



Beach Project Initiative

Progress Report – September 2008

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 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 conference was held on May 30, 2008 to officially launch the surveys and to help bring regional and national attention to the forms and the benefits of their broad use.

Status and Next Steps

At the beginning of the 2008 beach season, the feedback had been very positive from coastal county health departments and communities in all of the eight Great Lakes States, as well as some in the Province of Ontario, and indicated that many would use the forms during the 2008 beach season. The Clean Beaches Initiative workgroup will likely reconvene soon to assess the success of the Clean Beaches Initiative over the 2008 beach season. Ideally, this would entail quantifying the number of beaches that used the survey and garnering feedback from beach managers about the surveys. Further exploration is necessary into what additional efforts can be made to continue broadening the use of the sanitary survey forms throughout the region as well as providing information on beach health management and predictive modeling. Ongoing management of the GLRC Clean Beach Initiative web portal needs to be determined as well.