

Ocean sample tests clean after Los Angeles sewage spill

July 20 2016, by Robert Jablon

The first test of ocean water following a massive California sewage spill came back clean Wednesday, suggesting stinky sludge that drained into the Los Angeles River didn't flow 20 miles to the coast, officials said.

The sample taken Tuesday showed no excessive levels of bacteria, said Nelson Kerr with the Long Beach health department.

Officials were waiting for the results of a second test on Wednesday before deciding to reopen some five miles of Long Beach-area coastline to swimmers.

"It doesn't look like we're impacted by the spill," Kerr said. "This initial round of testing looks really good, for the most part."

A buried pipe near downtown Los Angeles collapsed Monday, causing a blockage and spill of 2.4 million gallons of [raw sewage](#) onto streets and into storm drains that feed into the river.

Crews managed to contain, divert or vacuum at least 750,000 gallons and the rest flowed into the river, officials said.

About 4 miles of coastline in Long Beach and a mile in neighboring Seal Beach were closed to swimmers and waders while [health officials](#) tested the waters for bacteria.

The sewage leak was initially capped Monday night, but another rupture

occurred during repairs. It was finally stopped Tuesday and an above-ground bypass system was being built so repairs and cleanup could get underway, said Adel Hagekhalil, assistant director of Los Angeles Sanitation.

Warning signs and flags were up along the closed beaches and lifeguards shooed away some visitors.

"Just pure disappointment," beachgoer Francisco Aleman of Lake Elsinore told KABC-TV. "My little sister, she wanted to come to the [beach](#) forever, the whole summer... she gets here and it's like, you can't get in, so what's the point, you know?"

The closure was a financial hit for M&M Surfing School of Seal Beach, which had to cancel classes for 70 students at a loss of \$85 each.

"Nobody went out," owner Michael Pless said. "The bummer is I have people coming from all over the world. I have people from England, Sweden. I had people flying in to meet me."

The 1929 concrete, tiled-lined pipe that broke was 18 feet underground, while more recent pipes are 80 to 100 feet below, Hagekhalil said.

The cause of the collapse wasn't clear.

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