

# ALLIANCE FOR THE GREAT LAKES

ENSURING A LIVING RESOURCE FOR ALL GENERATIONS

## CLEANER BEACHES, CLEANER WATER

Beaches provide recreation to millions of people, underpin coastal economies around the region, are a natural habitat for plants, animals and aquatic species, and are the most direct connection many of us have with the Great Lakes. Unfortunately, 84 Great Lakes beaches were unfit for swimming for at least 15 days during the 2008 swim season.

### What Makes a Beach Unhealthy?

- Stormwater runoff: Carries lawn chemicals, oil and road salt as rain makes its way from pavement, yards and fields to waterways.
- Outdated sewer systems: Overflows during heavy rains each year release billions of gallons of untreated and partially treated sewage into the Great Lakes and local rivers and streams.
- Excess phosphorus and nitrogen: Generated by farms, untreated sewage, fertilizers, plant waste and detergents, these chemicals feed algae that wash up on beaches, harbor bacteria and can be toxic to people, fish and wildlife.
- Beach litter: Attracts geese, gulls and other wildlife that deposit waste teeming with bacteria.

Volunteers with the Alliance's Adopt-a-Beach™ program cleared 30,000 pounds of trash from Great Lakes shorelines in 2008. Cigarette butts and food waste top the list as the most common forms of beach litter.



More than 7,000 volunteers with the Alliance's Adopt-a-Beach™ program record data on trash, water quality and pollution around the Great Lakes. Photo: Dennis Belogorsky

### How You Can Help

Below are just some of the ways you can help make Great Lakes beaches cleaner:

- Become an Alliance beach adopter! Sign up at [www.greatlakes.org/adoptabeach](http://www.greatlakes.org/adoptabeach).
- Don't litter; contact your local beach manager to install trash and recycling bins if needed at [www.greatlakes.org/BeachContacts](http://www.greatlakes.org/BeachContacts).
- Learn how to care for the shoreline if you own beachfront property. Download our new "Healthy Beaches Action Guide" at [www.greatlakes.org/HealthyBeachesGuide](http://www.greatlakes.org/HealthyBeachesGuide)

**For more information contact Jamie Cross at (866) 850-0745 x12, or [jcross@greatlakes.org](mailto:jcross@greatlakes.org)**

Formed in 1970, the Alliance for the Great lakes is the oldest citizens' Great Lakes organization in North America. Its mission is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resources using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife. The Alliance is headquartered in Chicago with offices in Cleveland, Milwaukee and Grand Haven. More about the Alliance is online at [www.greatlakes.org](http://www.greatlakes.org).

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