



Enforcement News

Laguna Beach reaches \$1.5 million settlement for wastewater collection system failure

Raw sewage spilled into Pacific Ocean Marine Protected Areas

June 9, 2021

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SAN DIEGO - The city of Laguna Beach has agreed to pay a \$1.5 million penalty for a wastewater collection system failure that spilled 1.7 million gallons of raw sewage into Aliso Creek and the Pacific Ocean shoreline in 2019, contaminating protected marine habitat and recreational waters.

In a settlement approved today by the San Diego Water Quality Control Board, the city will pay \$785,780 in fines and, within three years, use the remaining \$748,278 to partially fund a project that minimizes the risk of similar spills.

“It’s encouraging to see these funds applied to wastewater infrastructure improvements,” said Chiara Clemente, the San Diego Water Board’s enforcement coordinator. “Having the proposed project in place will be a valuable asset while the city develops and implements its broader plans for improving wastewater management and protecting public health and the environment.”

The spill occurred on a rainy Thanksgiving weekend in November 2019 when a relief valve along the city’s North Coast Interceptor transmission line ruptured due to corrosion. For three consecutive days, wastewater flowed into Aliso Creek and entered the ocean at the Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area. To stop the spill and complete the repairs, sewage flows to the transmission line were reduced and discharge was released to nearby Bluebird Beach, which is within the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve.

Critical sewage infrastructure runs for two miles adjacent to Aliso Creek from the beach to a treatment plant. The project proposed for funding from the settlement would allow for system failure repairs without discharges of additional sewage.





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The San Diego Water Board is responsible for protecting and restoring water quality in the southwestern regions of California, including southern Orange County, southwest Riverside County and San Diego County. Protecting aquatic habitat in streams and groundwater is essential to ensuring water quality and the health of humans and wildlife.