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## **Agency Leaves PCB Contamination in SF Bay for Another Century**

Clean up plan relies on little more than natural erosion of the toxic pollutant

**(San Francisco, CA) February 13, 2008** - Local community and environmental health activists sharply criticized today's decision by the San Francisco Regional Water Control Board to adopt a weak clean up plan for Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in the San Francisco Bay. The Regional Board approved the plan despite strong objections from San Francisco Baykeeper, Clean Water Action, Communities for a Better Environment and Friends of Five Creeks.

The clean up plan – also known as a total maximum daily load – fails to limit PCBs pollution from wastewater, does not issue a clear roadmap for PCBs reduction in Central Valley discharges to the Bay, and does little to get rid of the PCBs that still contaminate the vast industrial landscape throughout the Bay Area. Instead, the plan is based on vague goals, unrealistic reductions in unpermitted sources, including uncontrollable stormwater runoff, and the hope that PCBs will flow out into the ocean over time. In fact, the PCBs clean up plan includes many of the same flaws contained in the mercury clean up plan that was adopted by this Regional Board in 2004 and rejected by the State Water Resources Control Board the following year.

“The plan is nothing more than a paper-pushing exercise that contains a lot of assumptions and some fuzzy math,” said Sejal Choksi, San Francisco Baykeeper Program Director. “Just like the old mercury plan, this document contains no meaningful requirements to reduce PCBs from current sources and does nothing aggressive to clean up existing pollution.”

The group vowed today to bring its concerns over the weak PCB clean up plan to the State Board.

PCBs are persistent chemicals that accumulate in the food chain, affecting shellfish and fish, and poisoning those who eat the fish. Eating PCB-contaminated fish can cause severe health problems for humans and marine mammals alike, including neurological disorders (especially in infants exposed prenatally), liver and heart damage, and cancer. PCBs levels in the blood of San Francisco Bay seals have been found to be up to three times higher than the safe threshold.

“After eight years and thousands of staff hours, it's disappointing that all this cleanup plan really requires is additional studies,” said Amy Chastain, Baykeeper staff attorney who represented the organization at today's hearing.

Though the chemical was banned in the United States in 1976, PCBs are still found in the environment in old transformers, electrical generators and even building materials such as caulk and paint. The pollutant continues to circulate in the environment, collecting in sediments in storm drains and wastewater treatment systems, where it could be removed if required by the clean up plan.

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*Founded in 1989, San Francisco Baykeeper is the Bay's pollution watchdog, using science and advocacy to reform policy and enforce clean water laws. [www.baykeeper.org](http://www.baykeeper.org)*



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