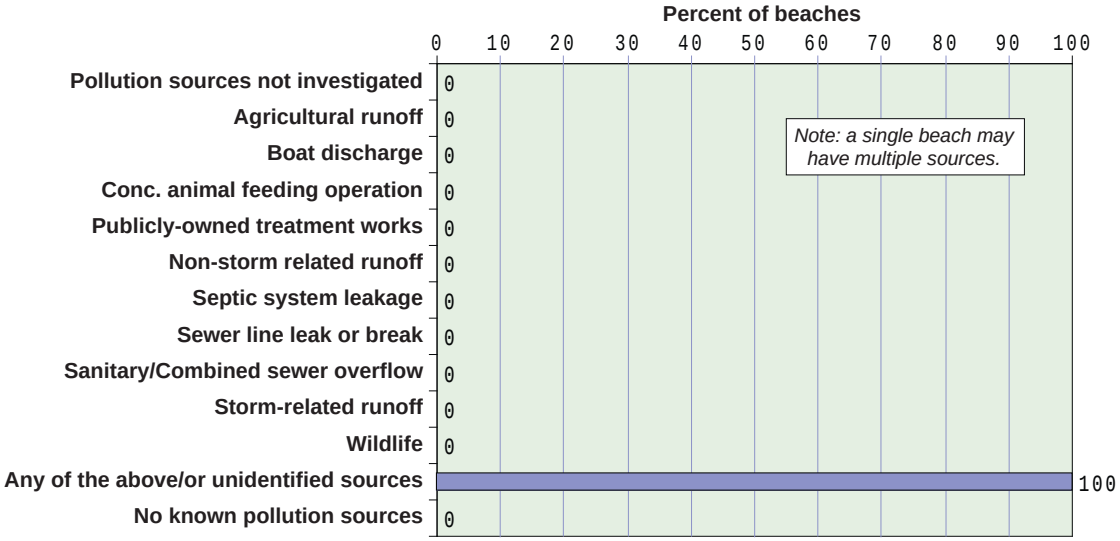
Figure 4: Percent of monitored beaches potentially impacted by pollution sources (58 beaches).