

Each year, NRDC publishes a report on the sometimes-foul state of our beachwater nationwide. This year's [Testing the Waters](#) analysis shows that people are still regularly swimming in water with unsafe levels of E Coli and other pathogens, and that thousands of people likely get ill every year from a day at the beach. In the northeast and Great Lakes regions, combined sewage overflows after rainstorms are a prime cause; here in California, surface runoff is a big reason.

Why can't we just close beaches when water is unsafe? Part of the problem is a lack of funding for regular beachwater testing and monitoring—something that's unlikely to improve in this year of state budget cuts. But even when beaches are monitored, the current tests don't give results for 18 hours or more — meaning that lots of swimmers have been exposed while we wait for a verdict.

As reported [here](#) in the LA Times, the House is proposing to mandate quicker tests. The Clean Coastal Environment and Public Health Act passed Wednesday by the House would require the EPA to develop a test by 2012 that would allow the public to be alerted to contamination within hours of sampling, reducing the risk of exposure to disease-causing pathogens.