

PRESS RELEASE

January 12, 2012

Contact: Deb Self, Executive Director, San Francisco Baykeeper, 415-856-0444 x102, deb@baykeeper.org

WEST BAY AGREES TO CURB SEWAGE SPILLS TO THE BAY

Baykeeper settles long-running lawsuit against Peninsula sanitary district

San Francisco—Less sewage will be draining into San Francisco Bay from Menlo Park-based West Bay Sanitary District, San Francisco Baykeeper announced today. Baykeeper has successfully settled its long-running lawsuit against West Bay for illegal sewage spills, reaching an agreement that details the agency's efforts to curb its sewage pollution as a result of Baykeeper's suit. The Sanitary District's board of directors approved the settlement last night.

After Baykeeper brought suit under the Clean Water Act in 2009, West Bay initiated major upgrades to its antiquated sewer system in order to significantly reduce its sewage pollution to the Bay. According to the settlement agreement, Baykeeper's suit was a significant factor in West Bay's decision to implement major upgrades to its system, and the agency is committed to further upgrades in order to achieve a very low rate of sewage spills to San Francisco Bay. The settlement also requires West Bay to pay \$1.4 million to reimburse Baykeeper's attorneys' fees and expert costs and to fund third-party projects to benefit Bay water quality.

In May 2011, a U.S. District Court Judge found West Bay liable for 21 illegal sewage spills that flowed into area creeks and sloughs over the past five years, with liability on dozens of additional spills to be proven at a trial set for March, 2012.

"We're excited to have achieved our goal of reducing West Bay's pollution to San Francisco Bay," said Baykeeper Executive Director Deb Self. "West Bay used to be one of the worst-polluting sewage agencies in the Bay Area, but they have reduced their sewage spills by two-thirds since we brought suit."

According to State Water Resources Control Board records, West Bay reported more than 300 sewer spills between 2004 and 2010. As a result, more than 60,000 gallons of sewage flowed into local creeks, sloughs and city drains connected to San Francisco Bay. The sewage polluted popular recreation areas and vital spawning grounds for threatened steelhead trout.

Spills of untreated sewage contain bacteria, viruses and other pathogens. When windsurfers, swimmers, fishermen and others come in contact with water contaminated with sewage, it can cause persistent skin infections and painful stomach disorders. Sewage can also deplete oxygen in the Bay, threatening fish, seals, other sea creatures, and plant life.

West Bay Sanitary District will be making repairs to its sewer lines in Menlo Park, Atherton, Woodside, Portola Valley, East Palo Alto and unincorporated areas of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. In addition, Baykeeper is overseeing settlement agreements compelling major sewer repairs in fourteen other Bay Area cities and sewage districts: Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, Richmond, El Cerrito, Kensington, Vallejo, San Bruno, South San Francisco, Millbrae, San Carlos, Burlingame, Hillsborough and Burlingame Hills.

##

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.