



## Channelkeeper's Concerns with the Approved Legal Settlement of the Major 2024 Goleta Sewage Spill

On February 27, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board voted narrowly to approve a proposed settlement agreement and administrative civil liability order for the Goleta West Sanitary District's 2024 unauthorized discharge of over one million gallons of raw sewage. In February 2024, untreated sewage flowed unchecked for fourteen hours from a broken 24-inch force main into an unnamed tributary to Tecolotito Creek, the Goleta Slough and its estuary, and ultimately the Pacific Ocean before it was discovered and stopped.

The Regional Board initiated an enforcement action in 2024. Last month, the Regional Board considered a joint settlement agreement developed by its staff and Goleta West Sanitary District. Channelkeeper provided comments at the Board meeting. We shared concerns that the proposed settlement and staff report fell short in key areas, including a lack of clear details on the actions that led to the spill and immediate response and an underwhelming financial penalty.

Channelkeeper remains dissatisfied that the many missteps made by Goleta West that were preventable and could have minimized the catastrophic size of the spill should have been factored in more strongly for the financial penalty, which ended up bring approximately \$1,500,000.

At the time of the spill, Goleta West lacked effective flow monitoring, which hindered their ability to detect the spill and be able to accurately calculate the size of the spill. The estimated spill size grew from 1,000 gallons to more than one million gallons over the course of several days. Additionally, there were several breakdowns in communications between Goleta West and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, which resulted in a five-day delay before the public was notified about the spill and Goleta Beach was closed.

While the civil liability money will go toward an important Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) focused on well sampling in mostly northern Santa Barbara County and provide residential treatment systems for approximately 30 households, we are disappointed that the agencies did not conduct a basic assessment of and consider potential projects related to improving the ecological health of the Goleta Slough, which is a sensitive coastal and wetland habitat and also designated as a State Marine Conservation Area and an Ecological Reserve.

The results of the long-awaited Force Main Condition Assessment, authorized by Goleta West, were shared at the Regional Board hearing. The report, which was finalized in January, concludes that the 24-inch force main pipe has a high risk of future failure and will need to be replaced in the next few years. This conclusion was not factored into the settlement agreement.

Channelkeeper has requested that the Force Main Condition Assessment be available for public review. It was posted on Goleta West Sanitary District's website in late February.

Channelkeeper is reviewing the report and will continue to monitor and engage with Goleta West on this issue.



**Sable Seeks Special Federal Permit to Sidestep Pipeline Safety Measures  
Public Comment Period Opens**

On February 24, 2026, the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) announced that it is seeking public comments on a request for a special permit submitted by Sable Offshore Corp. The special permit would replace an emergency permit that was issued in December 2025 and expired recently.

If granted, the permit would allow Sable to bypass certain federal pipeline safety requirements related to cathodic protection, substituting its own proposed “alternative safety measures” instead. Cathodic protection is a key safeguard designed to prevent corrosion in pipelines, one of the leading causes of pipeline failures.

This request is part of Sable’s effort to bypass State of California oversight of the pipelines that were the cause of the devastating 2015 oil spill at Refugio State Beach. The company is attempting to have the pipelines that run from the Gaviota coast to Kern County reclassified as an interstate pipeline system, which would place it under federal jurisdiction rather than state oversight by the California Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM).

In December, Channelkeeper, with the legal representation of Environmental Defense Center, filed a challenge along with other conservation groups in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit claiming PHMSA violated the Pipeline Safety Act and National Environmental Policy Act. The State Attorney General filed a similar suit in January 2026. The issue is expected to be addressed later this summer. In the meantime, Sable continues to pursue approvals from PHMSA so that it could operate the pipelines under federal authority.

The public has a short opportunity to take action. PHMSA has opened a 30-day public comment period, giving community members, organizations, and others the opportunity to weigh in on whether this special permit should be granted.

Channelkeeper will be submitting comments to oppose the special permit.

Review the proposal and submit a public comment before the March 26 deadline to ensure your perspective is considered.

Suggested talking points to include in your comments:

- Sable has not completed the required repairs and remediation of the pipeline as determined by OSFM.
- Restarting CA-324 and CA-325 puts lives, property, and the environment at risk.

[Submit Comments](#)

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# Blue Water Ball

Saturday, March 14, 2026



*Oceanario de Lisboa*

Remarks by

**Jane Lubchenco**

*World-renowned marine ecologist and ocean conservation champion*

## Blue Water Ball Ticket Sales Close on Sunday, March 8, and Online Auction Begins

Channelkeeper's Blue Water Ball is set for Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> — just a week away! We have a wonderful guest list. The gala will be a spectacular celebration of Channelkeeper's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Ticket sales close on Sunday, March 8, so get your tickets today if you would like to attend!

Even if you aren't able to join us for the event, this year's Blue Water Ball auction is going online, making it more accessible than ever before. The online auction will provide more opportunities to bid on auction items and help raise money to support Channelkeeper's mission and programs. Whether or not you are attending the Blue Water Ball, anyone can learn about and bid on the auction items between Tuesday, March 10 and Monday, March 16 at 5pm PST.

The auctions will feature water-centric and ocean-themed art, outdoor adventures, environmental-focused experiences, gear, and more. Get ready to:

- Set sail on a private sailing charter.
- Travel the California coast in a luxury campervan.
- Explore the Channel Islands with private guides.
- Ride the waves on a new surfboard.
- Send your kids to an unforgettable summer camp.
- Head out on a whale-watching adventure.
- Enjoy beautiful, one-of-a-kind fine art pieces from local artists.

Click below for a sneak peek to a few of the auction items. Stay tuned for more info about the online auction next week.

[Auction Preview](#)



**Isla Vista Cleanup  
Sunday, March 8  
9:30 am - 11:30 am**

**Isla Vista Cleanup  
Sunday, March 8  
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Join Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade for a morning of community action at our upcoming Isla Vista Cleanup on Sunday, March 8, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

This volunteer event will focus on the neighborhoods surrounding Pelican Park. Together, we will clean nearby streets and sidewalks to help prevent trash and debris from entering storm drains and flowing out to the ocean.

All cleanup supplies and snacks will be provided. Just bring your enthusiasm and a friend!

[Sign Up](#)

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### **Support Clean Water**

Want to make a difference for the environment and your community? Making a tax-deductible contribution to Santa Barbara Channelkeeper today is an investment in clean beaches, healthy watersheds, and a more sustainable future.

Thank you for your support!

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