

Earthquake 1989 - Santa Cruz County

Surfers brave sewage-fouled sea

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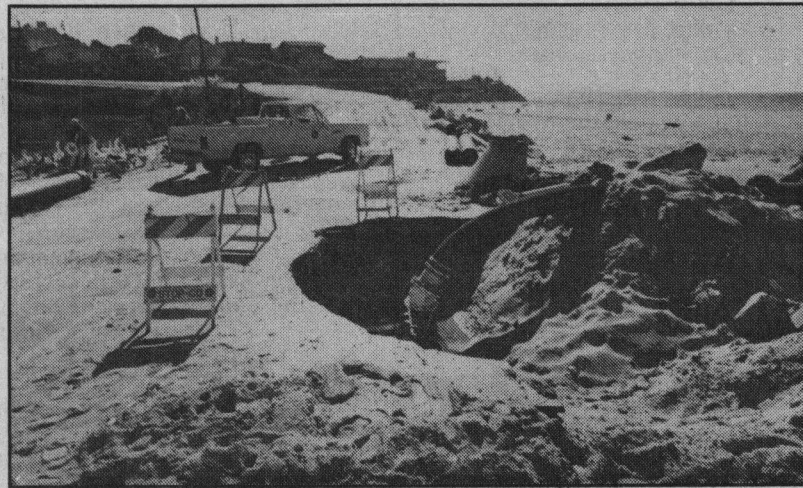
SANTA CRUZ — Millions of gallons of raw sewage continue to flow into Monterey Bay from a broken sewage line. Surfers and swimmers are warned to stay out of the water from Lighthouse Point to La Selva Beach until the line is fixed and sewage dispersed.

County workers hope to have the line fixed by tonight, but have been running into a series of setbacks, the latest of which is a series of heavy rains which flooded the work area.

"We've encountered about every difficulty you can run into," said John Nutt, project manager for the county. "Rain, mud, equipment failure, earthquakes."

The problem started when a joint in the 3-foot line separated near Marina Vista Avenue during last week's quake. Sewage began flowing into the San Lorenzo River until crews built a bypass at Twin Lakes State Beach and diverted the flow straight into the ocean.

The line carries from 5 to 8 million gallons of sewage daily



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Sewage is still flowing into bay from pipe at Twin Lakes Beach.

from a county pumping station near 26th Avenue to the city treatment plant at Neary Lagoon. An estimated 30 to 40 million gallons have flowed into the sea.

The line carries all of the sewage from Aptos, Capitola and Live Oak.

Area beaches were quickly posted, warning that the water was

contaminated. The warnings, however, failed to convince surfers who have paddled out by the score.

"I knew about it, but I didn't think it would be so bad," Mark Bohn, a local surfer said as he left the water after surfing at Steamer Lane. "The water really smells bad, like sewage. That's probably why

there aren't more people out."

Bohn and other surfers said they planned to take long showers after their surf sessions. County officials said, however, that showers do little to lessen the risk of catching a sewage-related sickness.

Those who venture into the contaminated water are at risk of contracting hepatitis or serious intestinal illnesses.

"People should stay out of the water," Rick Jones of the County Environmental Health Department said. "The waves are going to get nothing but better (as winter comes) and you can't surf if you're sick."

Jones has been checking pollution levels in the ocean waters found near Twin Lakes State Beach and the sewage outfall. The next highest pollution levels were found at the Cement Ship, then Capitola and Cowell's Beach. Prevailing currents carry the sewage south.