CLEAN Waters

CLEAN Waters is a post-fire water testing project with the aim of quickly evaluating and communicating the levels of contamination in Los Angeles' beaches, ocean, rivers, and streams after the 2025 wildfires.

Research Goals

Assess Risks at Beaches

Measuring metals, nutrients, and chemicals to track fire-related health and environmental hazards.

Isolate Impacts of Fires

Evaluate whether identified risks are due to the fires or normal variability.

Identify Contaminant Sources

Follow contamination as it travels from burn zones to the ocean to guide recovery.

Our Scope

We've collected over **400 samples** from **28 locations**—including coastal beaches and inland bodies of water. We are testing for **heavy metals**, **nutrients**, and **chemicals.**
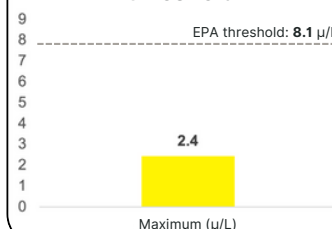

Findings as of November 2025

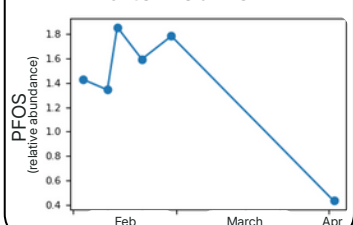We are still learning **how rain brings contaminants from source to coast.**

Low Contamination

Some contaminants rose after the fire but soon dropped back to safe levels. All are now below EPA thresholds.

Maximum lead value recorded was 3.4x below threshold

EPA threshold: **8.1 μ/L**

2.4

Maximum (μ/L)

PFOS at Santa Monica Pier declined sharply after Feb '25

PFOS (relative abundance)

Feb   March   Apr

Little Evidence of Fire Impacts

Nutrients that feed marine life were low after the fires and rose in the spring when deep ocean water came to the surface ("upwelling"), suggesting the fires had little effect.

Nutrients changed with the seasons, not the fires

Ammonia (μM)

Light blue = rain

Rainfall (in)

Feb   March   Apr