

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

North 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 North Carolina for the 2006 swimming season.

The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Division of Environmental Health administers the Recreational Water Quality Program, which monitors the coastal waters along North Carolina. The 320 miles of ocean coastline and 2.2 million acres of estuarine waters consisting of coastal rivers, bays and sounds give residents and visitors many recreational areas for swimming and water play.

North Carolina's coastal recreational waters are known for its pristine water quality; however, frequent monitoring is important to keep the public informed about any localized problems that may occur. The Recreational Water Quality Program monitors 243 sites along the coast and in 2006 collected 5,951 water samples for recreational waters, most of them on a weekly basis during the swimming season, April through October. North Carolina's ocean beaches rarely have swimming advisories and in 2006 only 3 out of the 20 beaches under advisory were ocean beaches. The other 17 swimming areas were located on sounds and rivers where the lack of tidal action and circulation often contribute to poor water quality.

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

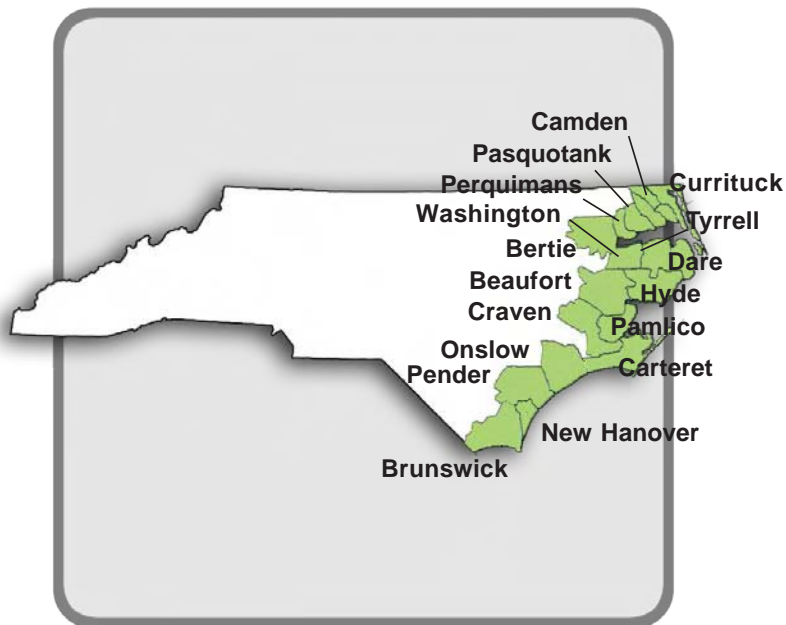


Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BEUFORT	12	12	0
BERTIE	1	1	0
BRUNSWICK	30	30	0
CAMDEN	2	2	0
CARTERET	51	51	0
CHOWAN	1	1	0
CRAVEN	9	9	0
CURRITUCK	9	9	0
DARE	58	58	0
HYDE	5	5	0
NEW HANOVER	21	21	0
ONSLOW	22	22	0
PAMLICO	10	10	0
PASQUOTANK	1	1	0
PENDER	9	9	0
PERQUIMAS	1	1	0
TYRRELL	1	1	0
TOTALS	243	243	0

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

North Carolina's Recreational Water Quality Program issues beach swimming advisories warning people swimming in waters where enterococci levels exceed the standard. Of the 243 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 20, or 8 percent, had at least one advisory during the 2006 season (Figure 2). Only 3 out of the 20 beaches with posted advisories were ocean beaches.

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

A total of 39 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Most actions were of relatively short duration, however 16 lasted longer than 7 days. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For North Carolina's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 52,002 beach days associated with the 243 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 450 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/

For more information concerning North Carolina's beaches, please visit:
www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/shellfish/Water_Monitoring/RWQweb/home.htm.

Figure 2: Monitored beaches with and without notification actions.

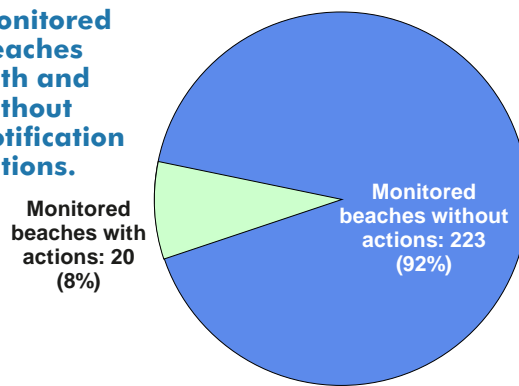


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

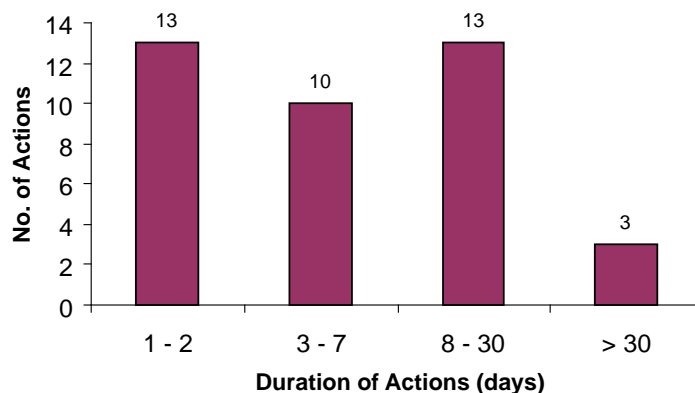


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

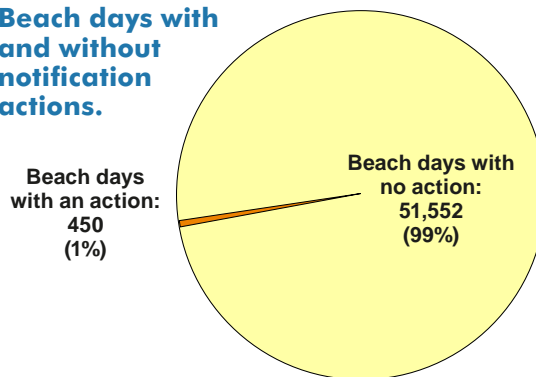


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	248	247	243
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	4	11	20
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	2%	4%	8%