

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report: Rhode Island 2010 Swimming Season

May 2011

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 Rhode Island for the 2010 swimming season.

Rhode Island is known for its beautiful beaches and coastline. Ensuring that its beaches are safe for swimming is a priority both to ensure the health of our residents and to support Rhode Island's valuable tourism industry.

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) is responsible for the licensing and regulation of bathing beach facilities in the State of Rhode Island. The HEALTH Beach Program's mission is to protect the public from illness associated with swimming in contaminated bathing waters. This includes both fresh and saltwater beaches. Funding for the Beach Program is provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). These funds support primary Beach Program activities which include: sanitary surveys, development and implementation of a risk-based monitoring plan, public Notification Plan, and bacteriological testing at marine beaches. Currently, freshwater beach managers are responsible for sampling and following HEALTH approved regulations.

All licensed beaches are required to monitor the water quality to ensure bacteria levels meet state and federal standards. Currently, HEALTH's Beach Program maintains a rigorous water sampling schedule from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Water samples are collected by HEALTH and analyzed for enterococci bacteria (an indicator organism used to detect the presence of fecal matter in the water column) based on standards set by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and USEPA. The Beach Program also assists beach owners and managers with finding and eliminating sources of contamination that pollute Rhode Island beaches.

Figure 1. Rhode Island coastal counties.



Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2010.

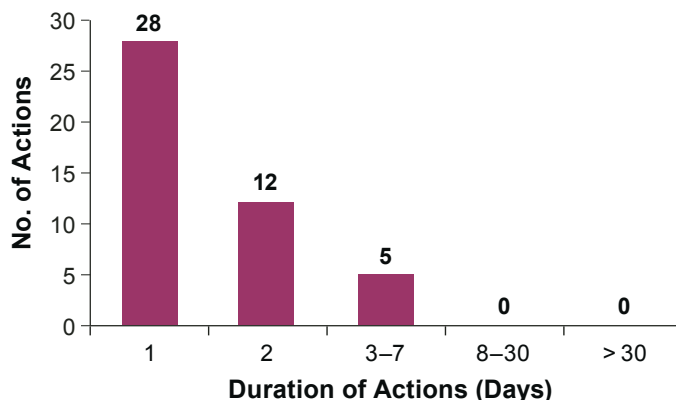
County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BRISTOL	20	4	16
KENT	16	4	12
NEWPORT	86	18	68
PROVIDENCE	8	0	8
WASHINGTON	100	46	54
TOTALS	230	72	158

2010 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Rhode Island issues a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the water. A total of 19 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2010 swimming season. About 89 percent of Rhode Island's 45 notification actions lasted two days or less. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations.

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.



What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Rhode Island's 2010 swimming season, actions were reported one percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2010 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2010 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly affect investigated monitored beaches?

Figure 4 displays the percentage of Rhode Island's investigated monitored beaches possibly affected by various pollution sources. In 2010, 92 percent of the beaches were listed as having unidentified sources of pollution.

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

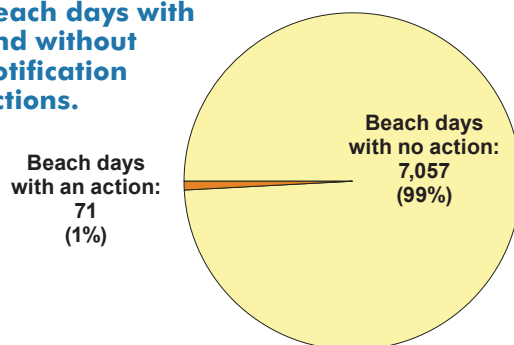


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2008-2010.

	2008	2009	2010
Number of monitored beaches	74	68	72
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	18	21	19
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	24%	31%	26%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	2%	3%	1%

For More Information

For general information about beaches:

www.epa.gov/beaches/

For information about beaches in Rhode Island:

www.ribeaches.org/index.cfm

Figure 4: Percent of investigated monitored beaches affected by possible pollution sources (72 beaches).

