



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this evaluation to determine how EPA grants provided under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 (BEACH Act) assist states, territories and tribes (collectively referred to here as “grantees”) to monitor the water quality of coastal recreation waters and notify the public of contamination events.

The EPA provides grants to eligible recipients under the BEACH Act to monitor recreation waters for bacteria and to notify the public about high bacteria levels to protect human health. Under the act, the EPA is required to, among other things, submit reports to Congress and establish performance and water quality criteria for grantees’ coastal recreation water monitoring and notification programs.

This report addresses the following:

- *Ensuring clean and safe water.*
- *Compliance with the law.*

Send all inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or visit www.epa.gov/oig.

Listing of [OIG reports](#)

EPA Has Not Reported to Congress on BEACH Act Progress as Statutorily Required or Fully Documented Budget Decisions

What We Found

Grantees use BEACH Act grants to operate their beach monitoring and public notification programs. While the details of these programs may vary from grantee to grantee, all programs must meet performance criteria before the EPA awards the grant.

Failure to submit required reports and keep required records limits congressional, public and EPA knowledge about the impact of the agency’s BEACH Act program and decisions regarding the use of taxpayer dollars.

The EPA has not submitted the required quadrennial reports to Congress describing the BEACH Act program’s progress and impacts since 2006. In response to an Office of Management and Budget request, the agency identified the BEACH Act report as one it no longer believes should be a reporting requirement; the agency compiled a list of all such reports to submit with its fiscal year 2019 budget request. Submitting BEACH Act reports would inform Congress and the public about efforts to implement the act, the need for additional water quality indicators, and the need for improved monitoring methodologies.

Further, beginning in fiscal year 2013, the EPA stopped requesting funding for the BEACH Act grant program based, in part, on its view that the grant program is “mature.” While the agency documented its initial deliberations and final decision, it has not documented the requisite supporting analysis and information used to make its decision. Grantees anticipate that a lack of future funding will negatively impact their beach monitoring and public notification programs. Although the EPA is no longer requesting funds, Congress has continued to fund the program.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the EPA submit mandated reports to Congress, but the agency disagrees and resolution efforts are in progress. We also recommend that the agency (1) review and update, as appropriate, the controls for ensuring that mandated reports are identified, tracked and submitted and (2) update the reporting process, especially for elevating and resolving disagreements about report content. The EPA agreed, and planned corrective actions meet the intent of the recommendations. We also recommend that the EPA develop and implement a tool to demonstrate compliance with recordkeeping requirements on budget decisions, but it disagrees and resolution efforts are in progress. The EPA agreed to update the agency records management policy and schedules as needed.

Noteworthy Achievements

In 2016, the EPA released a marine [sanitary survey mobile application](#) that provides managers of marine beaches with an innovative and consistent approach for identifying sources of beach pollution.