

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore News Release

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First Results of Chemical Spill Monitoring at National Lakeshore

INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE: The National Park Service has received the results of the first round of testing for a hazardous chemical, hexavalent chromium that was spilled into the Burns Waterway on April 11. Water and beach sand samples were taken by contractors working for the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on April 12th, at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's West Beach, Cowles Bog Beach, and Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk beach. The results showed no detection of the chemical in the waters of all three national lakeshore beaches. Results on the sand samples are still pending.

Sampling will continue throughout the weekend at the three national lakeshore sites and at other locations outside the park. Despite this encouraging initial result, the National Park Service is working with the EPA and other agencies to develop a long-term monitoring protocol. Lake currents and waves have the ability to move this hazardous material onto park beaches at a later date. Park staff is concerned with potential impacts to both beach user's health and long-term harm to wildlife and other park resources. Periodic beach patrols are under way at the national lakeshore looking for evidence of fish kills or other environmental damage.

While these three beaches remain closed, the trails at the national lakeshore's West Beach will be reopened this weekend. Signs warning visitors to stay off the beach and out of the water will be posted at West Beach. The scheduled, ranger-led West Beach Hike on Sunday, April 16 at 1:00 p.m. will be presented.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency is the lead agency on this incident. Specific questions as to the nature and potential harmful effects of the chemical spill should be referred to Rachel Bassler, Public Information Officer for the US Environmental Protection Agency at [312-886-7159](tel:312-886-7159) or by e-mail at bassler.rachel@epa.gov. Questions on local drinking water quality should be referred to the individual water provider. Information on closures within Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore should be directed to the national lakeshore's information desk line at [219-395-1609](tel:219-395-1609).

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Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is one of 417 units of the National Park System ranging from Yellowstone to the Statue of Liberty. Located in Northwest Indiana, the park includes 15 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and 15,000 acres of beaches, woods, prairies, and wetlands. Up to 2 million visitors come to the Indiana Dunes each year. Check our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/IndianaDunesNL.