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AN EDITION OF THE REGISTER

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

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LONG BEACH

City looks to curb sewage overflows

Report released by City Auditor Laura Doud says area had 103 leakages between 2014 and 2018

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Long Beach experienced more sanitary sewer overflows — which can impact environmental and public health — than most similarly sized cities in recent years. But the city's Health and Human Services Department, along with its Water Department, is working to change that.

City Auditor Laura Doud released a report Tuesday that detailed the high number of

Long Beach's sanitary sewer overflows — the technical name for when sewage leaks into the environment — and how the city is working to address them.

Doud found there were 103 such overflows from 2014 to 2018 and recommended the Water Department, along with the Health and Human Services Department, implement a new system to monitor maintenance and use new technology to ensure repair work can be done more quickly. Doud provided 23 other suggestions.

The two departments have already begun working to carry out Doud's proposals, she said in a statement.

"The departments have been extremely cooperative throughout this audit process, and we appreciate them being proactive in beginning to implement recommendations," Doud said. "By making these changes, the city can better meet its goal of reducing sanitary sewer overflows."

Doud found that 71% of the overflows were caused by fats, oils and grease in the pipe-

lines, which can be curbed by inspecting restaurants and other facilities to ensure the substances are properly disposed.

Doud said the Health and Human Services Department should conduct inspections of more of those locations and better educate the community about how to throw out those fats and oils — which should go in the trash, rather than down the drain.

The complete report can be found online at cityauditorlauradoud.com.

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— City Auditor Laura Doud