



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
GEORGE P. BUSH, COMMISSIONER

**REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF COASTAL RESOURCES
BEACH WATCH PROGRAM**

OCTOBER 2019

OVERALL CONCLUSION

We concluded that the GLO generally complied with some of the significant requirements of the Beach Watch program during the period under audit. The GLO's Beach Watch program previously experienced considerable employee turnover with new team members starting in September 2018. The issues identified during this review predate the current team, who have expressed and demonstrated a commitment to ensure compliance with program requirements. The audit identified the following areas of improvement:

1. Beach Advisories: Advisories of high bacteria levels are provided to the public on the Beach Watch interactive online map; however, process improvements are needed to ensure communication to current local authorities and that warning signs are appropriately posted on beaches.
2. Field Visits of Laboratories: No field visits were completed in 2017 and documentation of a 2018 visit was not sufficiently supported for usage by current Beach Watch team members.
3. Beach Monitoring Database: The database contains duplicate records of water samples and test results. Reports generated from the database do not appropriately adjust the sample count and test results of the additional samples taken for quality control purposes.
4. Policies and Procedures Manual: The manual is outdated and does not address all significant program processes.
5. Required Communication within Coastal Resources: No documentation was available to substantiate required quarterly meetings between the Quality Control Officer and the Deputy Director of Coastal Resources. Auditors were unable to locate the 2016 Quality Assurance Report (QAR) however, the 2017 and 2018 reports were provided.
6. Reports and Data Required by EPA: Reports and data were not consistently submitted timely.
7. MBE/WBE¹ Utilization Reports: Required reports were not filed since 2016.

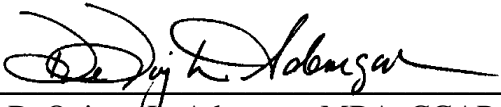
¹ Minority Business Enterprise/Women's Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE)

MANAGEMENT'S SUMMARY RESPONSE

Management concurs with the recommendations. The "Detailed Results" section of this report contains management's response to each observation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We appreciate the assistance and cooperation provided to us by the management and staff of the Beach Watch program during this audit. For questions about this report, please contact DeQuincy Adamson at (512) 463-8142 or Barbette Mays at (512) 463-4643.



DeQuincy L. Adamson, MBA, CGAP
Internal Audit Manager

October 25, 2019

Date

OBJECTIVE

The objective was to provide assurance that the GLO complies with the terms and conditions of the Texas Beach Watch Quality Management Plan (QMP) and Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The scope of the audit consisted of reviewing and evaluating information and documents involved in the Beach Watch Program operated in the Coastal Resources Division. The audit reviewed activities performed from September 2016 through December 2018.

The methodology included observing processes, interviewing employees, collecting information, performing tests, and analyzing and evaluating the information.

The audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The agency's mission reads "The Texas General Land Office primarily serves the schoolchildren, veterans, and the environment of Texas. The agency does so by preserving our history, maximizing state revenue through innovative administration, and through the prudent stewardship of state lands and natural resources."

The Beach Watch program is one of several Coastal Resources initiatives for providing stewardship of natural resources and promoting economic growth along the Texas coast. It is a federally funded program under which water quality is tested at beaches and the general public notified when the bacteria level exceeds EPA standards. GLO experienced turnover in its Beach Watch program in which the prior Beach Watch Coordinator was replaced in September 2018.

GLO contracts with laboratories along the coast that collect and test water samples for *Enterococcus* bacteria, which is a hazard as well as a marker for other water quality issues. According to program documents, these laboratories collect water samples for testing at 164 stations at 62 beaches in nine counties. Water samples are tested weekly during peak beach usage and every two weeks during off-peak periods. An interactive map on the Texas Beach Watch website displays water quality information as the contracted laboratories upload the test results.

GLO issues beach advisories by email and on the Beach Watch website when bacteria levels exceed quality standards established by the EPA. Beach users are also notified by warning signs posted at affected beaches by local governments.

The Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (Beach) Act authorizes the federal funding for the Beach Watch program. GLO's program is subject to the following guidance:

- Grant Awards: EPA awards the funding in overlapping two-year cycles. The grant award for September 2016 – September 2018 was \$364,000 and the award for September 2017-August 2019 was \$353,000. These awards also specify which federal regulations are applicable to the program.
- Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP): GLO developed the QAPP to implement the Texas Beach Watch Program. The QAPP provides extensive guidance on protocols for collecting, transporting, and testing water samples as well as reporting the results. It also includes guidance for managing the laboratories in the program on various topics, including training, equipment maintenance, and quality control. The QAPP must be approved by EPA and is incorporated by reference into the contracts with the laboratories. On an annual basis, GLO must certify in writing to EPA that the QAPP is current.
- Quality Management Plan (QMP): The QMP describes the roles and responsibilities in the Beach Watch program and how they work together to ensure that activities comply with EPA requirements. The QMP must also be approved by EPA.