



EPA's BEACH Report:

Washington 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 Washington for the 2006 swimming season.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day each year, the Washington BEACH Program monitors fecal bacteria at approximately 70 marine recreational beaches throughout Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Pacific Coast. While swimming occurs mainly in summer, other contact activities such as SCUBA diving, surfing, and kayaking occur throughout the year. The BEACH Program's mission is to monitor fecal bacteria at the state's public marine beaches and notify the public when bacteria levels present a risk to beach goers. The Program is managed collaboratively by the State Departments of Ecology and Health and accomplished through the cooperative efforts of multiple agencies and organizations: county health and surface water programs, tribes, and non-profit organizations and volunteers. These relationships are crucial to the success of the Program.

Bacteria levels in Washington's marine waters are typically very low with 85 percent of sample results below the detection limit. Beaches that exceed water quality standards are usually shallow enclosed bays close to urban areas. The Program implements several strategies to protect beach goers from bacteria related illness and improve water quality. In addition to monitoring and notification, they identify beaches with chronic problems and assist local health jurisdictions in fixing those problems. They have successfully conducted shoreline surveys and assisted with dye studies to identify contamination sources at beaches that are frequently out of compliance. In one instance, identifying the source of contamination led to a \$12 million dollar state effort to inspect and make improvements on the septic systems at numerous state parks. They are also developing an outreach program to educate the public about the risks of water born illnesses and what each of us can do minimize that risk and improve water quality. The program includes a Web site, posters and brochures, landscape models for street festivals, and a radio spot.

Figure 1. Washington coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.



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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
CLALLAM	61	7	54
GRAYS HARBOR	24	3	21
ISLAND	60	5	55
JEFFERSON	52	3	49
KING	64	15	49
KIITSAP	60	10	50
MASON	41	4	37
PACIFIC	29	1	28
PIERCE	55	9	46
SAN JUAN	165	1	164
SKAGIT	51	1	50
SNOHOMISH	32	6	26
THURSTON	16	2	14
WHATCOM	32	3	29
TOTALS	742	70	672

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When monitoring of water at beaches shows that levels of certain bacteria exceed standards, Washington's beach managers notify the public on their Web site. Of the 80 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 20, or 25 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 20 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Fifteen actions lasted longer than 7 days. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Washington's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 11,120 beach days associated with the 80 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 474 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 information about beaches in Washington:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/beach/

Figure 2: Monitored beaches with and without notification actions.

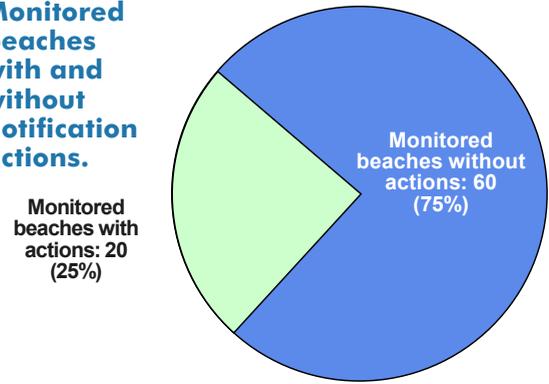


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

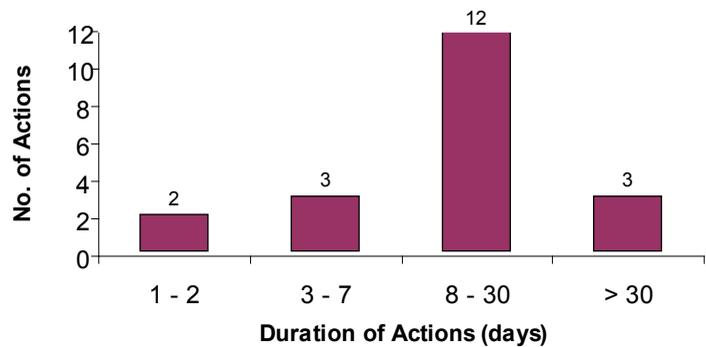


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

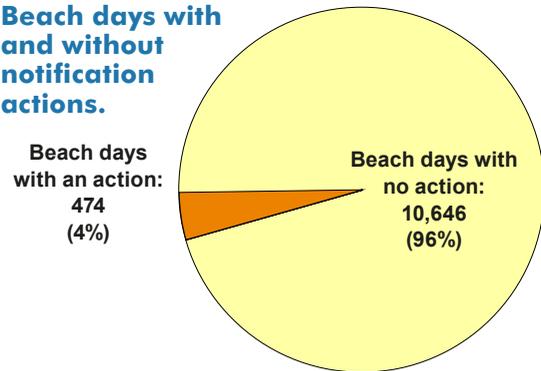


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004–2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	11	73	80
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	10	6	20
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	91%	8%	25%