

Following mega swell and storms, clean up in Southern California underway

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The big swells and high tides that battered the region for days have eased—but the aftermath and clean up since have kept crews busy along the coast.

Beaches across Southern California saw sea water push up past the sand, into [parking lots](#) and threatening beachfront buildings for several days in the last week. Several beaches suffered severe erosion, with sections of sand cut away and disappearing from the coast.

While rain is in the forecast and a strong swell is expected to hit on Thursday, the [weather events](#) will be mild in comparison to what battered the coastline over the weekend.

While the local region was spared the major damage seen elsewhere, it had its share of impacted areas.

The Beach House restaurant in Seal Beach was among the most dramatic visuals, with sea water pushing up the sand and surrounding the building near the San Gabriel River on Sunday, Dec. 31.

The restaurant had a similar experience last year during a strong surf event, but this weekend was even more threatening, said Rosie Ritchie, a partner at the restaurant. Fortunately, the restaurant's foundation is slightly elevated, saving it from [major flooding](#).

"It was not as intense as it was this weekend, it was scary," she said. "It was concerning."

Staff worked quickly to put sandbags around the building. Some [salt water](#) seeped onto the patio and into the back of the building, but city crews came out quickly to pump water back over the jetty and out to sea, Ritchie said.

"We are fortunate," she said. "That saved us."

The restaurant had to close for a few days, but by Tuesday customers were greeted back.

Caution cones also surrounded on Tuesday a small sinkhole that had formed in the nearby beach lot, which was the size of a couple of parking spaces.

Crews stayed busy cleaning up the south parking lot at Doheny State Beach, where advancing seawater prompted authorities to close down the area.

"We're still working on cleaning up the sand in the parking lot," said Scott Kibbey, south sector State Parks superintendent. "We have heavy equipment cleaning up most of that sand. That [coastal flooding](#) made a mess at that south use area of the park."

Still, the sand loss in Doheny South Day appears to be relatively minimal, he said, adding visitors were out enjoying the beach before the upcoming rain that is in the forecast.

Erosion concerns continue at San Onofre State Beach, Kibbey said, where sand has been disappearing at an alarming rate. About 30 parking spots have been lost to erosion from the recent swells, he said. "It's something we're continuing to monitor and something we're concerned about."

Also, inclement weather and maintenance issues have paused dredging operations for a sand replacement project underway in San Clemente, said the city's Coastal Administrator Leslea Meyerhoff. An update on when operations will resume will be announced as soon as possible, she said.

Huntington Beach suffered some erosion, normal for the big winter swells, said Marine Safety Battalion Chief Trevor McDonald.

"Right now, with it being new with the sand erosion ... use caution as

you are recreating at the beach," he said. "Always use caution and if you have any questions about specific areas, you can always check with a lifeguard."

Weather this week is expected to be milder, though there are still hazards to be aware of, said Elizabeth Adams, meteorologist for the National Weather Service.

A chance of rain is expected to develop overnight into the late morning on Wednesday. It will be a fast-moving storm and could produce lightning in some areas, she said.

A swell moving in this week will bring waves in the 4- to 7-foot range, though the [high tides](#) have subsided, for now, she said.

Next week, a king tide event—the highest of the year—will happen. Though it's too early to tell if it will mix with big waves, there could be some flooding along the coastline, Adams said.

"There could be some impacts with those," she said.

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