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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECEIVES BEACH MONITORING GRANT FROM  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**TALLAHASSEE** –The Florida Department of Health (DOH) received a beach monitoring grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). On August 9, 2006, the agency awarded a \$528,410 grant to Deputy State Health Officer Bonita “Bonnie” Sorensen, M.D., M.B.A

“Once again the state of Florida is pleased to partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to monitor our beaches and protect the safety of our residents as well as all those who frequent our beaches every year,” Sorensen said. “With the aid of this grant, we will be able to continue the process of creating the best Healthy Beaches program in the Nation.”

The Florida Healthy Beaches program was established in August 2000 to frequently monitor Florida’s waters for bacterial indicators to maintain the public's trust in the safety of these natural resources. Results are posted on the DOH Web site at [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us) and provided to the public for use when choosing a beach area. Through the Florida Healthy Beaches program, a total of 307 sites in 34 counties are monitored on a weekly basis to ensure the sites are safe and sanitary.

The initial authorization and funding from the Florida Legislature created the program to monitor the quality of water at frequently used beaches and notify the public of beach warnings and advisories. The U.S. EPA's Beach Act grants have allowed DOH to increase to weekly monitoring to provide the public with prompt notification of poor water quality conditions in an attempt to reduce the risk of exposure to disease-causing microorganisms in the water.

The EPA has nearly \$10 million available this year for states to monitor beach water quality, issue timely warnings or advisories, and protect public health. The grants are based on criteria including the length of beach season, the miles of beaches and the number of people using those beaches.

For more information about the Florida Healthy Beaches program, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us) and choose Beach Water Quality from the pull down menu.

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