

Officials clash over beach contamination warnings

June 30 2014, by John Flesher

Federal and state officials are clashing over standards for warning the public about water contamination at the nation's beaches.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awards grants to states in the Great Lakes region and along the ocean coasts to test beach waters for [fecal bacteria](#).

EPA wants state, tribal and local governments to use tougher standards this year for triggering warnings that the contamination has reached unsafe levels. In some places, those advisories lead to beach closures.

Officials in many states say the proposed thresholds are unattainable on such short notice and could harm tourism by unnecessarily scaring away swimmers. They say they may have to forfeit their beach testing grants.

EPA official Betsy Southerland says swimmers can make their own choices but should be informed about risk of illness.

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