

Charlotte awaits results

Beach advisory could be lifted today

By **JOSH SALMAN - STAFF WRITER**

PORT CHARLOTTE — The Charlotte County Health Department hopes to receive final lab results today of bacteria levels at the Port Charlotte Beach Complex following a sewage spill that closed the park to swimming. More than 10,000 gallons of raw sewage leaked into the Fordham Waterway last Tuesday after a wastewater collection pipe burst. A neighbor reported the break, and it was repaired in a matter of hours. Since the canal connects into Charlotte Harbor, officials issued a precautionary beach advisory, said Terri Kesner, interim director of Charlotte County Utilities.

The health department took its final water samples Monday, and if the results show the water's free from harmful bacteria, the advisory will be lifted.

"Since all of the canals lead into the Harbor, we have to take these precautionary steps," Environmental Health Administrator Herman Velasco said. "It's just one of those unfortunate accidents that happen, and we'll continue to monitor it."

The presence of enteric bacteria is an indication of fecal pollution.

If high concentrations of the bacteria is ingested or enters through an open cut or sore, it may cause disease or infection. The most common symptoms include rashes, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting, health department spokeswoman Marne Cothran said.

Even after the advisory is lifted, the health department plans to keep an eye on the beach, fearing a rain shower could create a flushing effect and amplify bacteria levels.

CCU doesn't foresee any further problems with the repaired pipe.

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