

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

Maine 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 Maine for the 2006 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 2006 compared to previous seasons. There are several factors contributing to this including: the most rainfall of any other season, severe flooding in coastal areas, an increase in the number of beaches monitored and samples collected, and improved notification of beach advisories/closures by the towns and state parks. Our extensive review of the program prompted many updates and revisions, thus strengthening the overall program. The MHB Program has been assisting towns with further assessment of the 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.

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

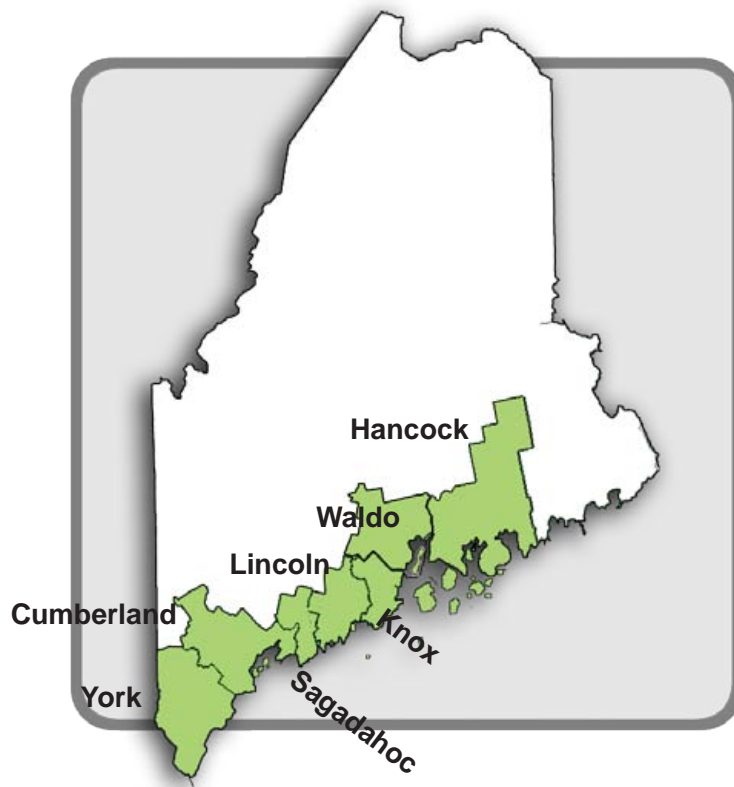


Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CUMBERLAND	8	8	0
HANCOCK	1	0	1
KNOX	3	2	1
LINCOLN	1	1	0
SAGADAHOC	5	5	0
WALDO	1	1	0
WASHINGTON	1	0	1
YORK	26	26	0
TOTALS	46	43	3

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When monitoring of water at beaches shows that levels of certain bacteria exceed standards, Maine beach managers typically resample the sites in exceedance and post a beach advisory, warning people of possible risks of swimming. They also notify the public on the Maine Healthy Beaches Web site. Of the 43 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 19, or 44 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 38 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Most 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 Maine's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 3,956 beach days associated with the 43 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 150 of those days or about 4 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 Maine:
www.MaineHealthyBeaches.org

Figure 2: Monitored beaches with and without notification actions.

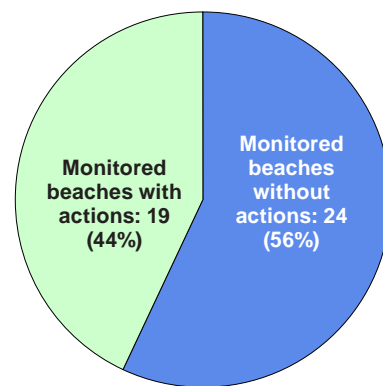


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

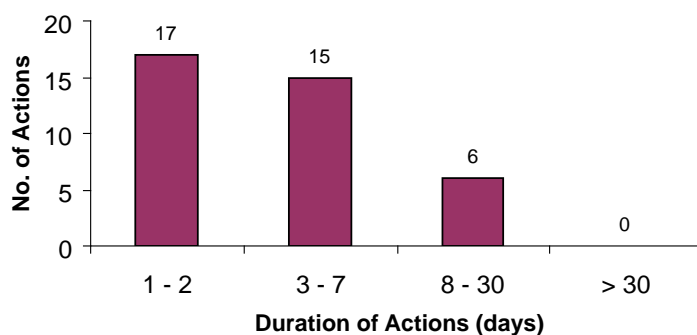


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

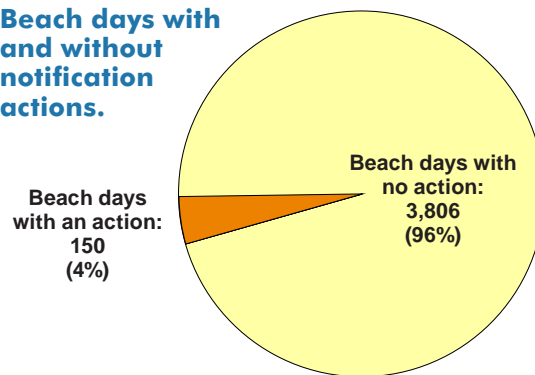


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	37	42	43
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	7	14	19
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	19%	33%	44%