



Press Release: Update on Release of Untreated Wastewater

January 24, 2018

An inadvertent release of approximately 4.4 million gallons of untreated wastewater from the Monterey One Water Regional Treatment Plant in Marina closed several Monterey County beaches over the past weekend. The release of the wastewater into the Monterey Bay occurred from the Agency's ocean outfall discharge pipe. The pipe carries the wastewater 2.5 miles from the coast line and is at a depth of approximately 130 feet.

The monitoring and collection of water samples has been underway at multiple sites including off shore and at beach locations, immediately following the release. Eleven offshore samples were taken the day of the release (Jan 20) and indicated findings below regulatory limits. One beach sample near Monterey Wharf #2, over 9 miles from the discharge point, exceeded the actual required limit on the day of the release as set by the State of California's Ocean Plan limits. Samples at seven beach locations were taken the next day, Sunday (Jan 21), and all seven of these samples were below the required limits.

Beach closures due to the spill were lifted at 5:30 p.m. on Monday evening (Jan. 22) by the Monterey County Health Department as indicator bacteria levels were safe for recreational contact. The most up-to-date information on beach closures can be found at www.mtyhd.org/beach or by calling 1-800-347-6363.

Monterey One Water also consulted a hydraulic model to estimate the dilution effects of the ocean on the wastewater being discharged from the outfall. Using the current ocean conditions, most of the dilution occurred two miles from the shore. Given the buoyancy of the wastewater, the model also suggested the dilution occurred relatively quickly and in a confined area around the discharge pipe.

In response to the incident, Monterey One Water is utilizing an independent consulting firm, Pinnacle Advanced Reliability Technology, to review all aspects of the equipment control failure. The on-going evaluation has yielded recommendations the Agency has implemented to provide additional reliability for the treatment facility.

Monterey One Water recognizes the contributions of the many entities that assisted the Agency to quickly and efficiently respond to the release.