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Floating Mass at Perdido was Decomposing Algae, not Sewage

Floating, smelly brown masses that were recently reported in Perdido Bay and Arnica Bay were caused by decomposing algae, not sewage, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management reported this week.

The most recent sampling and testing under ADEM's Coastal Beach Monitoring Program has revealed algae and no evidence of sewage with bacteria levels below action levels. ADEM's findings matched those conducted by the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

ADEM received reports of dark, smelly substances in the bay and investigated those reports. Recent tests by Mobile Baykeeper found similar results.

The Department did have one routine water sample collected last week from the Spanish Cove public beach exceed the bacteria threshold resulting in a "yellow" sign being posted. Follow-up sampling the next day documented that the bacteria concentration had returned to normal, and a "green" sign was posted. ADEM has several other public beaches in the Perdido Bay area and none of them have exhibited bacteria levels above the regulatory threshold. All of this was done under the Department's standard procedures for the Coastal Beach Monitoring Program.

No sanitary sewage overflows have been reported in the area over the last two weeks and the joint findings of ADEM, ADPH, and the Florida DEP revealed decomposing algae. The Florida DEP, which also samples and tests in Perdido Bay, conducted DNA tests for human markers of wastewater, and all samples were non-detect for these markers.

The sites on Perdido Bay that have been sampled include Spanish Cove, Escambia Avenue, Camp Dixie and Kee Avenue. The two sites on Arnica Bay (Pirates Cove and Bear Point) have also been sampled recently and are below the regulatory threshold for bacteria. More information on ADEM's coastal programs may be found at www.adem.alabama.gov along with results from testing at 25 different sites where recreational swimming, fishing, and boating occurs.

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