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Ravenna Creek Wastewater Spill

King County works with agencies to carry out cleanup of Ravenna Creek / University Slough Drainage Canal, Seattle

On Friday, May 23, King County Wastewater Treatment Division employees responded to stop a sewage spill into Ravenna Creek / University Slough Drainage Canal, begin cleanup of the affected area and investigate its cause.

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What happened and when?

- An estimated 6.4 million gallons of sewage overflowed from a stormwater pipe into the Ravenna Creek / University Slough Drainage Canal over a 10-day period. City of Seattle utility crews alerted the county to the event after their monitoring equipment detected unusually high flow volumes despite mild rainfall.
- The overflow occurred after county employees mistakenly diverted wastewater into the stormwater pipe during a county project to repair a wastewater level sensor, part of the regulator gate system, in the Lake City Tunnel. The repair would install a redundant sensor to monitor sewer levels and help prevent the type of flooding that was experienced at upstream neighborhoods during the December 3, 2007 storm.

What areas were affected?


- The release has primarily impacted a mile-long

What's New

July 9, 2008 - [Ecology fines King County for Ravenna Creek sewage spill](#) (external link)

June 16, 2008 - [Public areas reopened after Ravenna Creek cleanup](#)

June 13, 2008 - [University Slough south of Clark Road Bridge reopened to public after King County completes cleanup](#) (.PDF file)

 View video of cleanup: [WindowsMedia](#) and [RealVideo](#)

News Release, June 6, 2008 -- [Sewer utility crews accelerate cleanup efforts in Ravenna Creek](#)

Past [news releases and project updates](#)



Vactor trucks supplied water to wash sediment from banks and the bottom; the resulting slurry is drawn up into the vactor truck. June 6, 2008

[View more photos.](#)

stretch of Ravenna Creek / University Slough Drainage Canal from Northeast 45th Street near Montlake Boulevard Northeast to Union Bay.

- Because of the discharge volume, the county's environmental lab conducted extensive water quality testing around Union Bay and the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Results indicate that the spill did not have a wide effect on water quality beyond the slough.

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Why did this happen?

- King County is conducting a thorough investigation of this event and evaluating alternatives to ensure that this incident does not happen again.
- A number of sewer separation and diversion projects in the Ravenna area have been carried out over the past several years. The stormwater pipe involved in this incident had been a sewer line at one time.
- In 2004, a project was carried out to divert Ravenna Creek from the sewer conveyance system to the stormwater system. Updated information from this project was not available to crews diverting flows for the May repair project.
- For over a year, the Wastewater Treatment Division has carried out an aggressive program to update "as-built" drawings after completion of projects such as the diversion of Ravenna Creek. The "as-built" program continues to be a high priority for the Wastewater Treatment Division.

How are we protecting environmental health?

- King County is cooperating with regulatory agencies and the University of Washington to clean up areas of the waterway that are determined to have residual problems related to this incident.

What are we doing to clean it up?

- Crews removed visible debris and used absorbent materials on the creek to take up oils and residue.
- Ravenna Creek flows were diverted beginning May 30 into the King County wastewater treatment system to allow inspection and more effective cleanup.
- Stormwater flows that come into the slough are being bypassed around the work area.
- King County, in coordination with state and local health and environmental agencies, will bring in vector trucks to remove sediments in the slough south of Northeast 45th Street. The county is working in coordination with the City of Seattle, state Department of



The Ravenna Creek / University Slough is closed for cleanup south of N.E. 45th St. Click [map](#) for larger view (.PDF file).

Who to call for information

Status of cleanup - please contact Monica Van der Vieren, King County Wastewater Treatment Division Public Outreach, at monica.vandervieren@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-7301

Public Health Questions - please call 206-296-4632.

Previous News Releases and Updates

June 10, 2008 - [King County completing cleanup in University Slough](#) (.PDF file).

June 4, 2008 - [King County begins cleanup in University Slough drainage canal](#) (.PDF file).

News Release, May 30, 2008 -- [King County works with agencies to carry out clean up of Ravenna Creek](#)

News Release, May 24, 2008 -- [Crews investigate wastewater spill into Ravenna Creek](#)

Ecology, Public Health - Seattle & King County, University of Washington Health and Safety, state Dept of Fish and Wildlife, the Muckleshoot Tribe and King County Water and Land Resources Division.

- View latest update and news releases on cleanup effort under [What's New](#).

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What about risk of illness?

- According to Public Health, risk of illness is low from this spill. No illnesses have been reported as a result of this incident.
- Ingestion of contaminated water through mouth or nose could increase your risk of stomach or intestinal illness, but our monitoring systems haven't picked up any clusters of illness associated with the spill.
- People with health concerns they feel are related to wastewater exposure should consult a health care provider.
- To protect public health, the county posted public areas as closed, took water samples and notified health and regulatory agencies about the overflow. Public area closure signs will be posted until Public Health gives the approval to remove them.

Who did we notify?

- King County crews were initially made aware of the spill on Friday afternoon May 23 just before 5 p.m. A [news release](#) was posted to Regional Public Information Network, or RPIN, a source for breaking regional news and emergencies, at 12:31 a.m. on May 24. It was also distributed to regional and local media, and received extensive coverage over the holiday weekend.
- King County notified the state Department of Ecology, Public Health Seattle-King County, and University of Washington officials on May 23.
- King County WTD community relations staff posted [closure signs](#) (.PDF file), distributed fliers in the area and ensured people in the affected areas, including U of W boathouse and crew officials, were notified.
- In the weeks since, community relations staff have provided updates to community groups and interested citizens. If you would like to receive updates, contact Monica Van der Vieren at 206-263-7301 or monica.vandervieren@kingcounty.gov.

How do you know when the water levels will again be safe?

- King County's Environmental Laboratory will continue sampling and closure signs will remain posted until Public Health gives permission to remove them.

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For questions about the Wastewater Treatment Division Web site, please send an [e-mail message](#). For general information about the division, contact us at:

Related Information:
[Emergency Services: Office of Emergency Management](#)

[Department of Natural Resources and Parks](#)
[Wastewater Treatment Division](#)

[Sewer Spill Response](#)

201 S. Jackson St., Suite 505
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Updated: June 30, 2008

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Status of Cleanup Effort

King County is beginning efforts to clean up areas of the [Ravenna Creek/University Slough drainage canal](#) contaminated by a sewer spill in late May 2008. Beginning the week of June 2, work will focus on a section of the drainage canal between Northeast Forty-Fifth Street and Clark Road (view [map](#)). Sampling of the waterway has been ongoing since the spill occurred.

View video of cleanup: [WindowsMedia](#) and [RealVideo](#)

Weekly Status: June 2 | [May 26](#)

Week of June 2



A temporary bypass pipe has been installed to keep incoming stormwater flowing past the cleanup area.
 June 6, 2008



Dams were built to contain the cleanup area.
 June 6, 2008



Water was removed from the cleanup area to expose sediments for removal.
 June 6, 2008



Vactor trucks supplied water to wash sediment from banks and the bottom; the resulting slurry is drawn up into the vactor truck.
 June 6, 2008



County staff posted warning signs and tape to keep people and dogs away from waterways until King County Public Health gives approval to reopen the area.
 June 6, 2008



Information boxes are posted at access points in the area to provide updates.
 June 6, 2008



Construction fence extends along the east side of the waterway between 45th and Clark Road. Crews will work inside this area.
June 4, 2008



A temporary road is being constructed to allow heavy equipment and trucks into the area.
June 4, 2008



To construct the road, mesh is laid on the surface and rock is spread over the mesh. This temporary road will be removed and the area restored once remediation activity is complete. The University of Washington grounds staff are working closely with King County as work in this area progresses.
June 4, 2008



Vegetation by the waterway is being removed to allow access by large equipment.
June 4, 2008



Stormwater flows through the system will be maintained with pumps and bypass pipes to divert water around the cleanup area.
June 4, 2008

Week of May 26



View of Ravenna Creek/University Slough drainage canal, looking south. The bridge (NE Clark Rd) across the waterway is visible (view [map](#), .PDF file).
May 29, 2008



Sampling conducted from the bridge (NE Clark Rd).
May 29, 2008



Water quality samples are stored in bottles for later testing at the lab.
May 29, 2008

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Updated: June 10, 2008

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