

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts for the 2006 swimming season.

Every year, people head to bathing beaches in Massachusetts for vacation, relaxation, and recreation. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is responsible for implementation of the bathing beach monitoring program at over 500 coastal beaches in Massachusetts. The BEACH Act resulted in funding that MDPH has used to increase and implement consistent water quality monitoring throughout the state, increased public awareness of beach water quality issues, and identify areas of concern.

All public and semi-public (e.g., campgrounds, motels) bathing beaches in Massachusetts are required to be monitored for bacterial and sometimes other types of contamination during the bathing season. The bathing beach season in Massachusetts runs from as early as Memorial Day in some areas, through Labor Day during most years. If water samples from a beach are found to be in exceedance of regulatory standards, the beach must be posted as unsafe for swimming due to bacterial contamination. Monitoring is currently conducted at over 600 locations at 500 marine beaches. The public can view current and historical sampling results and posting information for public marine beaches via the Massachusetts Beach Water Quality Locator (http://mass.digitalhealthdepartment.com/public_21/).

Figure 1. Massachusetts coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.



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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BARNSTABLE	276	276	0
BRISTOL	47	47	0
DUKES	49	49	0
ESSEX	92	92	0
NANTUCKET	17	17	0
NORFOLK	24	24	0
PLYMOUTH	92	92	0
SUFFOLK	24	24	0
TOTALS	621	621	0

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

If water samples from a beach are found to be in exceedance of regulatory standards, the beach must be posted as unsafe for swimming due to bacterial contamination. Of the 621 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 154, or 25 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 408 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Most actions were of relatively short duration, however, lasting less than 8 days. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Massachusetts's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 69,552 beach days associated with the 621 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 1,571 of those days or about 2 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/

For information about beaches in Massachusetts:

www.mass.gov/dph/beaches
 or (617) 624-5757

Figure 2: Monitored Beaches with and without notification actions.

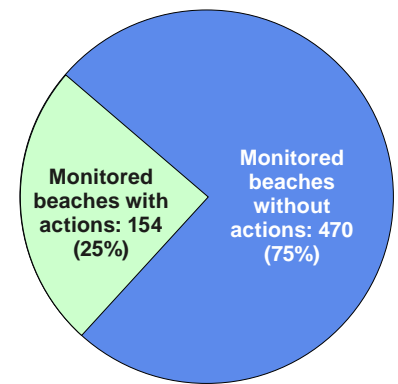


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

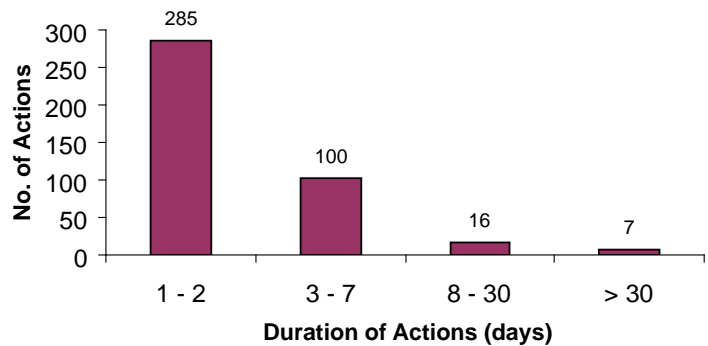


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

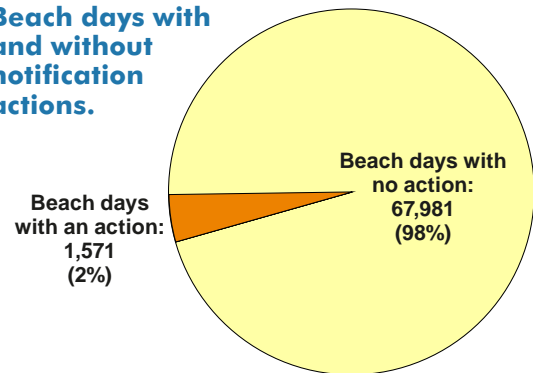


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	780	780	621
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	119	134	154
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	15%	17%	25%