

Cleanup of oily goo could allow California beaches to reopen

May 29 2015, by Christopher Weber



A cleanup crew collects balls of tar that washed ashore in Manhattan Beach, Calif. on Thursday, May 28, 2015. Popular beaches along nearly 7 miles of Los Angeles-area coastline are off-limits to surfing and swimming after balls of tar washed ashore. The beaches along south Santa Monica Bay appeared virtually free of oil Thursday morning after an overnight cleanup, but officials aren't sure if more tar will show up. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

A 7-mile stretch of Southern California coastline that was closed to swimmers and surfers after globs of oily goo washed ashore could reopen Friday after a two-day cleanup effort.

Officials were assessing the popular beaches on Santa Monica Bay and would make a decision by midday, U.S. Coast Guard spokesman Michael Anderson said.

Workers scooped up truckloads—about 30 cubic yards—of sandy tar balls and patties that began washing up Wednesday but had mostly dissipated by Thursday.

"We've made significant progress," Anderson said. "We estimate 90 percent of what we saw on the [beach](#) on Wednesday has been recovered."

U.S. Coast Guard and state officials said samples of tar and water would be analyzed to identify where the material originated, but it could take days to get the results.

There is a refinery and offshore oil tanker terminal nearby but the Coast Guard did not find a sheen from a possible spill after the tar started to accumulate. There is also a major shipping channel in the area.

Nothing has been ruled out, including last week's oil spill that dumped thousands of gallons of crude along the Santa Barbara County coast about 100 miles to the northwest. Two beaches there have been closed until at least June 4.

The environmentalist group Heal The Bay worried that the shoreline from Manhattan Beach to Redondo Beach would reopen too soon.

"From a human health perspective, exposure through skin contact is a

concern," the group said in a statement.



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Someone dropped off an oil-covered loon at a wildlife center in Manhattan Beach, but it's not clear exactly where the bird or the oil came from, the Coast Guard said. No other wildlife issues have been reported. The loon is expected to recover and be released back into the wild.

Lifeguards chased a handful of surfers out of the water Thursday at

Manhattan Beach, but beach life was otherwise normal for people exercising, playing volleyball, skating and riding bikes along the shore.

"I got a couple waves in and then they came by again and told me to get out," said Scott Berk, who regularly surfs waves in the area.



Lifeguards ask beachgoers to leave the beach after balls of tar washed ashore in Manhattan Beach, Calif. on Thursday, May 28, 2015. Popular beaches along nearly 7 miles of Los Angeles-area coastline are off-limits to surfing and swimming after balls of tar washed ashore. The beaches along south Santa Monica Bay appeared virtually free of oil Thursday morning after an overnight cleanup, but officials aren't sure if more tar will show up. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

He said surfers are used to seeing bits of tar in the water and on the shore from natural seafloor seepage, but the amount that came in Wednesday was concerning.

"I hope they clean it up quickly," he said.

Public health officials told people to avoid contact with the water, wet sand or any material that washed up in the area.



A crew cleans up a beach after balls of tar washed ashore in Manhattan Beach, Calif. on Thursday, May 28, 2015. Popular beaches along nearly 7 miles of Los Angeles-area coastline are off-limits to surfing and swimming after balls of tar washed ashore. The beaches along south Santa Monica Bay appeared virtually free of oil Thursday morning after an overnight cleanup, but officials aren't sure if more tar will show up. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)



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Contaminated bags of sand and oil are loaded onto a track loader in Manhattan Beach, Calif., on Thursday, May 28, 2015. Popular beaches along nearly 7 miles of Los Angeles-area coastline are off-limits to surfing and swimming after balls of tar washed ashore. The beaches along south Santa Monica Bay appeared virtually free of oil Thursday morning after an overnight cleanup, but officials aren't sure if more tar will show up. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

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