

EPA Announces Clean Beaches Strategy

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In April, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its commitment to protect the water quality of the nation's beaches and to ensure compliance with the Beaches, Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act of 2000. The Administration's Clean Beaches strategy includes a Clean Beaches Plan, grants to states for beach monitoring and notification programs, technical guidance, scientific studies and Federal water quality standards to backstop state and territorial efforts where necessary.

The BEACH Act of 2000 required coastal states, including those bordering the Great Lakes, to adopt up-to-date pathogen criteria by April 10, 2004 to protect beach goers from harmful bacteria. The Act provides that, if a state fails to meet this deadline, EPA must promptly propose Federal standards to protect that state's beaches.

Outlining EPA's Clean Beaches Plan, Ben Grumbles, EPA's Acting Assistant Administrator for Water stated "President Bush is committed to carrying out his proclamation for the Year of Clean Water to significantly reduce all forms of water pollution and to make our waters better suited for recreation and other pursuits. America's families deserve clean and safe beaches. We, the States and Territories must all work together to accelerate progress to adopt more protective standards."

Over the next six months, EPA will undertake several actions. Starting in May, EPA has begun awarding grants to states and territories to augment their monitoring of beaches and reporting to the public when the beaches are closed for health reasons. By June 30, EPA will move forward to propose updated standards for pathogens for those states and territories that have not yet complied with the BEACH Act. By July 31, EPA will propose updated technical guidance for more effective monitoring of pathogens at beaches. And by August 31, EPA will complete its report of beach closures and advisories for 2003.

This weekly report is written by the American Society of Civil Engineers' Government Relations staff. If you have any questions or comments about any items in this report please email govwash@asce.org.