



Enforcement News

Los Angeles County sanitation districts to pay \$6 million for multiple sewage spills

Funds will reduce contaminants and replenish local groundwater supplies

Feb. 6, 2024

Contact: [Ailene Voisin](#), Information Officer

LOS ANGELES – To resolve discharge violations from 14 separate spills, including a massive overflow that released 8.5 million gallons of untreated wastewater into the Dominguez Channel in December 2021, the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts' Joint Outfall Collection System [agreed to pay \\$6 million in penalties put forth by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board](#).

The districts will deposit \$20,000 into the State Water Resources Control Board's [Cleanup and Abatement Account](#), with the remaining \$5.9 million used to fund a stormwater capture and groundwater recharge project at Calas Park, a nine-acre recreational facility in an area historically overburdened by the impacts of pollution.

The wastewater discharge incidents, which took place between January 2018 and September 2022, largely resulted from operational and structural failures. The most egregious violation occurred in Carson during a rainstorm on Dec. 30, 2021, when a mainline ruptured, sending raw sewage into a residential neighborhood, down storm drains and into the Dominguez Channel Estuary before ultimately reaching the Pacific Ocean. In response, local officials closed beaches from Orange County to Rancho Palos Verdes through the holiday weekend.

The other spills released a total of 108,000 gallons of wastewater into multiple waterbodies, including the Dominguez Channel and Los Angeles River, in violation of the districts' sanitary sewer discharge permit.

“These are serious incidents that threatened water quality in multiple communities, especially in Carson,” said Los Angeles Water Board Chair Norma Camacho. “They illustrate why replacing and modernizing infrastructure must be a priority for sewer owners and operators. The board appreciates the fact that the districts are planning infrastructure upgrades, acted quickly to clean up the December 2021 spill and will be funding a project to improve water quality in the disadvantaged community where the worst spill occurred.”

The stormwater capture and groundwater recharge project at Calas Park is designed to collect, pretreat, and store 13.8 acre-feet of stormwater per year using an underground



infiltration gallery, bioswales and rain gardens before being discharged into groundwater. It will benefit the community by reducing the amount of contaminants in its surface waters, replenishing local groundwater supplies and promoting public awareness and education about urban runoff through project construction and signage.

The county sanitation districts are a confederation of 24 independent entities that provide wastewater and solid waste management for approximately 5.5 million people within Los Angeles County. Seventeen of the 24 districts proportionally share ownership and operation of the joint outfall system, a regional interconnected network that includes 1,220 miles of sewers and conveys approximately 350 million gallons per day of wastewater to treatment plants.

More [information](#) about the Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems is available on the board website.

With approximately 10 million residents, Los Angeles is the most densely populated region in the state. It encompasses all the coastal watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura counties. Land use varies considerably. In Ventura County, agriculture and open space exist alongside urban, residential and commercial areas. In northern Los Angeles County, open space is steadily being transformed into residential communities. In the southern part of the county, land uses include urban, residential and industrial.