

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

New York 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 New York for the 2006 swimming season.

Each summer, New York monitors bacteriological indicator levels at bathing beaches along Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Long Island Sound, and the Atlantic Ocean as part of EPA's BEACH Grant Program. Indicator bacteria are used to detect pollution sources, such as sewage or stormwater runoff that could affect water quality at a beach. The New York State Department of Health contracts with local health departments, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to provide up-to-date information regarding beach water quality conditions to the public.

In 2006, 9,495 beach water samples were collected from the State's 318 beaches and analyzed for *E. coli* (freshwater beaches) or Enterococcus (marine beaches). Sample analysis resulted in 665 instances of beach closures or advisory postings to protect the public from swimming in potentially contaminated water. Public notification occurs if a sample exceeds the threshold of 235 *E. coli* colonies per 100mL or 104 Enterococcus colonies per 100mL of water. New York's beach water quality is generally excellent; in 2006 the State's coastal beaches were open 95.8% of the time.

Figure 1. New York coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.



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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BRONX	10	10	0
CAYUGA	1	1	0
CHAUTAUQUA	9	9	0
ERIE	10	10	0
JEFFERSON	3	3	0
KINGS	11	11	0
MONROE	4	4	0
NASSAU	65	65	0
NIAGARA	2	2	0
OSWEGO	7	7	0
QUEENS	11	11	0
RICHMOND	3	3	0
SUFFOLK	196	193	3
WAYNE	3	3	0
WESTCHESTER	25	22	3
TOTALS	360	354	6*

*The New York State Department of Health prohibits swimming at these beaches.

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When monitoring of water at beaches shows that levels of certain bacteria exceed standards, New York's beach managers will either notify the public or resample if there is reason to doubt the validity of the original sample result. Resampling will be performed no more than 48 hours after the routine monitoring results indicated an exceedance. If the resampling exceeds the water quality standard, public notification will occur. This notification will be in the form of a sign or functionally equivalent communication measure stating the type of advisory or closing and the reason it was issued (heavy rainfall, the high levels of bacteria, etc.). Signs will be located where they are most likely to be noticed by beach users. They will be placed at beach entrances, on bulletin boards, or in the general vicinity of the common swimming areas. Functionally equivalent communication measures include mass media, such as newspapers, television and radio, Internet web sites, telephone hotlines, and technical reports. Of the 354 beaches that were monitored in 2006, 132, or 37 percent, had at least one advisory or closing during the 2006 season (Figure 2).

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

A total of 665 beach notification actions were reported in 2006. Most actions were of relatively short duration, however. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations for 2006.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For New York's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 40,002 beach days associated with the 354 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 1,705 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:

<http://www.epa.gov/beaches/>

Figure 2: Beach notification actions in 2006.

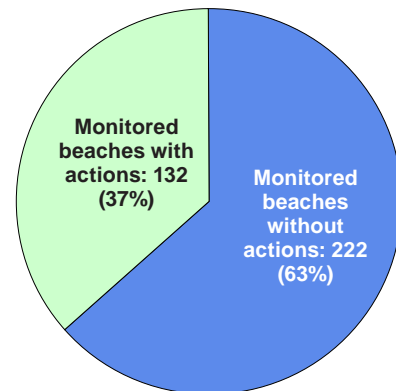


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

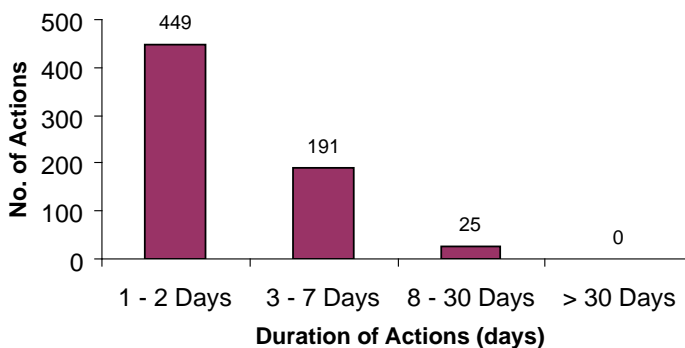


Figure 4: Beach days by notification actions.

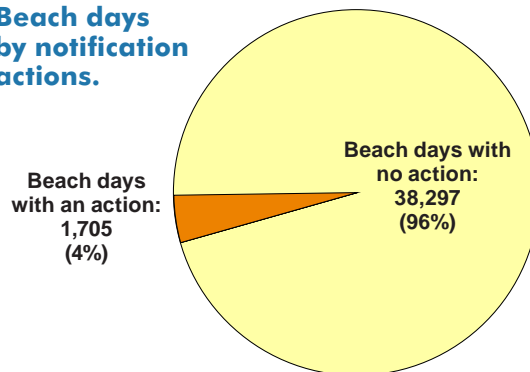


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	347	347	354
Number of beaches affected by advisories or closings	113	106	132
Percentage of beaches affected by advisories or closings	33%	31%	37%