

TED W. LIEU
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July 30, 2021

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

The Honorable Richard W. Spinard
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Administrators,

I write you to request that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conduct an investigation into the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant's massive and continuing wastewater discharge into the ocean. Given the severity of recent incidents, the subsequent and continued discharge of untreated and partially treated wastewater near highly trafficked beaches, and the lack of clear communication by the City of Los Angeles, an investigation into the facility's operations, response, and environmental impact is warranted.

The Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant is in my congressional district and is operated by the City of Los Angeles in the neighborhood of Playa del Rey, adjacent to Dockweiler Beach. On July 11, 2021, the facility was reportedly damaged after significant debris accumulated and blocked the flow of sewage and untreated wastewater into the plant. In an apparent effort to prevent further damage to the facility, operators discharged approximately 17 million gallons of sewage into Santa Monica Bay.

As the City of Los Angeles discharged this wastewater and facility operators attempted repairs, key local first responders and nearby cities were not immediately informed of the discharge in the nearby ocean. (There may have been a violation of the California law I authored in 2007 to improve reporting of sewage spills). The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health waited several hours to inform the public to avoid swimming in area beaches. Later, my office was briefed about the incident and the ongoing operations to repair the plant and return it to full capacity. Since this incident, beachgoers, residents of surrounding coastal cities, and my constituents have had to deal with foul odors emanating from the facility and concerns about the safety of nearby ocean waters.

On July 27, 2021, over two weeks after the initial incident, reports indicate that the facility has continued to release partially treated wastewater into the ocean, seemingly in gross violation of its environmental permit, in addition to local and federal water pollution limits. As the facility typically processes 260 million gallons of treated wastewater into the ocean daily, this continued discharge of partially treated wastewater into the ocean is deeply concerning to the health of beachgoers and the safety of our coastal communities.

Given the severity of this incident, the egregious delay in notifying local officials of the event, the continued discharge of wastewater into the Pacific Ocean, and the impact not only to nearby communities but also the local ecosystem, I urge EPA and NOAA to investigate this incident. This facility plays a critical role in processing wastewater in Los Angeles County and its continued problematic operation requires federal action.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ted W. Lieu".

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress