

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

South Carolina 2006 Swimming Season

June 2007

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 South Carolina for the 2006 swimming season.

South Carolina's annual program for monitoring bacteria content of recreational waters along the Atlantic coast takes place from May 15th to Oct. 15th. A partnership between the state's Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and local governments provides residents and visitors with specific and timely information about beach water quality along the state's 180 miles of coastline.

Water is collected from each beach either weekly or twice per month during the season. Samples are analyzed for enterococcus content with results available through local media outlets and on www.earth911.com. In 2006, over 92 percent of days during the beach monitoring season were advisory-free.

In 2005, South Carolina conducted an extensive evaluation of its coastal beaches, and determined that, of the 273 unmonitored points of public access, only 40 are likely to be used for recreation. The remainder are marinas, boat ramps, or may not even exist anymore. The state is working with EPA to determine if the remaining unmonitored beaches should be reclassified out of the state's list of beaches.

Figure 1. South Carolina coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.



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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BEAUFORT	84	4	80
BERKELEY	6	0	6
CHARLESTON	129	5	124
COLLETON	12	1	11
DORCHESTER	3	0	3
GEORGETOWN	36	5	31
HORRY	24	8	16
JASPER	2	0	2
TOTALS	296	23	273

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When bacteria levels exceed the standard of 500 colonies per 100mL of water sampled, advisory signs are posted to alert the public of potential health hazards. Should a beach water sample exceed 104 colonies per 100mL another sample is immediately taken. If the second sample exceeds 104/100mL, an advisory is posted. Samples will be taken every day until acceptable readings occur at which time the advisory is removed. Of the 23 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 9, or 39 percent, had at least one advisory during the 2006 season (Figure 2).

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

A total of 97 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Actions were of relatively short duration, however. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For South Carolina's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 3,496 beach days associated with the 23 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 267 of those days or about 1 percent of the time (Figure 4).

How do 2006 results compare to previous years?

Beginning in 2003, states are required to submit data to EPA under the BEACH Act for beaches which are in coastal and Great Lakes waters. Table 2 compares 2006 data with data reported in previous years.

For More Information

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

Information regarding sample results is available at the South Carolina DHEC Web site at www.scdhec.gov, www.earth911.com or by contacting DHEC at (843) 238-4378.

Figure 2: Monitored beaches with and without notification actions.

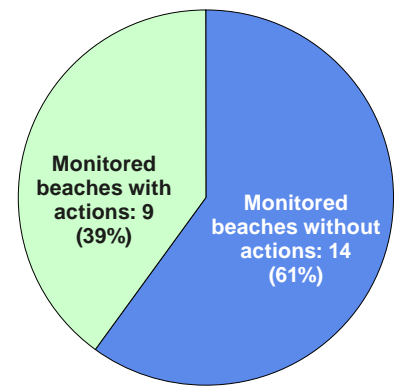


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

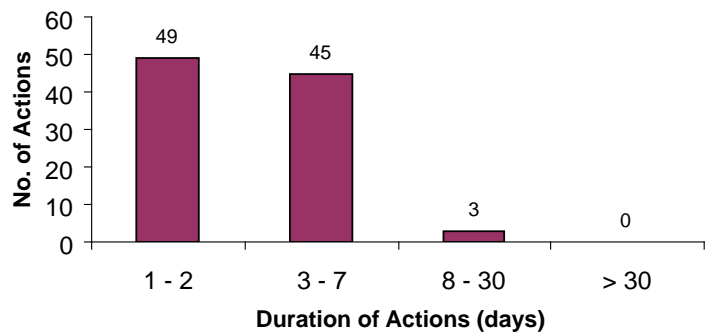


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

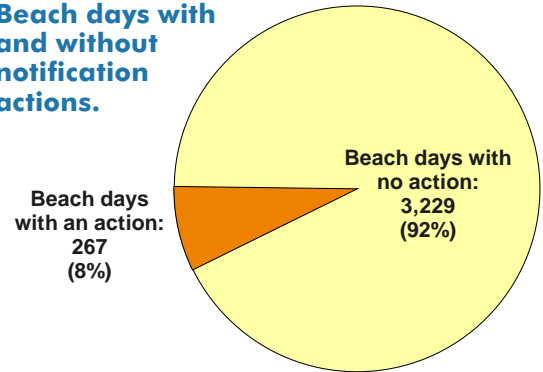


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	23	23	23
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	10	8	9
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	43%	35%	39%