

RIVIERA MAYA THREATENED BY SEVERE POLLUTION



Recent environmental study in the famous Mexican resort Riviera Maya uncovered severe pollution of local waters and local authorities are urged to take action in order to save the area as well as its main source of income, tourism.

A rather diverse selection of pollutants has been discovered in the waters of one of Mexico's most popular tourist sites, the 'Riviera Maya' south of Cancun. Professor Chris D. Metcalfe, from Trent University, recently conducted a very profound research, finding traces of pharmaceuticals, pesticides, cocaine, as well as several other chemicals in the aquifer beneath the area. His study is part of the Caribbean Pollution project and was published by the journal Environmental Pollution.

The study also examined waters in local system of caves, which flow to the Caribbean Sea. **Local coral reefs have been suffering too as over the past two decades**, nearly half of them died. Identifying the main sources of pollution is the key to fighting for a better and cleaner environment. Researchers are quite clear about one of the sources: local pit latrines and septic tanks. The public wastewater treatment systems serve only 1/3 of the country and the remaining, private ones are insufficient and leak, thus polluting the soil and aquifer.

Local golf course is also responsible for pesticide contamination; the coastal waters are threatened by overfishing as well as rising water temperatures. Environment experts also worry about the predicted tenfold increase in local population.

The outcome of the study is ringing all alarm bells and local authorities need to act swiftly, to better monitor and prevent further pollution. **An unhealthy and damaged environment would not be compatible with local tourist reputation** and the country would lose a major source of income from this popular area.

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