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Although exposure to pathogens in beach water has been an active area of research for decades, beach sand is a relatively unexplored habitat for the persistence of these microorganisms. Currently, there are no guidelines for monitoring sand quality. Beach sand, biofilms, and water all present unique advantages and challenges to pathogen introduction, growth, and persistence. These dynamics are further complicated by the continuous exchange between sand and water habitats. This review is a product of an international effort that aims to explore our current understanding of microbial populations on the sand. Factors such as transport dynamics across the sand-water continuum at beaches, how these dynamics can be modeled, and how global change factors (e.g., climate and land use) are investigated. The results of this review are expected to serve as a foundation to develop sand quality guidelines at the global level and improved policies for safe recreational environment.