

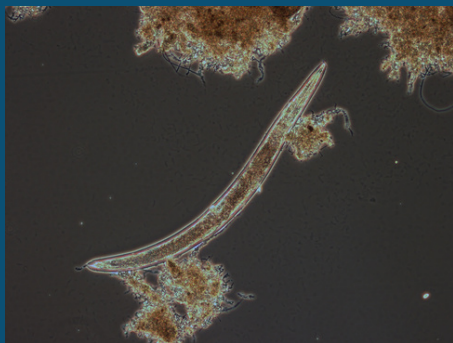
WASTEWATER BUG SPOTLIGHT

NEMATODE

Nematodes are small, worm-like metazoans that thrive in wastewater treatment processes when dissolved oxygen concentrations are high and food is abundant. Nematodes can be found in aerobic habitats and bio-rich soils and find their way to the El Estero Water Resource Center through the wastewater collection system pipelines.

Nematodes perform several supportive roles, not only in the overall biological stabilization of the wastewater itself, but also in the infrastructure of the treatment plant. Nematodes break loose portions of naturally occurring biofilms that coat plant filters by burrowing or tunneling into them. This results in reduced filter clogging as well as allowing oxygen to penetrate into the depths of the biofilm, which increases overall aerobic microbial growth and degradation of organic wastes.

Fun fact: nematodes had a starring role in the Nickelodeon cartoon *SpongeBob SquarePants*, where they were aptly portrayed as insatiably hungry herds of worms that ate *SpongeBob*'s iconic pineapple house in the episode "Home Sweet Pineapple."



Nematodes found under the microscope at the City's El Estero Water Resource Center,



El Estero
WATER RESOURCE CENTER

For more information on
wastewater treatment visit
www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/ElEstero