



## **Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **FEDERAL COURT EXECUTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF SAN DIEGO SEWAGE SETTLEMENT**

*Historic Settlement Ensures City Will Invest more than \$1 Billion through 2013 and  
Continue Sewage Spill Reductions*

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The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California announced the final execution and acceptance of the Clean Water Act lawsuit settlement between the City of San Diego, San Diego Coastkeeper, Surfrider Foundation and U.S. EPA that will obligate the City to invest over \$1 billion in its sewage collection system through 2013. The settlement, which was negotiated over a seven year period and approved by the City of San Diego in May 2007, will ensure the continuation of the City's successful Sewer Spill Reduction Program that has resulted in more than 83% reduction in spills since 2000.

"When this suit was initiated in 2000, the City was averaging a sewage spill a day and gaining national notoriety for massive spills like the 34 million gallon spill into Adobe Creek and the San Diego River," noted Coastkeeper's Executive Director Bruce Reznik. "We are thrilled to put this case behind us to ensure the City continues its successful efforts to upgrade its sewage system."

Sewage spills, which contain an array of bacteria, viruses and parasites, pose a serious public health threat. While it is difficult to get data on how many people get sick from swimming in sewage contaminated waters, experts say it could be as high as seven million beachgoers every year. The elderly, children, and people with compromised immune systems are the most susceptible to illness. By bringing large quantities of nutrients which feed algal growth and cause dwindling oxygen levels that can cause massive fish kills, sewage spills also pose a significant environmental threat.

According to Marco Gonzalez of Coast Law Group LLP, attorney for the environmental groups, "This litigation has had a profound impact on improving the health of our local waters and protecting San Diegans who enjoy our coast."

Because of the City's financial situation and inability to obligate funds, two partial consent decrees with the environmental groups and EPA were entered into over the past three years before the City could approve the final settlement in May 2007.

The settlement will require the City to continue its increased pipeline rehabilitation and replacement of 250 miles of pipeline, implement a comprehensive sewer pipeline cleaning program, and to reduce sewer spills caused by cooking oil and grease.

The consent decree settles the original lawsuit over sewer spills filed in 2001 by The Surfrider Foundation and San Diego Coastkeeper. The U.S. EPA joined that suit in 2003.

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Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region's bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. We balance community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches for all people.