



Beach Project Initiative Progress Report – March 2009

Introduction

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) identifies coastal health as a challenge recognizing the significance of beaches to the economic well-being, health and quality of life of the region's citizens. Contamination leading to beach advisories and threats to public health continues to be a concern in the Basin. The GLRC calls for identification of sources of contamination and remediation. The use of tools like sanitary surveys is a way to achieve these goals.

GLRC Clean Beaches Initiative

Through the first phase of the Clean Beaches Initiative, beach managers, state beach program coordinators, cities, coastal health departments and tribes were contacted directly in advance of the 2008 beach season with the survey forms and information on how to use them. A Clean Beaches Initiative webpage was created on the GLRC website as a portal for Great Lakes beach information and features the surveys and examples for beach managers to use as reference as well as information on predictive models and state monitoring programs. Additionally, a successful press event was held on May 30, 2008 to officially launch the surveys and to help bring regional and national attention to the surveys and the benefits of their broad use.

Status and Next Steps

For phase two of the Clean Beaches Initiative, the workgroup is moving forward with efforts to advance recommendations and milestones from the GLRC Strategy Coastal Health chapter. Specifically the workgroup is focusing on ways to encourage the use of surveys and other proven beach management practices as well as remediation of sources of contamination throughout the region. There is general consensus that more education is needed for beach managers on the benefits of proven beach management practices, and compiling such information into an accessible resource for beach managers would be useful.

Phase two of the Clean Beaches Initiative will entail best practice gathering and disseminating. Through a questionnaire that will be developed for beach managers, the workgroup will glean information on beach management practices, including the use of beach sanitary surveys to identify sources of contamination at beaches, types of predictive models being used (or considered for use) to forecast water quality, and pollution reduction measures being implemented by beach managers. The questionnaire will also assess impediments to using these tools and measures. The goal will be to use the information garnered from the questionnaire to develop a resource for beach managers on remediation measures and best practices.

The survey will be distributed in the spring of 2009 and, depending on the response rate, the resource could be developed by the fall.