



*Defending Our Waters—from the
High Sierra to the Golden Gate*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2006

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City of Richmond Pledges to Clean Up its Sewage System

Richmond, CA (October 18, 2006). In a huge victory for both Richmond residents and the San Francisco Bay, the City of Richmond announced today bold measures to clean up its outdated sewage system. The effort is the result of months of negotiations brought on after Baykeeper and Richmond-based West County Toxics Coalition sued the City for spilling hundreds of thousands of gallons of raw sewage every year.

Over the last three years, Richmond has spilled more than 17 million gallons of sewage in or near tributaries that empty into the San Francisco Bay. Raw sewage overflows into homes and streets as the result of disintegrating pipes, clogs due to tree roots and grease, and insufficient capacity to contain and treat the waste.

“We’re thrilled that the City is ready to do what it takes to stop this environmental and health disaster,” says Deb Self, Associate Director of Baykeeper. “Richmond currently has one of the highest spill rates in the state, but we’re optimistic that they will soon have one of the lowest.”

Other defendants named in the suit were Richmond’s wastewater management agencies West County Wastewater District (“West County”), West County Agency and Veolia Water North America Operating Services.

Clean up measures to be undertaken include the following:

- **Spill rate reduction.** The sewer system overhauls will have a tremendous impact on sewage spills. Over the next ten years, Richmond has agreed to reduce its number of sewage spills by 90 percent, while West County will reduce its spill rate by two-thirds.
- **Capital Improvements.** Richmond and West County will spend \$25 million on capital improvements to sewage collection systems.

(more)



Pollution hotline: 1-800 KEEP BAY
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- **Private Lateral Sewer Replacement Program.** Richmond and the wastewater agencies will spend \$3.5 million over the next ten years to provide private residents and businesses up to \$3,000 to replace or fix the privately owned pipes that connect homes and businesses to the City's main sewer lines.
- **Sewer Rate Assistance Program.** Over the next five years, Richmond will spend \$311,000 on rebates to low income residents for sewer rate increases needed to fix Richmond's sewer system.
- **Storm Water Pollution Controls.** Richmond will begin requiring new means of controlling polluted runoff from new residential developments, and will retrofit the existing storm water system to control pollution discharges where feasible--making Richmond a Bay Area leader in storm water pollution control.
- **Environmental Project Funding.** Richmond will contribute an additional \$355,000 to improve water quality in the Bay Area.

“The settlement and benefits are a major Environmental Justice victory for Richmond and West Contra Costa County residents; residents will not have to worry about sewage backing up in their houses nor in the streets,” says West County Toxic Coalition’s Henry Clark. “It shows how important leadership and organization are to promoting a clean, green, and safe environment.”

“The City of Richmond takes very seriously its commitment to the environment,” says Bill Lindsay, Richmond City Manager. “We’re pleased to have developed an ambitious, yet achievable, plan to improve our wastewater system that can serve as a model for other communities.”

Baykeeper is a non-profit environmental watchdog dedicated to protecting the water quality of the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary and its tributaries for the benefit of its ecosystems and human communities. West County Toxic Coalition is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect against toxic threats the communities of West Contra Costa County.

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