



Beach Protection Act of 2007 Talking Points

The BEACH Act of 2000

The overall goal of this federal law was to standardize beach water quality monitoring programs nationwide and to have beach status information readily available to the public. It set national water quality standards and required states to develop a list of all the beaches in their states.

Authorized at \$30 million, only \$10 million has been appropriated annually to support state and local beach water quality monitoring programs.

Problems with Implementation

Inadequate funding makes it difficult for states to meet their testing requirements. Limited staff resources forces local health departments to prioritize which beaches they can sample and to limit their sampling frequency to weekly, monthly or yearly.

States are only allowed to use water testing methods approved by the EPA. The currently approved methods rely on a 24-hour incubation period, causing a 1-3 day time-lag before water quality data are available and managers can make decisions to open or close beaches. This puts public health at risk and often forces pre-emptive beach closures, which may or may not end up being necessary.

Current interpretation of the BEACH Act does not allow states to use their federal beach grants to track the source of pollution or to make any efforts to solve their beach pollution problems.

Beach Protection Act of 2007 (S. 1506 & H.R. 2537)

This proposed legislation would reauthorize BEACH Act grants until 2012 and raise the authorized funding level to \$60 million.

It requires EPA to adopt rapid testing methods that can produce water quality information in two hours or less.

States will be able to use their BEACH grant funding to identify and clean up the sources of beach pollution.

New federal standards are also proposed for state beach programs including the development of public online databases with water quality information available from each beach, and all advisories and closures must be issued within 24 hours.

The Beach Protection Act also has provisions for EPA to conduct annual reviews of compliance. If states fail to meet their testing requirements, a 50% cost share can be required to maintain their federal beach funding.

Congressional Support

Subcommittee hearings have been held on the BEACH Act and the proposed Beach Protection Act of 2007 in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Ask your Congressman to show their support for healthy beaches and thriving coastal communities by cosponsoring the Beach Protection Act of 2007.

House members please contact Tim Del Monico with Representative Pallone (202) 225-4671) or Mark Copeland with Representative Bishop at (202) 225-3826. Daniel Rosenberg with Senator Lautenberg's office can be contacted at (202) 224-3224 to sign on as a cosponsor in the Senate.