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URGENT COMMUNITY ALERT:

Wastewater testing shows significant COVID-19 community risk

Local BioBot indicators among highest in the country

August 3, 2021 (Eureka, Calif) - The City of Eureka has been notified of a higher-than-average concentration of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in wastewater flowing to the City's wastewater treatment plant. Samples from the plant, which serves the greater Eureka area including Myrtle town, Cutten, and Pine Hill, were collected via the National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS), a federal program designed to help public health officials monitor COVID-19 spread. Out of all samples submitted nationwide in the last six weeks, local wastewater contained concentrations higher than 99% of all samples.

This report coincides with last Friday's Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services announcement that cited that the county experienced its highest single day case count of confirmed COVID-19 last week and yesterday's subsequent announcement that more than 90 additional cases were confirmed since last week's report.

"While this is another useful datapoint that can help our community make more informed decisions to protect themselves from transmission, it is critically important to remember that this is a test of wastewater, not drinking water. At no point has local drinking water been threatened during the pandemic, and it remains safe for consumption," Brian Gerving, Director of Public Works for the City of Eureka said. "However, knowing that the virus may be spreading locally at levels higher than in other parts of the country is important information that helps public health officials monitor and respond. We are making this information public so that citizens can also take early action and remember to follow all guidance to better protect themselves and their families."

The City of Eureka has been participating in the federally funded National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS) since June. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in collaboration with [agencies throughout the federal government](#), initiated this program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By testing wastewater for the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, health officials are better able to understand and predict community trends related to COVID-19 infection rates. Sewage testing has been used throughout the world to monitor the spread of harmful disease.

“As much as we may want it to be, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet,” said Humboldt County Health Officer Ian Hoffman, M.D. “Vaccination is still the best measure to protect yourself and the community from COVID-19. Masking and social distancing is also advised. This new local data including both rising case counts and now the wastewater testing results are cause for concern. Everyone must continue to do their part to protect themselves and each other.”

Citing the increased spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 nationwide, the CDC currently recommends that all people, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask indoors in public in areas of substantial or high virus transmission. Humboldt County now meets this threshold. Both Humboldt County administration and the City of Eureka are now requiring everyone who enters county or city facilities to wear a face covering, regardless of vaccination status.

To view the full biobot report, visit:

<https://www.ci.eureka.ca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=58261&BlobID=23604>

For more information on wastewater testing, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/surveillance/wastewater-surveillance/wastewater-surveillance.html>.

For more information about COVID-19 conditions locally, including where to get vaccinated, visit: <https://humboldt.gov/2927/COVID-Info>.