

State water board wants to cut back on inspections

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

California water quality regulators are considering a policy change that would end testing and cleanup of several thousand underground storage tanks that have leaked gasoline and other petroleum products.

In a draft policy circulating for comment, the staff of the State Water Resources Control Board proposes to end groundwater monitoring, investigation and further costly cleanup at sites deemed "low risk" for spreading pollution.

By doing so, the agency is trying to free scarce funds for more pressing cleanup projects as part of a strategy the state water board authorized more than a year ago.

But some regional water quality regulators say the draft policy does not protect water quality, offers little scientific backing for deciding when to stop tracking cleanup cases, and is open to misinterpretation.

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