



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Substance Found in Kern River, Water Agencies Confirm Drinking Water Not Affected**

*Water testing shows no detections in treated water supply, ongoing monitoring in place*

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif.—June 9, 2023—After an unknown substance was discovered in the Kern River, Kern County and Bakersfield officials, along with local water utilities that receive water from the river, have been working together to determine the cause, mitigate the issue, and confirm drinking water quality is not impacted.

“We tested water samples immediately after this was reported, and public health experts at the State Water Resources Control Board’s Division of Drinking Water confirmed there was no acute risk to public health,” said David Beard, Kern County Water Agency Improvement District No. 4 (ID4) Manager. “As such, the agencies have been working together since then to understand the scope of the situation and assist wherever possible in order to resolve it. In addition, ongoing, follow-up testing shows no detections of the substance in the treated water.”

The substance, which has been identified as including trace amounts of diesel hydrocarbons, was first noticed in the Kern River last week. ID4, the City of Bakersfield, Bakersfield Fire Department, and California Water Service (Cal Water) took immediate steps to test the water, conduct aerial and ground investigations, and remove the substance with absorbent booms. The agencies coordinated closely with Kern County Public Health and other local water providers, including East Niles Community Services District and North of the River Municipal Water District/Oildale Mutual Water Company. All water providers continue to monitor to confirm their treated water remains safe to use and drink.

“Protecting our customers’ health and safety is our highest priority, and we took a number of steps as a precautionary measure to reduce our intake from the Kern River. Additionally, the water is treated before it enters the distribution system, and our regular water quality testing regimen would have identified if there were any issues arising from this situation that affected the water being delivered to customers,” said Tammy Johnson, District Manager of Cal Water’s Bakersfield District, which also operates the City of Bakersfield system. “We will continue to monitor our systems and would inform our customers immediately if there is ever any acute risk to public health.”

“Although there is no acute risk to public health, in the spirit of transparency, the coordinating agencies all believed it was important to notify the public of the situation and efforts to resolve it,” said Joe Conroy, City of Bakersfield Public Information Officer. “We will continue to work together until the issue in the river has been resolved.”

Officials ask that if anyone saw or knows of an unusual event in the Kern River near the Hart Park area recently that may have caused this situation, please contact Kern County Public Health at [eh@kerncounty.com](mailto:eh@kerncounty.com) or the City of Bakersfield at [prevention@bakersfieldfire.us](mailto:prevention@bakersfieldfire.us).

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- Kern County Water Agency, Tracy Leach, 661-327-1698, [tracy@provconsult.com](mailto:tracy@provconsult.com)
- City of Bakersfield, Joe Conroy, 661-326-3074, [jconroy@bakersfieldcity.us](mailto:jconroy@bakersfieldcity.us)
- Bakersfield Fire Department, Tim Ortiz, 661-326-3688, [tortiz@bakersfieldfire.us](mailto:tortiz@bakersfieldfire.us)
- California Water Service, Tammy Johnson, 661-837-7200, [tajohnson@calwater.com](mailto:tajohnson@calwater.com)
- East Niles Community Services District, Tim Ruiz, 661-871-2011, [truiz@eastnilescsd.org](mailto:truiz@eastnilescsd.org)
- North of the River Municipal Water District/Oildale Mutual Water Company, Ryan Nunneley, 661-399-5516, [rnunneley@oildalewater.com](mailto:rnunneley@oildalewater.com)