



Media Release

State Water Board Approves Low Risk Underground Storage Tank Policy

Effort Intended to Speed Reuse of Former Sites, Focus on Environmental Threats

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Sacramento – The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) today unanimously approved a resolution establishing a Low Risk Underground Storage Tank (UST) Policy that sets criteria for closing former leaking tank site locations statewide where cleanup has occurred and monitoring indicates the sites are stable and ready for reuse.

The policy is the result of a multi-disciplinary stakeholder group made up of environmentalists, the petroleum industry and regulators that met through 2011 on this issue.

“It is important that through extensive stakeholder involvement, we took the time to build the scientific basis that the policy is based on,” said State Water Board Chairman Charles R. Hoppin. “The policy will allow us to focus our resources on the greatest threats to our groundwater resources.”

To date more than 35,000 UST locations have been identified, cleaned up and returned to use since the program began in 1984. These are “closed” sites. Some 8,000 UST locations remain in various stages of investigation and cleanup. These are “open” sites. Approximately 50 percent of the open sites have been open for more than 15 years.

The policy establishes uniform statewide criteria for the evaluation of leaking petroleum sites. This policy only applies to sites that have been cleaned up, where there has been sufficient monitoring to show that any remaining petroleum contamination has stabilized and will not migrate into domestic or municipal water supply wells, streams or rivers. At some of these sites, clean-up activities occurred years ago.

Twenty five years of experience with leaking underground tank sites has taught us that petroleum naturally breaks down as it interacts with micro-organisms in the soil. This natural biodegradation of the petroleum remaining after the cleanup activities cease will continue to occur and not pose a risk to the environment.

For more information on the proposed policy adopted by the board, please visit:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ust/lt_cls_plcy.shtml





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For information on the Underground Storage Tank Program, please visit:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ust/

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