

## **State Water Board To Solicit Public Comments on Proposed Septic Systems Policy**

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Septic systems, or onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS), make a modern, rural lifestyle possible.

And, most of the time, they do a good job. More than 1.3 million septic systems are buried beneath the foothills, valleys, and fields of California. But in some areas of the state they can be a problem.

Septic systems can be a serious threat to human health and to aquatic life. They can leach sewage, which may carry nitrates (nutrients) and dangerous pathogens into ground waters and nearby drinking water wells. Septic systems that are located too close to streams, creeks and rivers can pollute the waters of the state and harm aquatic life.

As the agency responsible for protecting the quality of our State's surface and groundwaters, the State Water Board is required by law to adopt statewide standards to make sure septic systems protect human health and water quality. During October and November, State Water Board staff conducted eight public workshop sessions in four locations throughout California to take public comment on the new proposed OWTS (septic systems) policy.

This proposed policy creates a statewide framework to guide Regional Water Quality Control Boards and local public health agencies on how to manage septic systems that pose the greatest risk to human health and aquatic life.

This proposed policy does not affect most property owners who currently own septic systems. It will primarily affect property owners who live near water bodies identified as impaired with pathogens and nitrates.

The State Water Board has an informative website with the proposed policy, fact sheets, a video, and other tools to help area residents determine if this proposed policy will affect them.

By visiting the septic systems website at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/septic tanks> residents can use an interactive address locator or web mapping tool (*similar to a Google map*) to determine whether they may be affected by the new standards, and to identify the presence of nutrient - or pathogen-impaired waters near their property.

This policy is dramatically different from the draft septic system regulations that were proposed in 2008 in its overall approach and in how it addresses existing and future septic systems.

The State Water Board listened to the public comments and concerns about the 2008 draft regulations, and the staff went back to the drawing board. This policy should address most of the concerns.

The proposed statewide policy is designed to address large, known problems. It is not meant to complicate the lives of rural residents who depend on their properly operating septic systems that are not posing a risk to human health or aquatic life.

The goal for this policy is clean water for all state residents -- not over-regulation.

**San Luis Obispo Tribune**

<http://www.sanluisobispo.com/2011/10/20/1804502/viewpoint-septic-concerns-find.html>

**Redding Record-Searchlight**

<http://www.redding.com/news/2011/oct/24/tom-howard-new-septic-rules-offer-relief-for/>

**Santa Rosa Press Democrat**

<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20111101/WIRE/111109962/1307/opinion?Title=GUEST-OPINION-Feedback-wanted-on-new-septic-rules>