EPA's BEACH Report:
Maine 2009 Swimming Season

May 2010

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 2009 swimming season.

The Maine Healthy Beaches (MHB) Program is committed to implementing an adaptive monitoring regime, routinely assessing the risk of pollution at each beach management area and improving public notification of water quality conditions on Maine's coastal beaches. It is a unique partnership among municipalities, state parks, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension/Sea Grant, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, nonprofit organizations, other state agencies and volunteers.

Record amounts of rainfall were reported during the 2009 beach season and several beaches with historically good water quality experienced issues in 2009. In response to the high number of beach actions days in 2009, the MHB Program examined the relationship between rainfall and enterococci levels for targeted beach management areas. Other beaches have demonstrated improved water quality over the past few years due to the MHB Program special studies, sanitary surveys, and actions taken at the local level. The biggest improvements have been a result of addressing malfunctioning subsurface wastewater disposal systems (i.e., septic systems) and improvements to stormwater systems.

The MHB Program has also 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 and state officials, partnering state agencies, non-profits and citizens with a focus of shared resources and solving problems.

Figure 1. Maine coastal counties.

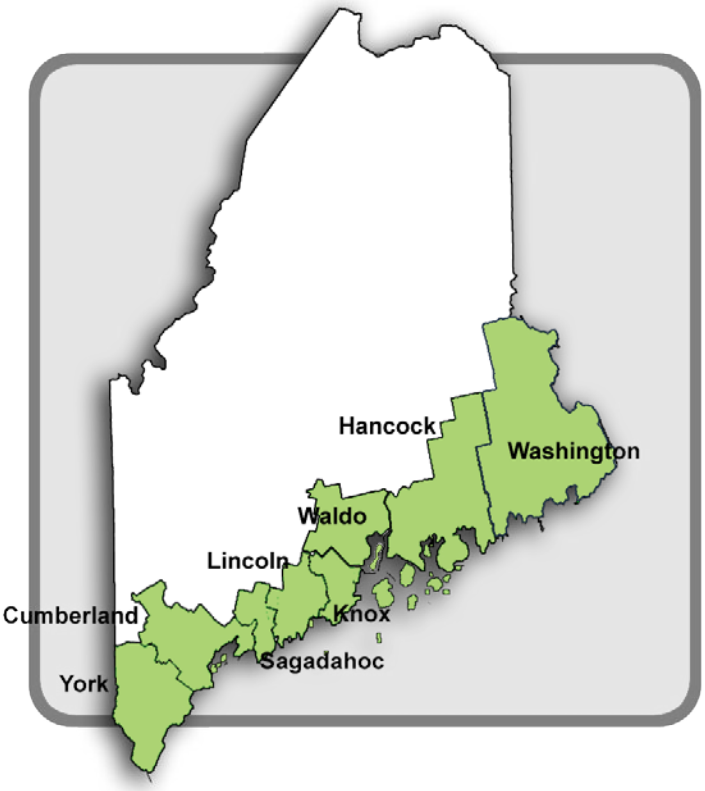

Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2009.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CUMBERLAND	9	9	0
HANCOCK	4	4	0
KNOX	3	3	0
LINCOLN	1	1	0
SAGADAHOC	7	7	0
WALDO	2	2	0
YORK	34	34	0
TOTALS	**60**	**60**	**0**

2009 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Maine's approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the ocean water. A total of 36 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2009 swimming season. About 68 percent of Maine's 79 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 2009 swimming season, actions were reported about 4 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2009 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2009 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly impact investigated 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 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.

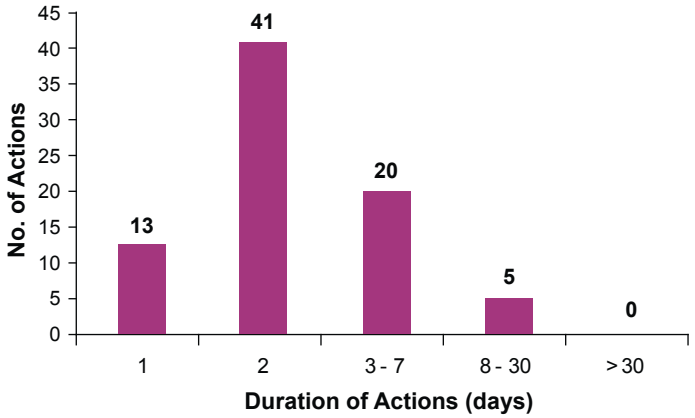

Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

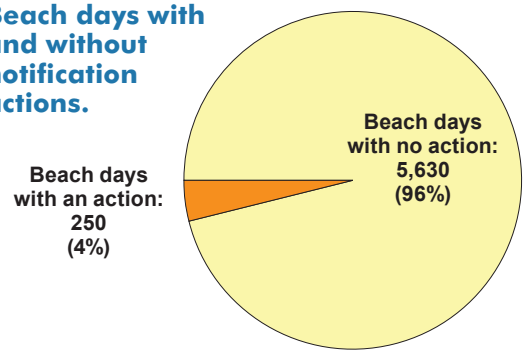

Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2007–2009.

	2007	2008	2009
Number of monitored beaches	58	60	60
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	30	22	36
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	52%	37%	60%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	3%	3%	4%