

Stockton Record

**GROUPS PLAN SUIT AGAINST STOCKTON  
ENVIRONMENTALISTS, FARMERS, BLAME CITY, COUNTY FOR  
DELTA'S FRAGILE STATE**

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STOCKTON - Two Delta groups with normally opposite interests said Tuesday they intend to sue the city of Stockton and San Joaquin County for pollution coming from stormwater runoff and sewage.

The Coalition for a Sustainable Delta, a group of south Valley farmers and water users, claims Stockton has allowed heavy metals, chemicals and pesticides to escape through storm drains and into the fragile estuary.

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, headed by Stockton environmentalist Bill Jennings, says the city has illegally allowed sewage to overflow and spill, threatening not only the environment but also human health.

As required by law, both groups sent letters warning officials of their intent to sue within 60 days. The two separate actions were not coordinated, the groups said.

"The Delta is going to drown in a sea of pollution if we don't get the municipalities and industry to comply with the law," Jennings said.

Stockton City Attorney Ren Nosky said he had heard of the letters but had not seen them and couldn't comment. Public Works officials with the county could not be reached Tuesday afternoon. Mark Madison, director of Stockton's Municipal Utilities District, declined to comment.

The coalition claims invasive species, water quality and diversions are major factors in the estuary's decline. The farmer's coalition has threatened to sue the owners of a power plant in the west Delta, and already has sued the state for supporting populations of striped bass, which critics say eat threatened Delta smelt.

Environmentalists such as Jennings, on the other hand, place most blame on the pumps that export trillions of gallons of water to the far reaches of California. Jennings said he does believe water pollution is a problem, however.

That's why his alliance is threatening to sue Stockton, claiming that in the past five years, the city's 900 miles of sewer lines have overflowed 1,487 times. Jennings says his numbers come from reports submitted to state water authorities as well as the Office of Emergency Services.

Some of these spills find their way into city storm drains, which empty into waterways feeding the Delta. The end result is toxic for fish and dangerous for those who eat fish, Jennings said. Those spills that don't reach the Delta pose "significant health risks" in the city's streets, buildings, and private yards and homes, he said.

Jennings also alleges that treated effluent released into the Delta from Stockton's wastewater treatment plant has violated water quality standards.

The coalition's allegations do not concern wastewater that is treated by the city, but rather stormwater. The city and county, which share a stormwater permit, have failed to reduce pollutants that wash off the streets and down the drain, the coalition says.

Coalition spokesman Michael Boccadoro called stormwater runoff a "significant and growing threat" to the health of the Delta. Stockton's pollution problems are shared by other cities in the estuary, he said.

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