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Russian Government Aims to Reopen Black Sea Beaches by June After Oil Spill Cleanup

March 27, 2026



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The Russian government hopes to reopen beaches along the southern Black Sea coast this summer as cleanup efforts from the December 2024 oil spill near completion, officials said Friday.

Swimming has been banned around the resort city of Anapa in the Krasnodar region since thousands of metric tons of heavy fuel oil, known as mazut, washed ashore after two tankers were damaged in a winter storm in the nearby Kerch Strait.

Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Savelyev said Friday that more than 90% of the spilled fuel had been removed from beaches and the surrounding water, adding that satellites had not detected any new slicks in the Black Sea since the start of this year.

Savelyev said technical crews will use special pumps to extract fuel that remains in one of the

ships that sank during the accident. That pumping operation is expected to conclude by the end of May, he added.

“If everything goes according to plan, we’ll open the beaches to our citizens by June 1,” Savelyev said during a meeting of the federal government commission tasked with overseeing the cleanup efforts.

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Authorities will continue to monitor pollution levels throughout the summer to ensure no new potential fuel leaks endanger the safety of beachgoers, the Russian government said in a statement.

Russia’s consumer health and safety agency Rospotrebnador has so far declared eight pebble beaches in the Krasnodar region as safe to visit.

A decision is still pending on whether to reopen roughly 40 kilometers (25 miles) of sandy coastline, where most hotels and resorts are located.

A federal-level emergency remains in place over the December 2024 oil spill, with cleanup efforts continuing in other impacted areas.

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