

## **Baykeeper, EPA Reach Agreement in Sewage Lawsuit Against Seven East Bay Cities**

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(Bay Area, CA) San Francisco Baykeeper, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Water Boards today announced an agreement in a lawsuit over illegal sewage spills by seven East Bay municipalities. The resulting enforceable Court Order requires major improvements to the sewage collection systems of Oakland, Emeryville, Piedmont, Berkeley, Alameda, Albany, and the Stege Sanitary District, which serves Kensington, El Cerrito and the Richmond Annex section of Richmond.

EPA brought the judicial action in December 2009 and Baykeeper joined the suit as part of its long-term effort to hold East Bay cities accountable for their polluting sewage collection systems. During every significant rain event, the cities' sewer pipes are inundated with rainwater and send massive amounts of rainwater mixed with raw sewage to the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) treatment plant, which is forced to discharge the mixture to the Bay before it is fully treated.

The Court Order requires the cities to develop individual plans for repairing and operating their sewage pipes. "We're very pleased with the agreement, but on-the-ground work remains to be done," said Baykeeper's Staff Attorney Jason Flanders, who participated in the negotiations. He says Baykeeper, a Bay pollution advocacy group, aims to ensure that the cities' timetables for repairs are aggressive and that the fixes are a successful in stopping spills.

Undertreated sewage contains pathogens and other pollutants that can cause a variety of illnesses in humans who come into contact with contaminated water and can poison the Bay's food web and local wildlife. Since September, so much rain has seeped into broken city-owned sewer lines that EBMUD has released more than 125 million gallons of undertreated sewage to San Francisco Bay. According to government data, the Bay Area is responsible for over a third of the California's sewage spills.

Baykeeper Executive Director Deb Self characterized the East Bay's sewage spills as more than a public nuisance. "Sewage spills are an environmental justice issue," she said. "East Bay residents need immediate relief from contaminated creeks, beaches and parks. Raw sewage just shouldn't be a major public health threat in the Bay Area."

In addition to this action against seven East Bay municipalities, Baykeeper has brought and settled nine prior suits against Bay Area cities to compel what it calls long-overdue repairs to sewage infrastructure. As a result of the organization's Sick of Sewage campaign, the Cities of Richmond, Vallejo, South San Francisco, Millbrae, San Carlos, Burlingame, Hillsborough and Burlingame Hills and EBMUD are upgrading their systems under consent decrees with Baykeeper, while cases against San Bruno and the West Bay Sanitation District (which serves large portions of San Mateo County) are still active.

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*San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay's pollution watchdog, using science, advocacy and litigation to protect and restore San Francisco Bay. For more information, visit us at [www.baykeeper.org](http://www.baykeeper.org).*