



For Immediate Release
May 28, 2008

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State Announces Proposal to Improve Water Boards' Enforcement and Efficiency

SACRAMENTO—The State Water Board announced today a comprehensive proposal to improve the California Water Boards to work more efficiently in protecting California's most valuable natural resource – water.

"These reforms will allow the Water Boards to provide more protection with existing resources," said Tam Doduc, chair of the State Water Boards.

The proposed initiative would improve efficiency of the Regional Water Boards to speed up administrative actions that lead to improved water quality. The amendments also would enhance environmental enforcement to streamline the process to issue and collect penalties for illegal pollution.

The State Water Board is releasing a comprehensive Water Quality Improvement Initiative which includes administrative and statutory changes. Key highlights from the comprehensive Initiative include:

- Improves the ability to recruit and retain quality regional board members by reducing number of members on each Regional Water Board from nine to seven. Regional Board chairs would be selected by the Governor and would serve on a full-time basis, the remaining members would continue to serve part-time.
- Speeds up the Regional Boards' regulatory activities by delegating the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting decisions to the Regional Board Executive Officers.
- Increases Water Board consistency and performance by creating a new, formal process to identify and address inconsistencies and by requiring the Boards to set performance targets for water quality improvements; and to report their progress to the Legislature and Governor every two years.

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- Expedites the cumbersome adoption process for water quality standards (Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs) by eliminating unnecessary state reviews of Regional Board decisions, making the environmental review of these actions consistent with federal Clean Water Act requirements.
- Conforms Water Board conflict-of-interest rules with those that apply to other state officials to cut through regulatory red tape that prohibits the Boards' subject-matter experts from participating in key decisions.
- Provide significant enhancements to Water Board water quality capabilities, including:
 - Establishes new penalties for submitting false information and removing unnecessary barriers to prompt, effective enforcement actions.
 - Improves the equitable implementation of the Mandatory Minimum Penalty law for small, disadvantaged communities.
 - Authorizes District Attorneys and City Attorneys for cities with a population of 750,000 or more, at the request of the Water Boards, to seek civil liability for water quality violations.

The statutory proposals are subject to approval by the Legislature and signature by the Governor. However some changes already have been made administratively, including requiring speedier reporting of sewage spills and certification to water boards that first responders have been notified.

For a complete listing of the Water Quality Improvement Initiative proposals, go to www.calepa.ca.gov.

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