



# California Regional Water Quality Control Board

## San Francisco Bay Region



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### FACT SHEET

## PCBs in the Ettie Street Pump Station Watershed

### Oakland, California

### April, 2006

**Summary** – This Fact Sheet has been prepared to inform community members and other interested parties of the status of an on-going PCB investigation being conducted within the portion of West Oakland defined as the Ettie Street Pump Station Watershed (see reverse side for map). As part of a State-funded water quality grant project, the City of Oakland has performed visual inspections of public and private properties in the watershed, sampling of sediments (i.e., dirt and debris) in targeted areas of the public right-of-way (for this project right-of-way means streets, curbs, gutters, driveways, sidewalks, and storm drain inlets), and investigations on selected private properties based on the results of the right-of-way sampling. Varying concentrations of PCBs have been found in sediments in the right-of-way and on private properties. Plans are being implemented to remove sediments with the highest concentrations from the right-of-way, as well as to enforce cleanup of the suspected sources of the PCBs on several nearby private properties.

**Background** – The Ettie Street Pump Station is an Alameda County facility that collects and pumps storm water runoff to the San Francisco Bay. The watershed that it serves comprises approximately 2.5 square miles of West Oakland and includes residential, commercial, and industrial areas. PCBs have been previously found in sediments collecting in the Ettie Street Pump Station. PCBs from this and other stormwater systems contribute to elevated PCB levels in Bay fish, which in turn has led to a Bay fish advisory. To improve Bay water quality, the City, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Board, and County have been working with other local and state regulatory agencies to identify and subsequently remove sources of the PCBs within the watershed.

**Sampling** – The City has collected a total of 42 soil samples from a number of public right-of-way areas in front of private properties identified as potential sources of PCBs. These samples contained PCBs at concentrations ranging from 0.02 to 31.3 parts per million (ppm). Surface soil concentrations over 0.22 ppm in residential areas normally trigger further investigation, and sometimes cleanup.

The City later collected a total of 25 soil samples from private properties near locations where the right-of-way PCB concentrations exceeded 0.22 ppm. These samples contained PCBs at concentrations ranging from 0.04 to 93.4 ppm.

#### What are PCBs?

Polychlorinated biphenyls, or “PCBs”, are a group of chemicals that were used in hundreds of different commercial applications until the mid-1970s. Because of concerns about their toxicity and persistence in the environment, the production and distribution of PCBs is now prohibited. Nevertheless, PCBs are still found on many pieces of older equipment and in areas where that equipment was used.

**Health Issues** – PCBs are considered a probable carcinogen, and are believed to also have serious non-cancer health effects on the immune system, reproductive system, nervous system and endocrine system. Because the elevated PCB levels in right-of-way sediments do not appear to be widespread, and professional risk assessors under contract to the City believe that prolonged contact by people with sediments in their current locations is not likely, the PCBs are not believed to present an immediate danger to public health. Nevertheless, as part of its ongoing environmental improvement efforts in the community, the City is actively working with local, State and federal agencies to further identify the sources of the PCBs and pursue the enforcement of cleanup at private properties.

**Next steps** – Over the next several months, the City and its contractors will be performing work to:

- (1) Remove PCB sediments from public right-of-way locations with the highest PCB concentrations;
- (2) In coordination with the Oakland Fire Department, require implementation of immediate measures to reduce PCB migration from private properties to the right-of-way;
- (3) Work aggressively with local, State and federal officials to enforce cleanup at private properties confirmed to be sources of PCBs.

**Additional Information:** For details on sampling locations and results, or for any other questions, contact Mark Gomez of the City of Oakland Public Works Agency- Environmental Services Division at (510) 238-7314 (or email him at [mmgomez@oaklandnet.com](mailto:mmgomez@oaklandnet.com)).

### Map of Ettie Street Pump Station Watershed

