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ADEM Gives Green Light to Resuming Recreational Activities in Perdido Bay Areas

Caution was issued for beaches Friday after Florida sewage spill

BALDWIN COUNTY, Ala. - The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is giving a green light to resuming regular recreational activities at Alabama beaches on Perdido Bay after stepped-up water quality sampling this week showed bacteria below levels of concern in the wake of a sewage spill last week from a nearby Florida sewage treatment plant.

On Tuesday, ADEM and the Baldwin County Health Department changed water quality monitoring signs on the beaches from yellow back to green. ADEM had the signs changed to yellow, which indicates increased health risks, on Friday after being notified by Florida that a ruptured pipe at an Emerald Coast Utilities Authority sewage treatment plant in Escambia County, Fla., was sending untreated sewage into Perdido Bay. Florida officials said the rupture released nearly 6 million gallons of sewage over a 20-hour period before the rupture was repaired Friday night.

Due to the spill and based on communications with ADEM, the Baldwin County Health Department changed its water quality sampling from Wednesday to Monday. Areas sampled were:

- Kee Avenue
- Escambia Avenue
- Pirate's Cove
- Camp Dixie
- Spanish Cove
- Orange Beach Waterfront Park

The water samples showed enterococcus bacteria counts were below actionable levels. ADEM and the Health Department will continue to monitor the water quality in areas potentially impacted by the spill.

The waters in recreational areas on the Alabama Gulf Coast are routinely sampled for enterococcus bacteria as part of the Coastal Beach Monitoring Program in which ADEM partners with the Alabama Department of Public Health. The Beach Monitoring Program began in 1999 and has since expanded to cover 25 high-use recreational areas on the coast.

After Friday's reported spill, ADEM notified the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Baldwin County Health Department and the City of Orange Beach. No public drinking water sources in Baldwin County were impacted.

In Florida, that state Department of Health announced Tuesday that it was continuing its health advisories for two areas after sampling there showed bacteria levels exceeded state guidelines.

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