

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
State Water Resources Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 15, 2008
SWRCB 08-004

Contact: Public Affairs
916-341-5354

**STATE WATER BOARD UPGRADES PERMITTING PROCESS
TO AID STATE CLEAN WATER EFFORT**

SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) today approved a policy standardizing permit compliance with state and federal water quality laws. The change will provide uniform procedures for designing and enforcing compliance schedules in permits. The uniform compliance schedules are intended to ensure that wastewater being returned to California's rivers and streams meets the latest and highest quality standards.

The State Water Board's new policy will ensure that compliance schedules in permits are issued under uniform standards and enforcement, statewide. This will provide for improved water quality, while saving California businesses money and time. According to Water Board Chair Tam M. Doduc, "This uniform policy will protect California waterways because the procedures are the same across the state. It will make the process easier to understand and manage."

Alexis Strauss, director of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Water Division in San Francisco said, "EPA strongly supports having a comprehensive policy for compliance schedules that will apply statewide. Having one policy applicable throughout California will promote both consistency and certainty among the Regional Boards and the permittees. We are also pleased with the amount of detail in the policy, which should ensure compliance schedules are used only when appropriate and consistent with EPA regulations."

Compliance schedules are a discretionary regulatory tool to help companies and public waste water treatment systems that discharge water into state and federal waters meet changes in pollution control standards. The state issues National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to each of these regulated entities. The U.S. EPA authorizes the State Water Board and the nine regional water boards to issue these permits. A compliance schedule in the permit allows a discharger time to change procedures or operations, as well as finance and construct facilities to meet changes in water quality standards.

The new, uniform policy does not reduce either the State water Board's authority to enforce clean water standards, or public input to the NPDES permitting process. The statewide policy will provide consistency and make better use of both stakeholder and Water Board resources by providing clear guidance on the appropriate use of compliance schedules in NPDES permits.