

# Bacteria thriving in flooded Louisiana

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Louisiana's Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf of Mexico shoreline reportedly are suffering environmental damage from sewage-infested floodwater.

Salt water that flooded New Orleans from breeched levies following Hurricane Katrina is contaminated by human and animal waste and chemicals. It is now being pumped from the city back into Lake Pontchartrain and is expected to cause fish kills and other environmental damage that might last for at least six months, the Houston Chronicle reported Thursday.

"My gut feeling is that when (the polluted water) is placed into Lake Pontchartrain ... it will (eventually) dilute and the natural systems will come back to some kind of equilibrium and balance," said Ted Cleveland, a civil engineer and hydrologist at the University of Houston. "(But) in the short term, it won't be a good place to be for much of anything."

The water contains dangerous bacteria, including E. coli and Vibrio vulnificuls, a flesh-eating, water-borne pathogen that causes cholera, the Chronicle said.

Tests conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found the water is contaminated with human and animal fecal matter in concentrations 10 times higher than normal, fueling massive bacteria growth.

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