



EPA Makes Grants Available to States to Develop Water Quality Monitoring and Public Notification Programs at the Nation's Beaches

Summary

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is making \$10 million in grants available to eligible states to protect public health at the Nation's beaches. These grants are available to coastal and Great Lakes states to develop programs to monitor water quality at the beach and to notify the public when water quality problems exist.



Background

Each year state, tribal, and local health and environmental protection agencies monitor the quality of water at the Nation's beaches. When measured bacteria levels in the water are too high, these agencies notify the public of beach warnings or closings. State and local monitoring and notification programs differ across the country and provide varying levels of swimmer protection.

In an effort to improve water quality testing at the beach and public notification when water quality problems exist, Congress passed the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (BEACH Act). This Act, passed on October 10, 2000, authorizes EPA to award grants to eligible states, tribes, and territories to develop and implement beach water quality monitoring programs at coastal and Great Lakes recreational waters near beaches. These grants also provide support for the development and implementation of programs to reduce the risk of exposure to disease-causing microorganisms in the water to users of the Nation's beaches.

Funding

In fiscal year 2002, EPA expects to award approximately \$10 million in grants to eligible states and territories for beach program development. Once all applications for funding are received, grants will be awarded to eligible states and territories. For this second year of the Developmental Grants, EPA expects to award Grants to all eligible states and territories who apply for funding based on an allocation formula. In developing this formula EPA consulted with various states and the Coastal States Organization. This formula has three factors that use readily available and verifiable data: 1) length of beach season, 2) miles of beach and 3) number of people that use the beaches.

Beach season length was selected as a factor since it determines the part of the year that a government would conduct its monitoring program. The longer the beach season, the more resources that a government would need to conduct monitoring. EPA's information on the length of beach season was obtained from the National Health Protection Survey of Beaches for the states or territories that reported information. The beach season for American Samoa, Oregon, Puerto Rico, and Northern Mariana Islands was estimated based on season reported by nearby states and territories. The beach season for Alaska was estimated based on air and water temperature, available information on recreation activities, and data from the 1993 National Water Based Recreation Survey. EPA grouped the states and U.S. territories into four categories of beach season lengths:

For beaches in:	The beach season category is:
Alaska	< 3 months
Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin	3 – 4 months
Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina	5 – 6 months
American Samoa, California, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana, Puerto Rico, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands	9 – 12 months

Miles of beach was selected as a factor because it determines the geographical extent over which a government would conduct monitoring. The longer the miles of beaches, the more resources a government would need to conduct monitoring. For this second year of Development Grants, EPA is using shoreline miles as a surrogate rather than beach miles because beach miles are not available for all beaches in for the 35 eligible states and territories. EPA discussed the drawbacks of using this surrogate factor with states on a conference call on December 11, 2001. As part of the BEACH Act monitoring and notification programs, grantees will identify their beaches; therefore in future years, EPA will be able to measure and thus use beach miles rather than shoreline. EPA used the NOAA publication *The Coastline of the United States* to quantify the shoreline miles.

Beach use was selected as a factor because it reflects the importance of beach-related tourism to the local economy. The greater use a beach receives, the more likely a government would conduct increased monitoring because of the larger number of people potentially exposed to pathogens. For this second year of Development Grants, EPA is using the coastal population that is wholly or partially within the state's or territory's legally defined coastal zone as a surrogate rather than beach usage because information on beach visitors is not available for all beaches in the 35 eligible States and Territories. EPA also discussed the drawbacks of using this surrogate factor with states on a conference call on December 11, 2001. Participants on the call were doubtful that EPA could develop a consistent, verifiable approach for estimating beach use for all beaches, but could not suggest a better way to quantify this factor at present. EPA is committed to working with the states and territories that implement BEACH Act section 406 grants to develop a better way to quantify this factor. EPA used the 1990 Census data to quantify coastal population since the 2000 Census data are not yet available for American

Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. EPA will update this factor when 2000 data are available for all eligible States and Territories.

The grants allocation consists of the sum of a base amount that varies with the length of beach season and a variable amount based on the shoreline miles and coastal population:

For the factor:	The part of the allocation is:
Beach season length	< 3 months:\$150,000 (States and Territories with a season <3 months receive season-based funding only.) 3-4 months:\$200,000 5-6 months:\$250,000 >6 months: \$300,000
Shoreline miles	50% of funds remaining after allotment of season-based funding.
Coastal population	50% of funds remaining after allotment of season-based funding.

Based on this allocation formula, the size of the Developmental Grant Award varies from \$150,000 to \$530,893 if all 35 eligible States and Territories apply. EPA anticipates that all 35 eligible governments will apply. If fewer than 35 States and Territories apply for the allocated amount, then EPA will use the allocation formula to apportion the unused grant funds to those States and Territories applying for a grant. If all 35 eligible States and Territories apply, the distribution of the \$10 million in funds for year 2002 will be:

For the state or territory of:	The year 2002 allocation is:	For the state or territory of:	The year 2002 allocation is:
Alabama	\$263,142	Mississippi	\$258,028
Alaska	\$150,000	New Hampshire	\$204,918
American Samoa	\$302,288	New Jersey	\$285,719
California	\$535,643	New York	\$366,030
Connecticut	\$226,389	North Carolina	\$306,721
Delaware	\$211,339	Northern Mariana Is.	\$303,462
Florida	\$530,893	Ohio	\$227,879
Georgia	\$288,490	Oregon	\$230,342
Guam	\$302,775	Pennsylvania	\$226,953
Hawaii	\$325,149	Puerto Rico	\$335,862
Illinois	\$248,615	Rhode Island	\$214,225
Indiana	\$206,670	South Carolina	\$300,253
Louisiana	\$383,287	Texas	\$387,957
Maine	\$259,742	U.S. VI	\$303,488
Maryland	\$276,068	Virginia	\$282,355
Massachusetts	\$260,691	Washington	\$274,034
Michigan	\$287,556	Wisconsin	\$228,396
Minnesota	\$204,631		

What is the Expected Duration of the Funding and Project Periods?

The expected funding and project period for Development Grants awarded in FY2002 is one year. Over the next five years, EPA is authorized to issue additional funds to eligible states, tribes, territories and local governments to support the development and implementation of monitoring and notification programs.

Who Is Eligible to Apply?

States and territories eligible for the BEACH grants are states that have coastal and Great Lakes recreational waters adjacent to beaches or similar points of access used by the public. Under the BEACH Act, EPA is authorized to treat tribes in a manner similar to a state. In order to receive BEACH Act grant funds tribes must have coastal recreation waters for which water quality standards have been established under the CWA. There are currently no Tribes that have met this requirement. In addition, a tribe must meet the “treatment in the same manner as a state” criteria under CWA section 518(e) to receive grant funds under Section 406 of the CWA.

The BEACH Act requires EPA to publish performance criteria for monitoring and notification of coastal recreation waters by April 2002. EPA expects to publish performance criteria for implementation of coastal recreation water monitoring and public notification programs in April 2002. In order to receive grants for beach program implementation, States will be required to demonstrate how they are meeting the performance criteria. The BEACH Act authorizes EPA to make a grant to a local government for implementation of a monitoring and notification program only if, after the 1-year period beginning on the date of publication of performance criteria, EPA determines that the State is not implementing a program that meets the requirements of the statute. Since EPA expects to publish performance criteria in April 2002, EPA expects April 2003 as the earliest date for local governments to be eligible for beach grants. In April 2003, if a state is not implementing a program that meets the requirements of the statute, then a local government may apply for funding to help them develop and implement beach monitoring and notification programs that are consistent with EPA performance criteria.

How Does a State or Territory Apply for the Grant?

Eligible states and territories may obtain an application from their regional EPA beach contact. These contacts are listed in the *Federal Register* Notice of Availability for the BEACH grants. The *Federal Register* Notice will be available on EPA’s Beach Watch web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/>.

For More Information

For more information on the BEACH grants, contact the appropriate EPA Regional beach program representative or contact Charles Kovatch at 202-566-0399; kovatch.charles@epa.gov.