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## **Refugio State Beach Slated to Reopen July 17: *All Major Santa Barbara County Beaches Will Now Be Open Post-Oil Spill***

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIF. (July 10, 2015) – Refugio State Beach, the last of two major public beaches closed for oil spill cleanup, is slated to reopen Fri., July 17 at noon, according to California State Parks officials.

“We’re obviously excited to get the park open again,” said California State Park Superintendent Eric Hjelstrom. California State Parks and members of the Unified Command completed a site assessment of the popular state beach and deemed it safe for the public. All recreational activities, including swimming, camping and fishing, can resume. The park is booked the rest of the summer for camping, as is El Cápitan State Beach since it reopened June 26.

Small, less-frequented pocket beaches between Refugio and El Cápitan (Las Flores and Venedito beaches), which are only accessible at low tide, as well as an area north of Refugio will remain closed for final cleanup work, but the closures will not affect beachgoers or campers, the state park mentioned in a statement.

Although only 4 miles of Santa Barbara County’s more than 100 miles of [coastline](#) were closed by the May 19 spill, high-profile coverage of the two temporarily closed state park beaches has caused some confusion in the marketplace, according to Kathy Janega-Dykes, president & CEO of Visit Santa Barbara. The affected beaches are actually located in the Gaviota region, some 20 miles north of the city of Santa Barbara.

“Santa Barbara’s visitor industry is very pleased to reach this major milestone in the beach recovery process,” said Janega-Dykes. “We’ve been getting the word out that Santa Barbara beaches are beautiful and safe, and related businesses are open for business. But publicity about the remaining closed beach area some 20 miles north of Santa Barbara has caused misconceptions among some potential visitors. We want to remind consumers that the visitor experience in the American Riviera® is as fantastic as ever, and they should move forward with any vacation plans.”

Water and seafood have remained safe throughout the cleanup. Dr. Takashi Wada, director of Santa Barbara County’s Public Health Department, said, “All open beaches are safe for the public. The Public Health Department has received air and water tests results on a regular basis since the initial oil spill incident and a team of public health experts continues to monitor conditions.” In addition, “because there is no ongoing release at the incident site, it is unlikely that water quality will be affected by this incident at a later date in time,” Dr. Wada said in a [statement](#).

Since the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) quickly imposed fishing restrictions in the affected spill areas, sustainable seafood served at local restaurants never posed a health risk. The CDFW lifted the fishing closure in Santa Barbara County on June 29, following official notification from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) that there was no human health threat present in finfish and shellfish. “After collecting and testing numerous species of finfish, shellfish and other invertebrate species from the Refugio spill zone, we found there is no oil-related public health hazard from consuming seafood from the Santa Barbara area,” said Sam Delson, OEHHA’s deputy director for external and legislative affairs.

News of the reopening sparked further excitement as Santa Barbara, located just 92 miles north of Los Angeles, heads into the final weekend of its signature annual watersports event, [Semana Nautica](#). This weekend’s festivities include the California Beach Volleyball Association (CBVA) Men’s Open Volleyball Tournament, Mullen and Henzell One Mile Ocean Swim and Krazy Kardboard Kayak Race on Saturday, and Sunday programs include a Reg Richardson Masters Swim Meet, CBVA Women’s Open Volleyball Tournament on the beach, 3-Mile Ocean Swim and Sea Shell & Sabot Sail Boat Races for Kids (ages 8-13).

Visitors looking to get out on the water this summer can enjoy everything from surfing and paddle boarding to kayaking. Santa Barbara boasts some of the [best surf breaks and stand up paddle board zones](#) along the West Coast. They can choose from a variety of other [water activities](#), such as sailing, scuba diving, recreational fishing and a day trip to the [Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary](#) – the “Galapagos of North America” – where they can kayak in sea caves, hike and catch a glimpse of more than 150 species of migrating whales, dolphins, marine mammals and pelagic birds.

Recently voted “[Best Beach Town](#)” by [Sunset magazine](#) in its inaugural travel awards, Santa Barbara offers more than a day at the beach, from great arts and culture and family attractions to world-famous wine and food. For more reasons to visit this summer, click [here](#).

## **ABOUT SANTA BARBARA**

Featured on the cover of *Travel + Leisure* in May 2013, Santa Barbara is located just 92 miles north of Los Angeles and 332 miles south of San Francisco, on the Pacific coastline. Visitors can arrive via scenic Highway 101, train, bus or by flying into Santa Barbara Municipal Airport or Los Angeles International Airport. For travel and accommodation information and to request a free copy of the official *Santa Barbara Visitors Magazine*, contact Visit Santa Barbara at (800) 676-1266 or (805) 966-9222, email [tourism@santabarbaraca.com](mailto:tourism@santabarbaraca.com) or visit [SantaBarbaraCA.com](http://SantaBarbaraCA.com). Visitor information is also available at the Visitor Center, 1 Garden St. (at Cabrillo Boulevard).

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**Photo info:**

File name: Haskell's Beach\_1\_photoDanielleMethmann

Photo credit: Photo courtesy of Visit Santa Barbara / Danielle Methmann

**Caption: Family recently enjoying Haskell's Beach in Goleta, down the coast from Refugio State Beach, which is set to reopen July 17. All other major Santa Barbara County beaches are open.**

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** Destination images are available at <http://www.santabarbaraca.com/media-gallery/media/>. Additional recent images from Goleta and Santa Barbara beaches are also available upon request.