



EPA's BEACH Report: Texas 2009 Swimming Season

May 2010

Introduction

The BEACH Act of 2000 requires 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 Texas for the 2009 swimming season.

The Texas Beach Watch Program continues to collect water samples at 167 stations along the Texas coast in Aransas, Brazoria, Cameron, Galveston, Jefferson, Kleberg, Matagorda, Nueces and San Patricio counties. The Texas General Land Office contracts with universities, local governments and commercial laboratories to collect the samples and test them for the presence of Enterococcus bacteria. Samples are collected and tested weekly from May through September (the peak beach season) and every other week from October through April. In addition, weekly samples are collected at Gulf of Mexico beaches during March to coincide with Spring Break and the increased number of tourists.

Texas increased its beach season length in 2009 to reflect year round testing. As such, the number of beach days monitored increased by 141% or from 9,880 days to 23,725 days. An increase in testing days would portend an increase in the number of beach actions; however, beach actions decreased by four in 2009 to 152 total beach actions. The increased beach season did increase the number of beaches affected by notification actions to 50, up from 48 in 2008.

Texas also redesigned its public Web site, www.TexasBeachWatch.com, in 2009. The Web site now provides immediate public notification of water quality testing through email and RSS subscriptions. In addition, Texas redesigned

con't on next page

Figure 1. Texas coastal counties.

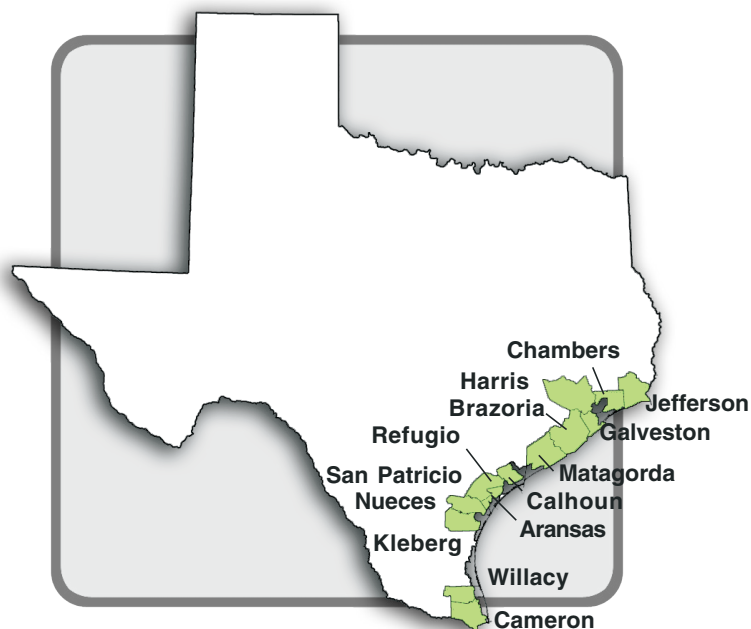


Table 1. Breakdown of monitored and unmonitored coastal beaches by county for 2009.

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
ARANSAS	9	1	8
BRAZORIA	10	4	6
CALHOUN	18	0	18
CAMERON	12	9	3
CHAMBERS	2	0	2
GALVESTON	36	23	13
HARRIS	8	0	8
JEFFERSON	2	2	0
KLEBERG	7	4	3
MATAGORDA	12	3	9
NUECES	43	18	25
REFUGIO	1	0	1
SAN PATRICIO	6	1	5
WILLACY	3	0	3
TOTALS	169	65	104

con't from next page

its public notification signage, notifications are now in English and Spanish and indicate whether contact with beach water is recommended based on the most recent testing. Other public notification activities in 2009 included Web site banner ads in key markets and selective Web sites prior to the summer season and a television ad in English and Spanish and a radio ad that ran during the summer months. Public notification activities are continuing with the distribution of a brochure in English and Spanish and Texas Beach Watch promotional items at various public outreach events attended by the Texas General Land Office to engender awareness of the Web site and water quality at Texas' beaches.

2009 Summary Results

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

When water quality standards are exceeded at a particular beach, Texas' approach is to issue a beach advisory that warns people to avoid contact with the water. A total of 50 monitored beaches had at least one advisory issued during the 2009 swimming season. About 80 percent of Texas' 152 notification actions lasted one day. Figure 2 presents a full breakdown of notification action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Texas' 2009 swimming season, actions were reported about 1 percent of the time (Figure 3).

How do 2009 results compare to previous years?

Table 2 compares 2009 notification action data with monitored beach data from previous years.

What pollution sources possibly affect investigated monitored beaches?

In 2009, Texas beaches were not investigated for sources of pollution.

For More Information

For general information about beaches:

www.epa.gov/beaches/

For more information about water quality conditions go to: www.TexasBeachWatch.com.

Additional information regarding the Texas Beach Watch Program is available by contacting the Beach Watch Coordinator at beachwatch@glo.state.tx.us, or by calling the Texas General Land Office at 1-(800) 998-4GLO.

Figure 2: Beach notification actions by duration.

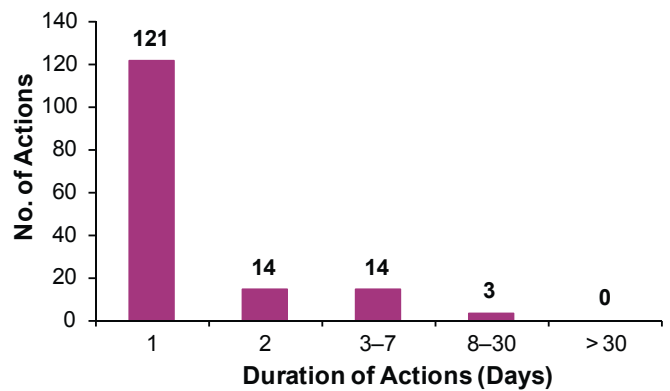


Figure 3: Beach days with and without notification actions.

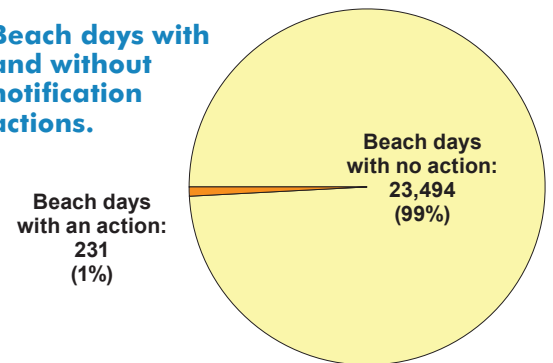


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2007-2009.

	2007	2008	2009
Number of monitored beaches	67	65	65
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	50	48	50
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	75%	74%	77%
Percentage of beach days affected by notification actions	5%	2%	1%