

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA's BEACH Report:

Rhode Island 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 Rhode Island for the 2006 swimming season.

From May to September 2006, the Rhode Island Department of Health collected approximately 2,800 samples from all its monitored saltwater beaches. All samples were analyzed for enterococci, as required in the federal BEACH Act rulemaking. The 2006 bathing season saw an increase in beach closures and closure days from the 2005 season. Closure days are greatly influenced by rainfall and by monitoring strategies and schedules.

The intensity and total volume of rainfall was lower during the summer of 2005 (June 1 to August 31) than the summer of 2006. Total rainfall increased from only 6.24 inches in 2005 to 14.65 inches in 2006. Significant rainfall instances (>0.50" in a 24-hour period from June 1-August 31 at TF Green) were similar, with 4 instances in 2005 and 5 instances in 2006. As HEALTH refines its sampling strategies, monitoring efforts are focused in areas of greatest concern and sample collection is targeted for times when high bacteria counts are most likely to be present.

Figure 1. Rhode Island coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.



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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BRISTOL	20	4	16
KENT	18	5	13
NEWPORT	86	18	68
PROVIDENCE	7	0	7
WASHINGTON	105	47	58
TOTALS	236	74	162

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When monitoring of water at beaches shows that levels of certain bacteria exceed standards, Rhode Island's beach managers post a beach advisory, warning people of the possible risks of swimming, or formally notify the public that the beach is closed. Information on recent beach closures and advisories can be found on their Web site, www.ribeaches.org/closures.cfm. Of the 74 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 17, or 23 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 23 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Seven of those lasted longer than 30 days. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Rhode Island's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 7,474 beach days associated with the 74 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 436 of those days or about 6 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 Rhode Island:

www.ribeaches.org/index.cfm

Figure 2: Monitored beaches with and without notification actions.

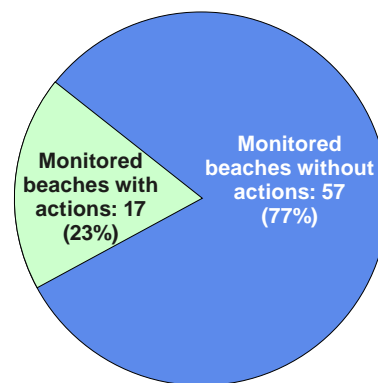


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

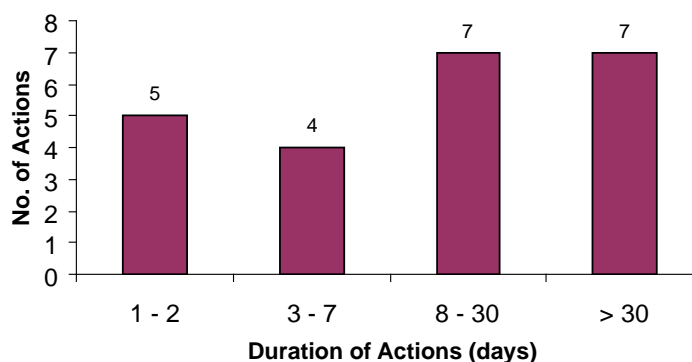


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

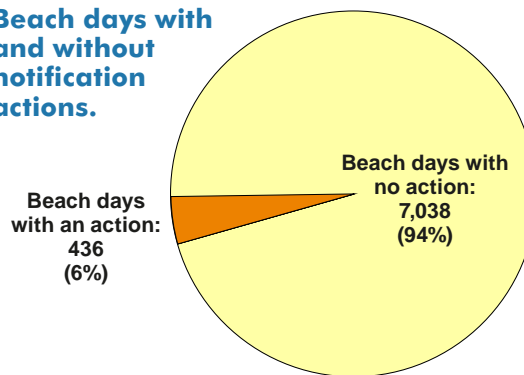


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	73	70	74
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	15	14	17
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	21%	20%	23%