



EPA's BEACH Report: Florida 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 Florida for the 2006 swimming season.

During 2006 Florida monitored 307 beaches along the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. These beaches are located in 34 of Florida's 35 coastal counties. The only other coastal county has no accessible beaches along the gulf. All total, there are approximately 1,100 miles of recreational beaches in Florida, and approximately 600 miles are monitored at least once per week, year round. The geography of these beaches varies from open coasts on barrier islands to more enclosed bays, sounds, and intra-coastal water ways.

Florida's beaches are heavily used most of the year; late April to mid-September are the peak season in most of the state. The state's population is estimated at 18 million, and approximately 70 million tourists visit per year. Estimates from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) place the number of swimmers at just over 14 million a year. In addition, NOAA estimates that another 3.5 million snorklers, surfers, and divers enter Florida water's each year.

The year 2006 saw a decrease in the number of advisory days in Florida. This corresponds with the beginning of a drought affecting the majority of the state. Runoff from rain events is listed as a possible source of contamination at a large number of Florida beaches. The decrease in tropical weather systems impacting the state in 2006 also greatly reduced the need for preemptive and storm-generated advisories compared to years past. Combined with efforts to correct chronic problems at some beaches the above factors resulted in the lowest number of advisory days, 4,888, since 2002.

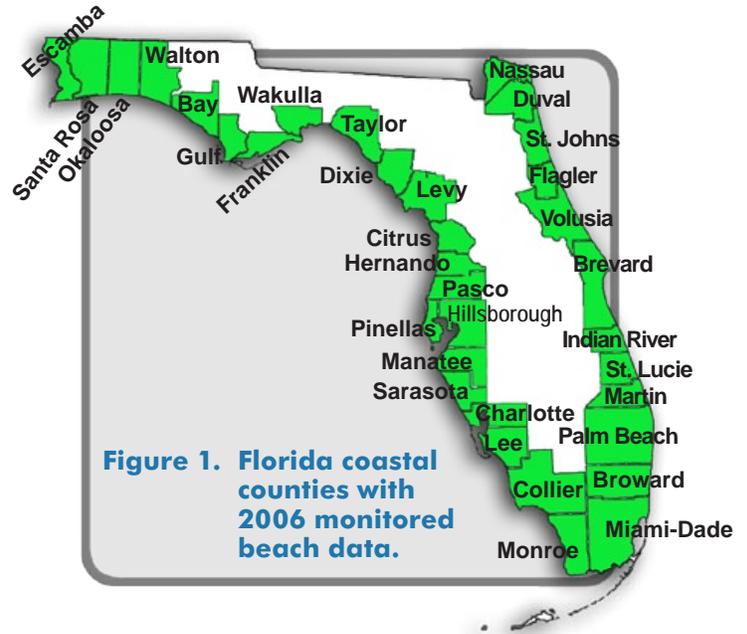


Figure 1. Florida coastal counties with 2006 monitored beach data.

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

County	Total Beaches	Monitored	Not Monitored
BAY	34	13	21
BREVARD	27	10	17
BROWARD	19	15	4
CHARLOTTE	11	8	3
CITRUS	1	1	0
COLLIER	56	14	42
DIXIE	1	1	0
DUVAL	10	10	0
ESCAMBIA	20	14	6
FLAGLER	9	6	3
FRANKLIN	6	5	1
GULF	7	6	1
HERNANDO	1	1	0
HILLSBOROUGH	11	9	2
INDIAN RIVER	18	6	12
LEE	23	13	10
LEVY	2	1	1
MANATEE	13	10	3
MARTIN	23	9	14
MIAMI-DADE	17	15	2
MONROE	45	17	28
NASSAU	30	11	19
OKALOOSA	53	12	41
PALM BEACH	24	14	10
PASCO	7	7	0
PINELLAS	48	14	34
SANTA ROSA	10	7	3
SARASOTA	34	16	18
ST. JOHNS	8	8	0
ST. LUCIE	25	4	21
TAYLOR	5	4	1
VOLUSIA	16	15	1
WAKULLA	2	2	0
WALTON	17	9	8
TOTALS	633	307	320

2006 Summary Results

How many beaches had notification actions?

When monitoring of water at beaches shows that levels of certain bacteria exceed standards, Florida's beach managers either issue an advisory discouraging swimming at that location or immediately take a resample to confirm the first results. If the resample confirms the results of the first sample an advisory is issued discouraging swimming at that location. Of the 307 coastal beaches that were monitored in 2006, 104, or 34 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 745 beach notification actions were reported in the 2006 swimming season. Most actions lasted 3 to 7 days. Figure 3 presents breakdowns of action durations.

What percentage of days were beaches under a notification action?

For Florida's 2006 swimming season, EPA determined there were a total of 112,055 beach days associated with the 307 monitored beaches. Actions were reported on 4,888 of those days or about 4 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 Florida go to: www.doh.state.fl.us (Select "Beach Water Quality" from the subject list.)

Figure 2: Monitored Beaches with and without notification actions.

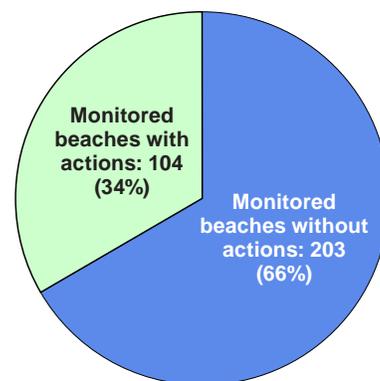


Figure 3: Beach notification actions by duration.

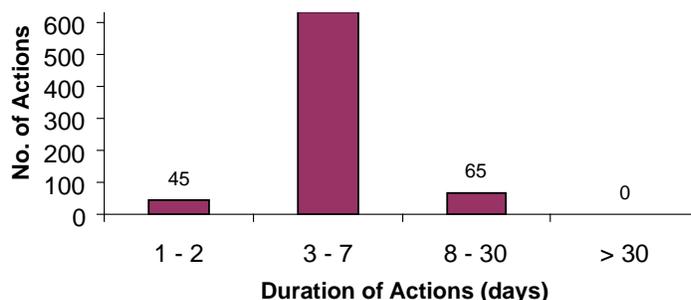


Figure 4: Beach days with and without notification actions.

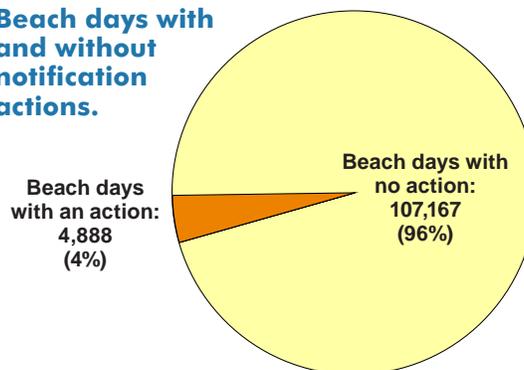


Table 2. Beach notification actions, 2004-2006.

	2004	2005	2006
Number of monitored beaches	313	313	307
Number of beaches affected by notification actions	127	124	104
Percentage of beaches affected by notification actions	41%	40%	34%