

2014 Michigan Great Lakes Beaches Tiered Monitoring Plan  
Public Comments Invited

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Water Resources Division, is seeking comments regarding changes to the way Tier 1 beaches are defined. Written comments may be submitted to Dr. Shannon Briggs, MDEQ, Water Resources Division, P.O. Box 30458, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7958; or e-mail at [briggss4@michigan.gov](mailto:briggss4@michigan.gov) by **March 14, 2014**.

Over the past ten years, the MDEQ has supported monitoring efforts at Great Lakes beaches by distributing funds to local health departments from the federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (BEACH Act) (<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/beachrules/act.cfm>). One of the BEACH Act's nine performance criteria requires states to develop a Tiered Monitoring Plan. Michigan has evaluated and classified beaches using a three-tiered system as follows:

- Tier 1 - beaches are monitored at least 5 times per 30-day period during most of the swimming season, have public access with high bather densities, and may have known or potential sources of contamination.
- Tier 2 - beaches are monitored but not as frequently as 5 times per 30-day period or are not monitored for most of the swimming season, have public access, and may have known or potential sources of contamination.
- Tier 3 - beaches may or may not be monitored and have public access.

Using this Tiered Monitoring Plan, the MDEQ awarded BEACH Act funds to all eligible local health departments based on the number of highly used Great Lakes beaches they oversee. Typically, this resulted in approximately 200 Great Lakes beaches being monitored.

The MDEQ proposes to revise the criteria used to define Tier 1 beaches by focusing on Great Lakes beaches that are listed on the Draft 2014 Clean Water Act Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 Integrated Report ([http://michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313\\_3686\\_3728-12711--00.html](http://michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3686_3728-12711--00.html)) as not meeting the total body contact recreation designated use as follows:

- Tier 1 beaches are monitored at least 5 times per 30-day period during most of the swimming season, have public access with high bather densities, and **are listed on the Section 303(d) list as not meeting the total body contact recreation designated use.**

There are \$152,000 of BEACH Act funds available for the 2014 monitoring season. The change in the Tiered Monitoring Plan is necessary due to a one-time budgetary requirement that provides \$100,000 for beach monitoring equipment for the Lake St. Clair Metropark Beach. The equipment will allow for the use of the new United States Environmental Protection Agency-approved quantitative polymerase chain reaction (QPCR) method. Currently, the most common laboratory methods used to analyze beach water samples require the incubation of the samples on culture plates, so results are delayed by 18 to 24 hours. The new QPCR method will allow samples to be analyzed in just a few hours. The MDEQ realizes the importance of

implementing this new technology and investing \$100,000 to conduct a pilot study will provide faster results and more timely issuance of advisories when needed.

Since there are insufficient funds available for all of the eligible Great Lakes beaches, the MDEQ proposes to distribute funds to the local health departments that oversee the monitoring of Tier 1 beaches as defined in the new Tiered Monitoring Plan. This approach will help to protect public health and will provide funding to 10 local health departments to monitor 20 Tier 1 Great Lakes beaches that are not meeting the total body contact recreation designated use.