

The original documents are located in Box 120, folder “Sludge by the Sea (Long Island beaches)” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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June 23, 1976

SUBJECT: SLUDGE BY THE SEA

Long Island residents have in the last few days been unable to use the beaches in Nassau County because of sludge and (rue the thought) sewage that has been washing up on the shore. Distraught L.I. authorities have asked that the Federal Government become involved.

What is the President doing about the sewage on the Long Island seashore?

Today, two Long Island authorities came to the White House and met with an Associate Director of the Domestic Council, George Humphreys.

He will be reviewing the problem with the appropriate agencies (primarily EPA) to determine if there is anything that the Federal Government can do. If you have questions on the meeting, you should talk to George (456-6630)

Note 1: A statement has been drafted for us to release, once the President has signed off.

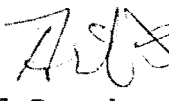
Note 2: George would like to answer questions on the meeting today, because both people he met with are running for office, etc., etc.

ME

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 25, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: MARGARET EARL
FROM: ART QUERN 
SUBJECT: Long Island Beaches

Raw sewage, garbage, sludge and other debris has washed along a 70 mile stretch of beaches -- from Atlantic Beach at the Queens-Nassau border to just east of Southhampton.

The source of the material is not known. The most plausible theory suggests that several factors have combined to create this unique condition. There was a blow-up at a sewage treatment plant two weeks ago on the South Shore and raw sewage was pumped into the bay. Heavy rains on the island have added to the normal run-off problem, in addition to creating over-flow conditions at the treatment plants. Passing ships discharge oil, sewage and garbage into the ocean. A major oil spill was sighted about ten days ago that could contribute to the problem. New York City is still discharging raw sewage into the Hudson and the New York Harbor.

Most importantly, the winds and currents off the island have been flowing contrary to the normal patterns, thus washing the floatables to shore rather than out to sea as in normal conditions. It would appear that the real solution to the problem would be a shift in the winds and currents to take the garbage out to sea. So long as the climatic conditions remain the same, the problem could persist.

LOCAL ACTIONS

The beaches were closed on the advice of the County health authorities based more on the concern for potential health problems than on sample data. In fact, the coliform count of the off-shore water indicate the waters are now swimmable. Obviously, the waste materials and fecal matter in the water and on the beaches makes swimming an unattractive option.

STATE ACTIONS

Governor Carey has sent a telegram to the President seeking Federal aid on the basis of declaring the island a disaster area. The State Department of Environmental Conservation has been assigned the lead responsibility for coordinating state and local activities.

FEDERAL ACTIONS

The Federal involvement to date has been:

1. Jim Cannon, Executive Director of the Domestic Council and George Humphreys, Associate Director of the Domestic Council are in New York today and will visit the affected areas and meet with local officials.
2. EPA has stepped up its monitoring efforts to keep track of any water quality changes and is mounting a major effort to determine the actual source or sources of the material.
3. National Park Service has cleared up its own beach area -- 16 miles in length -- on two separate occasions.
4. The Regional Director of EPA has called a meeting with the Federal, State and local agencies and the two County Executives to discuss a coordinated effort to clean up the area.

The stance of the Federal agencies to date has been that the State, and County, and local governments have the responsibility to clean up.

The Coast Guard is limited by law to clean up only oil spills and hazardous materials (such as toxic chemicals). The Coast Guard contends that it does not have the authority to clean the area. The Corps of Engineers is limited to cleaning up navigable waters (piers, shipwrecks). EPA has no resources in personnel, material or money to clean up.

5. At this time, no scheduled meeting on the subject with the President
6. J. P. Cannon, Humphreys, and reps from EPA, Interior, Coast Guard and Corps of Engineers left last evening and are reviewing the situation today by boat and by helicopter (will return late this p.m.)
7. Will meet this a.m. w/ local officials

President Ford ~~today~~ directed James M. Cannon, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs, to review personally the damage to the Long Island, New York, beaches and to determine what appropriate Federal action can be taken to assist the State and local governments to remedy the problem.

The President, noting the potentially adverse economic and health impact, is directing the appropriate Federal agencies to assist State and local officials under existing statutory authority. Mr. Cannon, along with other White House staff members and Federal officials, will tour the affected area on Friday, June 25.

- V.P. will fly over the area today - Thurs

- Geo. Humphries, Assoc. Dir of Dom. Council met w/ 2 Long Island officials and would look into it



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