



GCOOS Public Health and Safety Task Team

Follow up discussion (internal) for beach conditions/ water quality information product

February 21, 2017

Participants: Barb, Shin, Matt, Bob, Grant

This call was a follow up to 2/1/2017 meeting (teleconference) with the GCOOS PHSTT. The objective for this call was to discuss feasibility of building and maintaining a near real-time beach conditions/ water quality product.

Since EPA beaches is not a viable source for up to date bacteriological data, possible sources of data were discussed. Bob discussed the issue with bacteriological data from FL. Many FL Counties sub contract the collection and posting of bacteriological data to meet the EPA mandates for testing. As reporting counties are added the formats may be changes that would disrupt the flow of bacteriological data. Without a published (ATI?) formats can change and links will break. This is time consuming to keep chasing and repairing links. Other states can also present a constantly moving target for consistent links.

Matt mentioned the TX General Land Office/ Texas BeachWatch maintains a public product with access to fecal coliform, beach conditions, wind speed/ direction, and rip current info. Craig Davis (TGLO and GCOOS PHSTT member) manages the site. Using historical beach data to look at where bacteriological elevations have been a problem was also discussed. Andy mentioned in last meeting that tourism bureaus may push back on this approach. Other parts of the US have used a grading system (west coast?). Grant will look into products that may use historical data.

Stakeholders request a product that is manageable day to day. Consistent beach conditions and bacteriological data are available from some GOM locations (e.g. Sarasota, Galveston) but there are a lot of gaps where a consistent data/ info source is not available. Some of these gaps could be addressed with future funding (restore).

Craig Davis scaled back from daily beach conditions reporting because it was difficult to get consistent daily submissions and also pushback from tourism bureaus. Sarasota BCRS is partially funded by tourism branches so good relations between reporting and tourism are possible. GCOOS DMAC will mull over some possible ways forward and reconvene.