



At a Glance

Why We Did This Project

We conducted this follow-up evaluation to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency adequately implemented corrective actions in response to a previous Office of Inspector General report, *EPA Has Not Reported to Congress on BEACH Act Progress as Statutorily Required or Fully Documented Budget Decisions*, Report No. [18-P-0071](#), issued January 18, 2018. Specifically, we evaluated whether the EPA submitted the mandated reports to Congress regarding the Agency's progress under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000.

The BEACH Act amended the Clean Water Act to improve the quality of coastal recreation waters and for other purposes, including to protect human health. Under the Act, the EPA is required to submit reports every four years to Congress.

This report addresses the following:

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

This project addresses a top EPA management challenge:

- *Fulfilling mandated reporting requirements.*

Address inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or OIG_WEBCOMMENTS@epa.gov.

List of [OIG reports](#).

EPA's 2018 BEACH Act Report to Congress Does Not Fully Meet Statutory Requirements

What We Found

In our January 2018 report, we found that the EPA had not reported to Congress on BEACH Act progress as statutorily required. We recommended that the EPA submit the mandated reports to Congress. As part of its corrective actions in response to our January 2018 report recommendations, the EPA issued a BEACH Act report to Congress in July 2018.

EPA issuance of informative BEACH Act reports would allow Congress to make informed program decisions, improve program oversight, and enhance transparency.

In the course of this follow-up evaluation, we found that the EPA's 2018 report to Congress does not fully meet the reporting requirements of the BEACH Act and the Plain Writing Act of 2010. The report also does not adhere to federal internal control principles. Specifically:

- The report does not evaluate federal and local efforts to implement the BEACH Act.
- Although the report lists recommendations for additional water quality criteria and improved monitoring methodologies, communication of these recommendations could be improved by using plain language principles, which would help readers to more easily understand the recommendations.
- The report recommendations do not specify who needs to take action or what the barriers to implementation are.

In addition, we concluded that the EPA's Office of Water staff did not reach out to congressional staff members to inquire about what information Congress needs from the Agency to make informed decisions regarding the BEACH Act program. By issuing a report that did not fully meet the requirements of the BEACH and Plain Writing acts, the EPA missed the opportunity to provide Congress with the information needed for effective decision-making.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the assistant administrator for Water develop and adopt a written strategy to verify that future BEACH Act reports to Congress fully meet the reporting requirements of the BEACH Act, expectations that federal agencies comply with the Plain Writing Act, and federal internal control principles. We also recommend that the EPA submit a report in 2022 that evaluates efforts to implement the BEACH Act. The Agency disagreed with our recommendations and did not provide acceptable corrective actions and planned completion dates. The recommendations are unresolved with resolution efforts in progress.