

WINK News - Southwest Florida

Water at Port Charlotte Beach still unsafe for swimmers

Story Created: May 12, 2010 at 5:56 PM America/New_York

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. - On Wednesday, it was hot, sunny, a perfect day to go to the beach and "look" at the water

That's all Rebecca Heiland let her daughter do. "She has her little pail and she says mommy, I've got to get some water for my castle, and I said no, see the yellow signs? That means we don't go near the yucky water," Heiland said.

Patricia St. Jean relaxed in a beach chair several yards away from the shore. "we'll maybe take a walk, watch the water and the fish," St. Jean said.

Some dared to dip their feet in the water. Others hoped to do some fishing. "I just come down here on a daily basis to check and see and it seems to be getting worse," Tom Gagliardi said. "You just informed me that they extended the ban on the beach so I am not real happy right now."

Last week, a utility pipe broke, spilling 10,000 gallons of sewage into a waterway that leads to Port Charlotte Beach. The Health Department says the contaminants are twice as high as the safe level, so at least for another week, the warning signs stay up.

"We seem to have the same effect here in the canal acting like a septic tank," Environmental Health Administrator Herman Velasco said. "The heavy solids settled, and bacteria now will break it down slowly and it will pass down unfortunately to the beach area and the harbor."

The county is looking at ways to fix or eliminate the county's problematic septic tanks, in the hopes this would also cut down on bacteria in the harbor.

"The rest of the day, I'm going to be in my pool," Gagliardi said

It's uncertain how soon the beach will be safe for swimming, but the Environmental Health Department says a heavy rain would flush out bacteria more quickly.

Read more: <http://www.winknews.com/Local-Florida/2010-05-12/Water-at-Port-Charlotte-Beach-still-unsafe-for-swimmers#ixzz0npGCFse>