

Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (aka the BEACH Act)

Agency: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Citation: [33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.](#)

Enacted as: the “Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000”, amending the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (aka the Clean Water Act), on October 10, 2000

Summary:

The [Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 \(BEACH Act\)](#) amended the Clean Water Act (CWA) to require states and tribes with coastal recreation waters to adopt new or revised water quality standards for pathogens and pathogen indicators for which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has published criteria under section 304(a) of the CWA. Section 303(i) also directs the EPA to promulgate standards for states that fail to establish standards as protective of human health as EPA’s published criteria.

The BEACH Act amended the CWA by adding section 104(v) and 304(a), which together require the EPA to conduct studies associated with pathogens and human health, and to publish new or revised CWA section 304(a) criteria for pathogens and pathogen indicators based on those studies. Under section 303(i)(1)(B), states that have coastal recreation waters are directed to adopt new or revised water quality standards for all pathogens and pathogen indicators to which EPA’s new or revised section 304(a) criteria are applicable by not later than three years after EPA’s publication of the new or revised section 304(a) criteria.

The Act amended the CWA to add section 406, which authorizes the EPA to award grants to states or local governments to develop and implement beach monitoring and assessment programs.

The BEACH Act also amended part 502 of the CWA to define “coastal recreation waters” as the Great Lakes and marine coastal waters (including coastal estuaries) designated under CWA section 303(c) for swimming, bathing, surfing, or similar water contact activities. The term “coastal recreation waters” does not include inland waters or waters upstream of the mouth of a river or stream that has an unimpaired connection with the open sea.

Source: Implementing the BEACH Act of 2000 *Report to Congress*, pages 1-1 to 1-2, available at http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/upload/2007_02_13_beaches_report_chapter01.pdf

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