

NEST York Case Study

SUMMARY

In this study, we examined perceptions of ocean water quality in York, Maine. In particular, we focused on York's business community, and their interactions with beachgoers regarding water quality. In order to get a more complete sense of what type of questions York beachgoers ask about water quality, we also interviewed lifeguards about their interactions with beachgoers. In the summer of 2015, we conducted 41 semi-structured interviews in York. Two members of the research team approached every business within walking distance from York's beaches. We interviewed 31 business employees, using an interview guide. We also interviewed 10 lifeguards using an interview guide slightly adapted from the one we used with the businesses. We obtained written consent and maintained participants' confidentiality according to IRB (Institutional Review Board) procedures. We audio recorded and transcribed the interviews in full. We then elicited data from the transcriptions by coding them with ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. For the few participants who did not want to be audio recorded, the second research team member took detailed notes, which we typed and uploaded into ATLAS.ti. Below is a summary of the data we extracted from the interviews.

SAMPLE

- 41 interviews total
- 31 business employees; 10 lifeguards
- 7 retail stores; 6 restaurants; 17 accommodations; 1 other
- Maine Healthy Beaches (MHB) advisory sign posted on the day of interview for 10 of 41 interviews

RESULTS

1. First, how long have you worked at (name of business) [substitute "here" for lifeguards]? What are your duties?

- < 1 years: 6
- 1-5 years: 11
- 6-10 years: 11
- 11+ years: 13

2. Now I'd like to ask you about people who come to York's beaches. Why do you think visitors choose to come to the beach in York?

10 most frequent responses:

- Beaches/beach activities: 29
- Family friendly: 22
- Activities/entertainment: 12
- Businesses: 11
- Location: 10
- Cleanliness: 9
- Family history: 8
- Old time feeling: 8
- Safe: 7
- Sand: 4

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3. What do you think visitors don't like about York beaches?

5 most frequent responses:

- Seaweed: 21
- Parking: 12
- High tide: 5
- Crowded: 3
- Dogs: 3

4. What do you think affects visitors' decisions to go, or not go, in the water...*besides temperature?*

5 most frequent responses:

- Nothing: 15
- Seaweed: 8
- Fear of sharks: 4
- Fear of ocean: 3
- Waves: 2

5. Do visitors ever ask you questions about the beach or the ocean?

5 most frequent responses:

- Tides: 15
- Temperature: 10
- Directions: 7
- Sharks: 6
- Seaweed: 5

6. Do visitors ever ask you about the signs up along the beach? If yes, what do they ask?

Businesses:

- No: 26
- Sometimes/not MHB signs: 4
- Missing: 1

Lifeguards:

- Sometimes/MHB signs: 7
- Sometimes/not MHB signs: 1
- No: 1
- Missing: 1

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7. Do businesses like yours [substitute “you” for lifeguards] have access to information about issues regarding health, safety or water quality at York’s beaches?

5 most frequent responses:

Businesses:

- Probably, but don’t know: 18
- Yes, via newspaper: 8
- Yes, via word of mouth: 4
- Yes, via town website: 3
- No: 2

Lifeguards:

- Yes, via MHB: 4
- Yes, via workshop: 2
- Probably, but no source indicated: 2
- Yes, via boss: 1
- No: 1

7a. [Lifeguards only] Have you helped collect samples as a part of the town’s water quality monitoring? (If not, then skip question)

- Yes: 9
- No: 1

8. How would you evaluate the way the town of York is managing the beach? Use scale: [Good, Fair, Poor, DN]

- Good: 26
- Fair: 7
- Poor: 2
- Don’t know/good as far as I know: 4
- Missing: 2

9. How would you evaluate the way the town of York is managing water quality? Use scale: [Good, Fair, Poor, DN]

- Good: 11
- Fair: 2
- Poor: 5
- Don’t know/good as far as I know: 22
- Missing: 1

10. Finally, is there anything else you’d like to share with me or are there any other issues that you think are important to the business community related to York’s beaches and water that we haven’t discussed?

- Open-ended question. Nearly all participants responded “no.” Several offered novel responses, but no responses were duplicated.

11. (OPTIONAL): Do you or your family ever go to the beach in York? [Why / why not]

- Yes: 19
- No: 11
- Missing: 11