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EPA ADMINISTRATOR RELEASES FUNDS FOR BEACHES

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EPA Administrator Christie Whitman is making available nearly \$2 million in grants to coastal and Great Lakes states to improve monitoring and public notification of human health risks at beaches.

“For the first time, we are making federal funds available to states specifically to help protect public health at the nation’s beaches,” said Whitman. “A third of all Americans visit our coasts every year. Consistent monitoring for bacterial contamination, along with prompt public notification of health hazards at our beaches, can help assure Americans safe enjoyment of our coastal waters.”

Eligible states can use the funds to develop programs to monitor water quality at their beaches and to notify the public when water quality problems are detected.

The funds are available under a new federal law passed by Congress last October, the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (BEACH Act). The new law established a national program for monitoring beach water quality and notifying the public of unsafe conditions.

In 2000, in response to EPA’s annual National Beach Health Survey, states voluntarily submitted data on approximately 2000 beaches. One-third of the reported beaches issued a beach advisory or closing at least once during the swimming season.

EPA estimates that Americans make a total of 910 million trips to coastal areas each year, spending about \$44 billion.

The surveys and additional beach information, including information for states interested in applying for the beach grants, are available on EPA’s beach Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/ost/beaches>.

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