

# More than 211 million gallons of sewage spill into Fort Lauderdale's waterways

"Crews have been out there picking up hundreds of fish out of the water so it doesn't look like holy hell. Manatees are swimming in that poison," a fisherman told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.

**Toxic invasion in one of America's most beautiful beach destinations**



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**By Elizabeth Chuck**

More than 211 million gallons of sewage has spilled into the waterways and streets of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, killing fish, seeping into houses and prompting the may and federal assistance.



The problems began in December, when aging sewer pipes in the beachside city broke [six times](#), releasing 126.9 million gallons of toxic sewage – one of South Florida's biggest spills ever, according to the [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#) of Fort Lauderdale. The waste poured into streets in three neighborhoods of the popular tourist destination, as well as the Tarpon River and Himmarshee Canal, the newspaper reported.

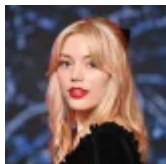
Then, over the course of 10 days at the end of January and the beginning of February, 79.3 million more gallons spilled, this time into George English Lake, the Sun-Sentinel said. Another 5.4 million gallons flooded streets near George English Park, across from a popular mall.

"All the fish are dead there," Fort Lauderdale fisherman Jeff Maggio told the Sun-Sentinel on Sunday. "Everything's just gone. Crabs, oysters, barnacles and plankton. Crews have been out there picking up hundreds of fish out of the water so it doesn't look like holy hell. Manatees are swimming in that poison."

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Fort Lauderdale's sewage system was built more than a half-century ago. Leaks beginning in 2014 led to a state mandate requiring the city to start improvements immediately and to fix the system by 2026.

The city is racing to clean up the 211.6 million gallons of toxic sewage – enough to fill 300 Olympic-size pools. But Mayor Dean Trantalis fears that the efforts will not discuss a request for federal and state aid overhauling the sewage system at meeting Tuesday.



"There's no way anyone could have taken care of every single aspect overnight. It's going to take years to do it," Trantalis told NBC News.

The sewage leaks come amid another crisis hitting Fort Lauderdale's pipes: In recent weeks, a [series of water main breaks](#) has forced residents to boil their tap water before using it.



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Elizabeth Chuck is a reporter for NBC News who focuses on health and mental health, particularly issues that affect women and children.

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Sam Brock contributed.

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