



**California Sportfishing
Protection Alliance**

"An Advocate for Fisheries, Habitat and Water Quality"



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Flawed Regulations Allow Polluted Runoff from Dairies

Groups assert that polluting dairies must be regulated under the federal clean water act

(San Francisco, CA) February 15, 2008 -- Environmental groups today challenged the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Board's flawed regulation of dairy operations in the Central Valley. The Regional Board recently issued permits that do not adequately protect the Valley's waterways from pollution caused by large dairy operations and do not comply with the federal Clean Water Act.

"Dairies in the Central Valley are a significant source of pollution and should be required to comply with the federal clean water act," said Sejal Choksi, Program Director with San Francisco Baykeeper. "Given the declining health of our Delta and Central Valley waters, there is no excuse for why the Regional Board isn't using all the tools on hand to control harmful pollution from over 1,600 dairies."

Three million cows in the Central Valley create as much polluted waste as a 20 million-person city. Runoff from these dairies contains raw manure and harmful chemicals, including bovine growth hormones and antibiotics, which severely pollute groundwater, creeks and canals throughout the Central Valley. The environmental groups have long advocated for an enforceable *federal* permit restricting pollution from mega-dairies. But now, the Central Valley Regional Water Board has proposed a lax pollution permit for existing dairies under *state law*. These inadequate state permits, known as Waste Discharge Requirements, make no provisions for citizen participation or oversight and rely extensively on the dairies regulating themselves.

"Given the degraded state of California's waterways and collapsing salmon and pelagic fisheries, the Regional Board action to exempt dairies from mandated federal pollution control requirements is both inexcusable and outrageous," said Bill Jennings, Executive Director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance. "Dairies are a massive source of water pollution and industry self-regulation has never worked and never will. It's time for the Regional Board to show as much concern for water quality and fisheries as it has for polluters."

If successful, the groups' legal challenge will require that the Regional Board make revisions to the existing permit that include federal effluent limitations and other Clean Water Act limitations and water quality protections. Once the permit is properly implemented under both state and federal law, it will ensure that the public will have access to the dairies' monitoring and sampling records.

"The people of California have a right to expect state regulators to do their job," said Sierra Club representative Terry Davis. "Pollution from these mega-dairies is a threat to public health; this industry will not police itself."

The organizations bringing suit are San Francisco Baykeeper, the Sierra Club, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance and Waterkeeper Alliance. They petitioned the State Water Board last summer to reject the Central Valley's inadequate regulations, but the State Water Board declined to hear the contentious issue thus prompting the groups to sue.

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