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Martin Finucane | March 15, 2019

## Federal government files suit against Quincy over alleged sewage discharge

The federal government is suing Quincy, alleging that the city is violating the federal Clean Water Act by discharging sewage and untreated wastewater from its sanitary and storm sewers into the ocean and local waterways, the US attorney's office said Friday.

"The Clean Water Act is designed to protect the waters of the United States for the health and enjoyment of its citizens. This complaint demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that our waters and beaches are protected from discharges such as raw sewage and seeks to require that the City of Quincy take the important and necessary steps to do so," US Attorney Andrew E. Lelling said in a statement.

Quincy Mayor Thomas P. Koch said at a news conference, "Quite frankly, I'm outraged by this action." He said the city had spent tens of millions of dollars over the past decade to address sewer issues and had been in the process of working with the US Environmental Protection Agency, "meeting on these issues time and time again."

"I don't believe the EPA is being reasonable. I think it's federal government overreach," he said, noting that he was pondering countersuing the government.

The civil complaint alleges that water quality samples from 2009 through 2018 showed that Quincy discharged pollutants, including the



The civil complaint alleges that water quality samples from 2009 through 2018 showed that Quincy discharged pollutants onto Quincy beaches and tidal areas, the US attorney's office said. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2015

bacteria *E. coli* and *Enterococcus*, onto Quincy beaches and tidal areas, the US attorney's office said.

Water samples from Quincy Bay, Sagamore Creek, Town Brook, Town River Bay, and Furnace Brook from the period 2009 through 2013 showed the discharge of ammonia, surfactants, and pharmaceutical compounds, the US attorney's office said.

The government attorneys also allege that the city's sanitary sewer system overflowed on numerous occasions, resulting in discharges of sewage and untreated wastewater.

"This complaint represents a critical step in the ongoing cleanup of Boston Harbor and nearby urban rivers," Deb Szaro, acting regional administrator of EPA's New England region, said in the statement. "EPA is committed to ensuring the restoration of Boston

Harbor and addressing sewage discharges in local communities continues in order to protect public health and clean water."

Koch said, "There's been a long history of the city doing the right thing here," but he was concerned that the EPA wanted the city to commit "tens and tens of millions of dollars over the next decade."

"The reality is there's been great improvement. We'll continue down that road, but I believe the lawsuit and what the EPA wants is far too aggressive for the city of Quincy and the residents to afford," he said.

Koch was joined at the news conference by Massachusetts US Representative Stephen Lynch.

"I think the efforts have been genuine, they've been earnest, to deal with some of the environmental issues here in Quincy," Lynch said. "I wish the EPA had shown a little bit of patience and also some contact with me."

"I ask the EPA, let's sit down, let's suspend this lawsuit. Let's sit down and work together. We can figure a way forward," he said.

Bruce Berman, spokesman for Save the Harbor Save the Bay, said, "Clean water is a core family value here in the Bay State. And I'm absolutely confident that Quincy and the EPA and the Department of Justice will come to an understanding that will continue the trajectory toward clean water."