



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kira Redmond, Executive Director, SB Channelkeeper  
Tel: (805) 536-3377 ext. 1; Email: [kira@sbck.org](mailto:kira@sbck.org)

### **Channelkeeper Applauds City of Santa Barbara for Reducing Sewage Spills**

*Extra Investment in Sewer System Maintenance and Repair Pays Off,  
Decreasing Spills by 83%*

May 22, 2019 (Santa Barbara, California) – Yesterday, the Santa Barbara City Council received an update on the City’s progress in reducing sewage spills, prompted by a lawsuit filed by local water watchdog Santa Barbara Channelkeeper in 2011. Thanks to heightened investments in sewer system inspections, cleaning and repairs, the City reduced spills from a high of 41 in 2009 to 7 in 2018, or by 83 percent.

Channelkeeper Executive Director Kira Redmond testified before City Council after they heard the staff report, applauding them for their success to date in reducing spills, which pollute creeks and beaches, threaten public health, and harm aquatic life.

Channelkeeper filed suit against the City in 2011 for violations of the federal Clean Water Act related to its inordinately high rate of sewage spills after a decade of advocacy yielded little progress. Channelkeeper and the City signed a settlement agreement in 2012 which required the City to significantly increase its level of effort and funding to repair and replace leaking sewer pipes and progressively reduce sewage spills. They agreed to extend the settlement for an additional three years in 2016 due to insufficient results, and Channelkeeper hired an expert to help the City design a more effective sewer system management program.

As a result, the City has invested an additional \$20 million since 2012 to improve its spill response and reporting protocols, enhance sewer pipe inspection and cleaning efforts, and repair or replace 38 miles of sewer pipe (equivalent to 15 percent of its entire 257 miles of sewer mains), including 10 miles of pipes that were identified as having a high risk of leaking to storm drains, creeks and the ocean. This represents an average of 5 miles of sewer pipe repaired or replaced each year since the settlement was signed, or twice as much as the City would have fixed absent the legal agreement.

That investment has paid off in spades, says Redmond, with the City achieving a spill rate of only 2.7 per 100 miles of sewer pipe – well below the California average. “Channelkeeper is

pleased with the progress the City has made in improving the performance of its sewer system and reducing sewage spills, which translates directly into less pollution in our creeks, beaches and ocean. We recognize that litigation isn't the most agreeable way to get things done, but on occasion it's necessary, and in this case it's been extremely effective and yielded significant, tangible improvements that benefit our environment and our community.”

In her testimony, Redmond urged the City Council to continue its investment and progress in reducing sewage spills beyond 2020, when Channelkeeper's settlement agreement with the City terminates.

#####

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds through science-based advocacy, education, field work and enforcement. To learn more, visit [www.sbck.org](http://www.sbck.org).