



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 2, 2009
Media Contact: Deb Self, (510) 882-1882 (c)

A New Wave of Legal Action to Stop Sewage Spills to the Bay

Baykeeper Files Three New Lawsuits, Investigates Next Targets

(Bay Area, CA) San Francisco Baykeeper filed three new lawsuits today to prevent sewage spills to San Francisco Bay from the City of Millbrae, the City of San Carlos and the West Bay Sanitation District. Baykeeper's lawsuits against the South Bay entities are the latest in a string of Clean Water Act enforcement cases designed to improve wastewater management throughout the Bay Area.

Over the past ten years, Baykeeper has brought lawsuits to rein in sewage spills from treatment facilities and sewer systems owned by the Cities of Vallejo, Burlingame and Richmond, as well as the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). In this newest round of the organization's "Sick of Sewage" campaign, Baykeeper's legal actions are targeting cities with dilapidated sewage collection systems and high rates of upland spills from broken pipes. According to Baykeeper's research, the cities' own records reveal that thousands of gallons of sewage have spilled in violation of clean water laws over the past five years.

Untreated sewage, as well as sewage that has undergone partial treatment, contains pathogens and other pollutants that can cause a variety of illnesses in humans that come into contact with contaminated water and can poison the Bay's food web and local wildlife.

"Bay Area cities have been able to pass the buck from one administration to the next by deferring maintenance of old sewage pipes. Baykeeper is determined to protect South Bay beaches and sloughs from sewage contamination," said Baykeeper Executive Director Deb Self. "The release of untreated sewage near Bair Island, Corkscrew Slough and other favorite recreation areas is a public health nuisance that shouldn't be tolerated any longer."

As Baykeeper launches this new round of sewage litigation, its previous efforts are bearing fruit. In response to Baykeeper's previous legal actions against EBMUD, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board recently issued individual regulatory permits to the Cities of Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont and Stege Sanitary District (the so-called "satellite systems" that send waste to EBMUD). These new permits allow regulators and the public to better track sewage spills and to hold individual cities accountable for leaky systems that contribute excessive flows to EBMUD's overextended treatment facilities.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has now taken action against the satellite systems, finding them to be in violation of the Clean Water Act and requiring a new round of inspections and sewage system repairs. Baykeeper supports the recent enforcement actions to help stop East Bay sewage spills but says it is investigating whether additional legal action may be necessary to ensure East Bay cities are keeping sewage out of the Bay.

San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay's pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to enforce clean water laws and hold polluters accountable. For more information, visit us at www.baykeeper.org. ####



Pollution hotline: 1 800 KEEP BAY
www.baykeeper.org

785 Market Street, Suite 850
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel (415) 856-0444
Fax (415) 856-0443