

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 914

Introduced by Assembly Member Logue

February 26, 2009

An act to amend Section 13385 of the Water Code, relating to water quality.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 914, as introduced, Logue. Mandatory minimum civil penalties: publicly owned treatment works.

(1) Under existing law, the State Water Resources Control Board and the California regional water quality control boards prescribe waste discharge requirements in accordance with the federal Clean Water Act and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (state act). The state act, with certain exceptions, imposes a mandatory minimum penalty of \$3,000 for each serious waste discharge violation, as defined, or for certain other described violations if those violations occur 4 or more times in any period of 6 consecutive months, as prescribed. The state act authorizes the state board or a regional board to elect to require a publicly owned treatment works (POTWS) serving a small community, in lieu of assessing the mandatory minimum penalty against that POTWS, to spend an equivalent amount towards the completion of a compliance project proposed by that POTWS if certain requirements are met.

This bill would authorize the state board or a regional board to assess a penalty against a POTWS serving a small community that is less than the mandatory minimum penalty if the amount of the penalty reflects a consideration of the size of the community being served by the

POTWS, the affordability of the penalty, and the impact of the water quality violation.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 13385 of the Water Code is amended to
2 read:

3 13385. (a) Any person who violates any of the following shall
4 be liable civilly in accordance with this section:

5 (1) Section 13375 or 13376.

6 (2) Any waste discharge requirements or dredged or fill material
7 permit issued pursuant to this chapter or any water quality
8 certification issued pursuant to Section 13160.

9 (3) Any requirements established pursuant to Section 13383.

10 (4) Any order or prohibition issued pursuant to Section 13243
11 or Article 1 (commencing with Section 13300) of Chapter 5, if the
12 activity subject to the order or prohibition is subject to regulation
13 under this chapter.

14 (5) Any requirements of Section 301, 302, 306, 307, 308, 318,
15 401, or 405 of the Clean Water Act, as amended.

16 (6) Any requirement imposed in a pretreatment program
17 approved pursuant to waste discharge requirements issued under
18 Section 13377 or approved pursuant to a permit issued by the
19 administrator.

20 (b) (1) Civil liability may be imposed by the superior court in
21 an amount not to exceed the sum of both of the following:

22 ~~(1)~~

23 (A) Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for each day in
24 which the violation occurs.

25 ~~(2)~~

26 (B) Where there is a discharge, any portion of which is not
27 susceptible to cleanup or is not cleaned up, and the volume
28 discharged but not cleaned up exceeds 1,000 gallons, an additional
29 liability not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25) multiplied by the
30 number of gallons by which the volume discharged but not cleaned
31 up exceeds 1,000 gallons.

32 The

1 (2) The Attorney General, upon request of a regional board or
2 the state board, shall petition the superior court to impose the
3 liability.

4 (c) Civil liability may be imposed administratively by the state
5 board or a regional board pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing
6 with Section 13323) of Chapter 5 in an amount not to exceed the
7 sum of both of the following:

8 (1) Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each day in which the
9 violation occurs.

10 (2) Where there is a discharge, any portion of which is not
11 susceptible to cleanup or is not cleaned up, and the volume
12 discharged but not cleaned up exceeds 1,000 gallons, an additional
13 liability not to exceed ten dollars (\$10) multiplied by the number
14 of gallons by which the volume discharged but not cleaned up
15 exceeds 1,000 gallons.

16 (d) For purposes of subdivisions (b) and (c), “discharge”
17 includes any discharge to navigable waters of the United States,
18 any introduction of pollutants into a publicly owned treatment
19 works, or any use or disposal of sewage sludge.

20 (e) In determining the amount of any liability imposed under
21 this section, the regional board, the state board, or the superior
22 court, as the case may be, shall take into account the nature,
23 circumstances, extent, and gravity of the violation or violations,
24 whether the discharge is susceptible to cleanup or abatement, the
25 degree of toxicity of the discharge, and, with respect to the violator,
26 the ability to pay, the effect on its ability to continue its business,
27 any voluntary cleanup efforts undertaken, any prior history of
28 violations, the degree of culpability, economic benefit or savings,
29 if any, resulting from the violation, and other matters that justice
30 may require. At a minimum, liability shall be assessed at a level
31 that recovers the economic benefits, if any, derived from the acts
32 that constitute the violation.

33 (f) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), for the purposes of
34 this section, a single operational upset that leads to simultaneous
35 violations of more than one pollutant parameter shall be treated
36 as a single violation.

37 (2) (A) For the purposes of subdivisions (h) and (i), a single
38 operational upset in a wastewater treatment unit that treats
39 wastewater using a biological treatment process shall be treated
40 as a single violation, even if the operational upset results in

1 violations of more than one effluent limitation and the violations
2 continue for a period of more than one day, if all of the following
3 apply:

4 (i) The discharger demonstrates all of the following:

5 (I) The upset was not caused by wastewater treatment operator
6 error and was not due to discharger negligence.

7 (II) But for the operational upset of the biological treatment
8 process, the violations would not have occurred nor would they
9 have continued for more than one day.

10 (III) The discharger carried out all reasonable and immediately
11 feasible actions to reduce noncompliance with the applicable
12 effluent limitations.

13 (ii) The discharger is implementing an approved pretreatment
14 program, if so required by federal or state law.

15 (B) Subparagraph (A) only applies to violations that occur
16 during a period for which the regional board has determined that
17 violations are unavoidable, but in no case may that period exceed
18 30 days.

19 (g) Remedies under this section are in addition to, and do not
20 supersede or limit, any other remedies, civil or criminal, except
21 that no liability shall be recoverable under Section 13261, 13265,
22 13268, or 13350 for violations for which liability is recovered
23 under this section.

24 (h) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this division,
25 and except as provided in subdivisions (j), (k), and (l), a mandatory
26 minimum penalty of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) shall be
27 assessed for each serious violation.

28 (2) For the purposes of this section, a “serious violation” means
29 any waste discharge that violates the effluent limitations contained
30 in the applicable waste discharge requirements for a Group II
31 pollutant, as specified in Appendix A to Section 123.45 of Title
32 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, by 20 percent or more or
33 for a Group I pollutant, as specified in Appendix A to Section
34 123.45 of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, by 40
35 percent or more.

36 (i) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this division,
37 and except as provided in subdivisions (j), (k), and (l), a mandatory
38 minimum penalty of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) shall be
39 assessed for each violation whenever the person does any of the
40 following four or more times in any period of six consecutive

1 months, except that the requirement to assess the mandatory
2 minimum penalty shall not be applicable to the first three
3 violations:

4 (A) Violates a waste discharge requirement effluent limitation.

5 (B) Fails to file a report pursuant to Section 13260.

6 (C) Files an incomplete report pursuant to Section 13260.

7 (D) Violates a toxicity effluent limitation contained in the
8 applicable waste discharge requirements where the waste discharge
9 requirements do not contain pollutant-specific effluent limitations
10 for toxic pollutants.

11 (2) For the purposes of this section, a “period of six consecutive
12 months” means the period commencing on the date that one of the
13 violations described in this subdivision occurs and ending 180
14 days after that date.

15 (j) Subdivisions (h) and (i) do not apply to any of the following:

16 (1) A violation caused by one or any combination of the
17 following:

18 (A) An act of war.

19 (B) An unanticipated, grave natural disaster or other natural
20 phenomenon of an exceptional, inevitable, and irresistible
21 character, the effects of which could not have been prevented or
22 avoided by the exercise of due care or foresight.

23 (C) An intentional act of a third party, the effects of which could
24 not have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care or
25 foresight.

26 (D) (i) The operation of a new or reconstructed wastewater
27 treatment unit during a defined period of adjusting or testing, not
28 to exceed 90 days for a wastewater treatment unit that relies on a
29 biological treatment process and not to exceed 30 days for any
30 other wastewater treatment unit, if all of the following requirements
31 are met:

32 (I) The discharger has submitted to the regional board, at least
33 30 days in advance of the operation, an operations plan that
34 describes the actions the discharger will take during the period of
35 adjusting and testing, including steps to prevent violations and
36 identifies the shortest reasonable time required for the period of
37 adjusting and testing, not to exceed 90 days for a wastewater
38 treatment unit that relies on a biological treatment process and not
39 to exceed 30 days for any other wastewater treatment unit.

1 (II) The regional board has not objected in writing to the
2 operations plan.

3 (III) The discharger demonstrates that the violations resulted
4 from the operation of the new or reconstructed wastewater
5 treatment unit and that the violations could not have reasonably
6 been avoided.

7 (IV) The discharger demonstrates compliance with the
8 operations plan.

9 (V) In the case of a reconstructed wastewater treatment unit,
10 the unit relies on a biological treatment process that is required to
11 be out of operation for at least 14 days in order to perform the
12 reconstruction, or the unit is required to be out of operation for at
13 least 14 days and, at the time of the reconstruction, the cost of
14 reconstructing the unit exceeds 50 percent of the cost of replacing
15 the wastewater treatment unit.

16 (ii) For the purposes of this section, “wastewater treatment unit”
17 means a component of a wastewater treatment plant that performs
18 a designated treatment function.

19 (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), a violation of
20 an effluent limitation where the waste discharge is in compliance
21 with either a cease and desist order issued pursuant to Section
22 13301 or a time schedule order issued pursuant to Section 13300,
23 if all of the following requirements are met:

24 (i) The cease and desist order or time schedule order is issued
25 after January 1, 1995, but not later than July 1, 2000, specifies the
26 actions that the discharger is required to take in order to correct
27 the violations that would otherwise be subject to subdivisions (h)
28 and (i), and the date by which compliance is required to be achieved
29 and, if the final date by which compliance is required to be
30 achieved is later than one year from the effective date of the cease
31 and desist order or time schedule order, specifies the interim
32 requirements by which progress towards compliance will be
33 measured and the date by which the discharger will be in
34 compliance with each interim requirement.

35 (ii) The discharger has prepared and is implementing in a timely
36 and proper manner, or is required by the regional board to prepare
37 and implement, a pollution prevention plan that meets the
38 requirements of Section 13263.3.

39 (iii) The discharger demonstrates that it has carried out all
40 reasonable and immediately feasible actions to reduce

1 noncompliance with the waste discharge requirements applicable
2 to the waste discharge and the executive officer of the regional
3 board concurs with the demonstration.

4 (B) Subdivisions (h) and (i) shall become applicable to a waste
5 discharge on the date the waste discharge requirements applicable
6 to the waste discharge are revised and reissued pursuant to Section
7 13380, unless the regional board does all of the following on or
8 before that date:

9 (i) Modifies the requirements of the cease and desist order or
10 time schedule order as may be necessary to make it fully consistent
11 with the reissued waste discharge requirements.

12 (ii) Establishes in the modified cease and desist order or time
13 schedule order a date by which full compliance with the reissued
14 waste discharge requirements shall be achieved. For the purposes
15 of this subdivision, the regional board may not establish this date
16 later than five years from the date the waste discharge requirements
17 were required to be reviewed pursuant to Section 13380. If the
18 reissued waste discharge requirements do not add new effluent
19 limitations or do not include effluent limitations that are more
20 stringent than those in the original waste discharge requirements,
21 the date shall be the same as the final date for compliance in the
22 original cease and desist order or time schedule order or five years
23 from the date that the waste discharge requirements were required
24 to be reviewed pursuant to Section 13380, whichever is earlier.

25 (iii) Determines that the pollution prevention plan required by
26 clause (ii) of subparagraph (A) is in compliance with the
27 requirements of Section 13263.3 and that the discharger is
28 implementing the pollution prevention plan in a timely and proper
29 manner.

30 (3) A violation of an effluent limitation where the waste
31 discharge is in compliance with either a cease and desist order
32 issued pursuant to Section 13301 or a time schedule order issued
33 pursuant to Section 13300 or 13308, if all of the following
34 requirements are met:

35 (A) The cease and desist order or time schedule order is issued
36 on or after July 1, 2000, and specifies the actions that the discharger
37 is required to take in order to correct the violations that would
38 otherwise be subject to subdivisions (h) and (i).

39 (B) The regional board finds that, for one of the following
40 reasons, the discharger is not able to consistently comply with one

1 or more of the effluent limitations established in the waste
2 discharge requirements applicable to the waste discharge:

3 (i) The effluent limitation is a new, more stringent, or modified
4 regulatory requirement that has become applicable to the waste
5 discharge after the effective date of the waste discharge
6 requirements and after July 1, 2000, new or modified control
7 measures are necessary in order to comply with the effluent
8 limitation, and the new or modified control measures cannot be
9 designed, installed, and put into operation within 30 calendar days.

10 (ii) New methods for detecting or measuring a pollutant in the
11 waste discharge demonstrate that new or modified control measures
12 are necessary in order to comply with the effluent limitation and
13 the new or modified control measures cannot be designed, installed,
14 and put into operation within 30 calendar days.

15 (iii) Unanticipated changes in the quality of the municipal or
16 industrial water supply available to the discharger are the cause
17 of unavoidable changes in the composition of the waste discharge,
18 the changes in the composition of the waste discharge are the cause
19 of the inability to comply with the effluent limitation, no alternative
20 water supply is reasonably available to the discharger, and new or
21 modified measures to control the composition of the waste
22 discharge cannot be designed, installed, and put into operation
23 within 30 calendar days.

24 (iv) The discharger is a publicly owned treatment works located
25 in Orange County that is unable to meet effluent limitations for
26 biological oxygen demand, suspended solids, or both, because the
27 publicly owned treatment works meets all of the following criteria:

28 (I) Was previously operating under modified secondary
29 treatment requirements pursuant to Section 301(h) of the Clean
30 Water Act (33 U.S.C. Sec. 1311(h)).

31 (II) Did vote on July 17, 2002, not to apply for a renewal of the
32 modified secondary treatment requirements.

33 (III) Is in the process of upgrading its treatment facilities to
34 meet the secondary treatment standards required by Section
35 301(b)(1)(B) of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Sec.
36 1311(b)(1)(B)).

37 (C) The regional board establishes a time schedule for bringing
38 the waste discharge into compliance with the effluent limitation
39 that is as short as possible, taking into account the technological,
40 operational, and economic factors that affect the design,

1 development, and implementation of the control measures that are
2 necessary to comply with the effluent limitation. For the purposes
3 of this subdivision, the time schedule may not exceed five years
4 in length, except that the time schedule may not exceed 10 years
5 in length for the upgrade described in subclause (III) of clause (iv)
6 of subparagraph (B). If the time schedule exceeds one year from
7 the effective date of the order, the schedule shall include interim
8 requirements and the dates for their achievement. The interim
9 requirements shall include both of the following:

- 10 (i) Effluent limitations for the pollutant or pollutants of concern.
11 (ii) Actions and milestones leading to compliance with the
12 effluent limitation.

13 (D) The discharger has prepared and is implementing in a timely
14 and proper manner, or is required by the regional board to prepare
15 and implement, a pollution prevention plan pursuant to Section
16 13263.3.

17 (k) (1) In lieu of assessing all or a portion of the mandatory
18 minimum penalties pursuant to subdivisions (h) and (i) against a
19 publicly owned treatment works serving a small community, the
20 state board or the regional board may elect to require the publicly
21 owned treatment works to spend an equivalent amount towards
22 the completion of a compliance project proposed by the publicly
23 owned treatment works, if the state board or the regional board
24 finds all of the following:

25 (A) The compliance project is designed to correct the violations
26 within five years.

27 (B) The compliance project is in accordance with the
28 enforcement policy of the state board, excluding any provision in
29 the policy that is inconsistent with this section.

30 (C) The publicly owned treatment works has prepared a
31 financing plan to complete the compliance project.

32 (2) *Notwithstanding subdivision (h) or (i), the state board or a*
33 *regional board may assess a penalty that is less than the mandatory*
34 *minimum penalty set forth in those subdivisions against a publicly*
35 *owned treatment works serving a small community, if the amount*
36 *of the penalty reflects a consideration of the size of the community*
37 *being served by the publicly owned treatment works, the*
38 *affordability of the penalty, and the impact of the water quality*
39 *violation.*

40 (2)

1 (3) For the purposes of this subdivision, “a publicly owned
2 treatment works serving a small community” means a publicly
3 owned treatment works serving a population of 10,000 persons or
4 fewer or a rural county, with a financial hardship as determined
5 by the state board after considering such factors as median income
6 of the residents, rate of unemployment, or low population density
7 in the service area of the publicly owned treatment works.

8 (l) (1) In lieu of assessing penalties pursuant to subdivision (h)
9 or (i), the state board or the regional board, with the concurrence
10 of the discharger, may direct a portion of the penalty amount to
11 be expended on a supplemental environmental project in
12 accordance with the enforcement policy of the state board. If the
13 penalty amount exceeds fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000), the
14 portion of the penalty amount that may be directed to be expended
15 on a supplemental environmental project may not exceed fifteen
16 thousand dollars (\$15,000) plus 50 percent of the penalty amount
17 that exceeds fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

18 (2) For the purposes of this section, a “supplemental
19 environmental project” means an environmentally beneficial project
20 that a person agrees to undertake, with the approval of the regional
21 board, that would not be undertaken in the absence of an
22 enforcement action under this section.

23 (3) This subdivision applies to the imposition of penalties
24 pursuant to subdivision (h) or (i) on or after January 1, 2003,
25 without regard to the date on which the violation occurs.

26 (m) The Attorney General, upon request of a regional board or
27 the state board, shall petition the appropriate court to collect any
28 liability or penalty imposed pursuant to this section. Any person
29 who fails to pay on a timely basis any liability or penalty imposed
30 under this section shall be required to pay, in addition to that
31 liability or penalty, interest, attorney’s fees, costs for collection
32 proceedings, and a quarterly nonpayment penalty for each quarter
33 during which the failure to pay persists. The nonpayment penalty
34 shall be in an amount equal to 20 percent of the aggregate amount
35 of the person’s penalty and nonpayment penalties that are unpaid
36 as of the beginning of the quarter.

37 (n) (1) Subject to paragraph (2), funds collected pursuant to
38 this section shall be deposited in the State Water Pollution Cleanup
39 and Abatement Account.

1 (2) (A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, moneys
2 collected for a violation of a water quality certification in
3 accordance with paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) or for a violation
4 of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Sec. 1341) in
5 accordance with paragraph (5) of subdivision (a) shall be deposited
6 in the Waste Discharge Permit Fund and separately accounted for
7 in that fund.

8 (B) The funds described in subparagraph (A) shall be expended
9 by the state board, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to assist
10 regional boards, and other public agencies with authority to clean
11 up waste or abate the effects of the waste, in cleaning up or abating
12 the effects of the waste on waters of the state or for the purposes
13 authorized in Section 13443.

14 (o) The state board shall continuously report and update
15 information on its Internet Web site, but at a minimum, annually
16 on or before January 1, regarding its enforcement activities. The
17 information shall include all of the following:

18 (1) A compilation of the number of violations of waste discharge
19 requirements in the previous calendar year, including stormwater
20 enforcement violations.

21 (2) A record of the formal and informal compliance and
22 enforcement actions taken for each violation, including stormwater
23 enforcement actions.

24 (3) An analysis of the effectiveness of current enforcement
25 policies, including mandatory minimum penalties.

26 (p) The amendments made to subdivisions (f), (h), (i) and (j)
27 during the second year of the 2001–02 Regular Session apply only
28 to violations that occur on or after January 1, 2003.