



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego to Participate in Statewide Program to Monitor Wastewater for Virus That Causes COVID-19

DATA FROM CITY'S POINT LOMA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT WILL BE REPORTED TO STATE THROUGH JUNE 2021

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego is participating in a statewide program to monitor its untreated wastewater for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19.

City staff will monitor for SARS-CoV-2 in untreated wastewater at the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant once a week in December 2020. Following this test run, City staff will monitor for SARS-CoV-2 three times a week from January through June 2021. All data will be reported to the state within 24 hours of receiving results.

“Assisting the state in monitoring wastewater for this virus is vitally important to the public,” said Shauna Lorange, Director of the City’s Public Utilities Department. “We hope that the information we provide will help health officials better understand the virus and stop the spread of COVID-19.”

The California Department of Public Health and the State Water Resources Control Board initiated the Wastewater-based Epidemiology Program in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and are participating in the National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS), a collaborative effort among states to monitor wastewater. The NWSS will then inform the incidence, spread and control or epidemiology of COVID-19 to improve public health decision making.

The City’s Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant is one of five large wastewater treatment plants in California that is already voluntarily participating in a State Water Resources Control Board sponsored research project with the Water Research Foundation titled “Measure Pathogens in Wastewater” (DPR-2) to generate bi-monthly SARS-CoV-2 data in untreated wastewater.

The City's participation in DPR-2 is not only important for advancing pathogen monitoring for direct potable reuse projects, but the data can also potentially improve the state's ability to respond to the current pandemic and plan for future outbreaks.

In addition, the City participated in multiple studies of its wastewater related to COVID-19, including those with San Diego State University, University of Arizona and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project.

The City's collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater are carefully monitored and meet all regulations ensuring the health and safety of our employees, community members and the environment. While SARS-CoV-2's presence and viability in wastewater is still being examined by the scientific community, the wastewater treatment environment has been shown to be very effective in removing many other viruses and bacteria that are commonly found in the City's wastewater systems.

For more information about City efforts regarding COVID-19, please visit sandiego.gov/coronavirus.

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