



Baykeeper Secures Agreement from San Carlos to Invest Millions in Preventing Sewage Spills

Pollution watchdog also files suit against San Bruno

Contact: Jason Flanders, Baykeeper Staff Attorney
(o) 415-856-0444 x106
(c) 916-202-3018
jason@baykeeper.org

(Bay Area, CA) February 23, 2010

Frequent sewage spills in San Carlos will soon be reduced through a new agreement with San Francisco Baykeeper to make substantial improvements to sewage operations. The pollution watchdog group sued the City in December after investigations revealed that San Carlos spills thousands of gallons of raw sewage from its sewer lines every year in violation of the federal Clean Water Act.

“We’re very pleased to have quickly reached a cooperative agreement with San Carlos to prevent sewage contamination in the Bay and in local neighborhoods,” said Jason Flanders, Staff Attorney for San Francisco Baykeeper. “The City will now be taking the right steps to immediately protect the health of our waterways and San Carlos residents. Taking care of long-deferred repairs to the system will ultimately save the City money, as well.”

The consent decree, approved by the San Carlos City Council on Monday, will result in substantial improvements to the city’s sewage infrastructure within the next seven years, with an emphasis on fixing the worst problems immediately. The City has agreed to spend tens of millions of dollars to make collection system improvements and undertake a study to identify capacity problems. The City will also invest \$200,000 in funding for projects to help restore the water quality of the San Francisco Bay watershed.

“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 the Bay 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.”

Baykeeper filed two related lawsuits in December against the neighboring City of Millbrae and the West Bay Sanitation District. Those cases are still being prosecuted.

Baykeeper also announced that it filed a new lawsuit today against the City of San Bruno to address that City’s significant sewage spill problem. The Regional Water Quality Control Board recently issued a significant penalty to San Bruno for its violations but sought no repairs or upgrades to the City’s sewage system. Baykeeper’s lawsuit aims to compel the City to undertake an aggressive inspection and repair program to dramatically reduce its sewage spills.

Last month, Baykeeper also joined the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's judicial action against six East Bay cities and one sewage district (Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont and Stege Sanitary District) that feed into the massive sewage treatment plant owned by East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD).

In the last month, heavy storms caused multiple sewage spills and treatment facility overflows that polluted waterways and beaches. Since January 14, Bay Area municipalities have reported more than 12 million gallons of sewage spilled from 143 sewer system failures. In addition, more than 170 million gallons of undertreated sewage overflowed from EBMUD's wet weather facilities in Richmond and Oakland. Attached is a map showing some of the sewage spills, overflows and beach closures from across the region.

Untreated sewage and under-treated sewage 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.

Baykeeper's Clean Water Act enforcement cases are 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 Vallejo, Richmond, Burlingame, Hillsborough, Burlingame Hills and EBMUD.

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. ###