

VISION 2030 | The Rotorua Way

Rotorua Lakes Council updates

Inflows into Rotorua's wastewater treatment plant will remain high for a few days following the weekend's rainfall but with the weather improving, it will remain within the plant's capacity.

On Saturday high volumes of rainwater getting into the city's sewerage system and going through the treatment plant caused an overflow from a pond at the plant from which treated wastewater is pumped to the forest. The overflow entered the Puarenga Stream, which flows into Lake Rotorua.

More than 120mm of rain in Rotorua during the weekend followed nearly 90mm which fell over two days earlier in the week.

"With more rainwater than sewage entering our sewerage system and coming into the plant, plus rainfall directly into the open-air pond, it was filling faster than the treated wastewater could be pumped out," Council's Acting Water Solutions Director, Stavros Michael, says.

As a precaution, people are advised to stay out of the water in the Sulphur Bay area until the all clear is given.

"It will take a few days to get results from water sample testing but it's important people understand the overflow was not raw sewage – it was treated wastewater," Mr Michael says.

"This is the first time such an overflow has occurred at the plant and we'll conduct an investigation to try and underway how it happened, as well as investigating options for immediate action to reduce the likelihood of it occurring again.

"We expect inflows into the treatment plant to remain above average for a few days as rainwater from the weekend continues to make its way through the system but if the weather forecast, which is for improving conditions, is correct, we will be well within plant capacity" he says.

"This was treated wastewater, diluted by rainwater and no public health warning was issued by Toi Te Ora – Public Health. However, we have erred on the side of caution in advising people to not go into the water in the Sulphur Bay area.

"Treatment plant staff prepared for the weekend's anticipated rain by emptying the pond as much as possible by the end of Friday but it still wasn't enough to cope with the weekend's rain.

Obviously this is not something we want to see happening and we'll undertake an investigation of our networks to understand why such a high level of infiltration (of rainwater into the sewerage system) has occurred. We may need to accelerate work underway to assess capacity of our infrastructure and will look into what action can be taken now," Mr Michael says.

"The proposed upgrade of our treatment plant will increase our capacity to deal with situations like this but that's some time away so we want to have measures in place in the interim."



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