



# Calaveras County

## Environmental Management Agency

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## NEWS

OSS # 01-08

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**For Immediate Release**

### **Assembly Bill (AB) 885 Proposed Regulations and Draft Environmental Impact Report Workshop**

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has proposed statewide regulations that will establish new minimum requirements for the siting, permitting, construction, operation, maintenance and performance monitoring of all new and existing onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) including septic tank systems with leach fields. OWTS's includes individual disposal systems, community collection and disposal systems, and alternative collection and disposal systems that use subsurface disposal.

The SWRCB is holding eleven workshops throughout the State in order to receive public comments on the proposed regulations and on the adequacy of the associated Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Calaveras County has been chosen to host one of the eleven workshops. This workshop will be held on December 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors chambers located at Government Center, 891 Mountain Ranch Road in San Andreas.

All individuals, businesses, homeowners associations, community groups, developers, property owners, and others that may be interested in or impacted by the proposed regulations are encouraged to attend this workshop and submit oral or written comments. All comments will be considered by the SWRCB prior to their adoption of the regulations and certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report sometime early next year. The upcoming workshop is the public's opportunity to directly participate in this important rule-making process. Implementation of the regulations as proposed would likely have impacts on all residents with existing septic tanks, on owners of unimproved residential parcels, and on future land development.

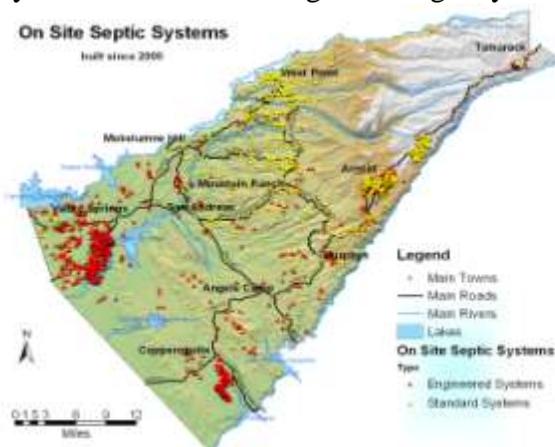
A copy of the proposed regulations and the DEIR (along with other related documents) can be downloaded from: [www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/septic\\_tanks](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/septic_tanks) . Some outstanding concerns regarding the regulations include:

- All owners of OWTS's will be required to have their septic tank inspected for solids accumulation at least once every five years by a qualified service provider.
- If OWTS owners use a domestic well for their water supply, the well water will need to be sampled and tested (for a wide array of minerals and other constituents) by a state-certified laboratory at least once every five years unless the owner installs and tests a separate monitoring well immediately downgradient of the OWTS.

- Unless existing regulations are more restrictive (Calaveras County is currently revising their regulations), the statewide minimums specify that all new conventional septic tank systems must have at least three feet of “good” soil below the bottom of the leach field and above high groundwater levels. Depending upon the quality of the soil, a greater depth of material may be required. If soil underlying the leach field does not meet prescribed standards, a pressure dosing system will be required for effluent dispersal through the leach field.
- In order to determine required leach field area, the proposed regulations state that only the trench bottom area may be used for effluent absorption. This will result in increasing the required leach field area because many/most designs currently include consideration of effluent absorption through trench sidewalls. Existing lots may or may not have sufficient space to accommodate the required larger leach field area.
- Prescribed methods for determining high groundwater levels must be followed. In some cases, monitoring of groundwater levels will be required continuously from November 1 through April 1 to determine whether there is sufficient separation from the leach field.
- In areas where conventional septic tank systems are prohibited because of inadequate soil characteristics and /or depth above groundwater, the regulations allow for construction and installation of “supplemental” or “advanced” treatment systems provided there is at least two feet of “good” soil below the dispersal area and above high groundwater. The SWRCB estimates that the installation cost for a new “supplemental” OWTS is “typically” about twice the cost of a conventional septic tank system.
- All supplemental treatment systems must be certified by an independent third party testing lab and must meet prescribed effluent standards. Ongoing effluent monitoring will be required for all supplemental systems.
- For all new and existing “supplemental” or “advanced” systems, the regulations require that the property owner have an on-going maintenance contract with a qualified service provider.
- If an existing conventional septic tank system is located within 600 feet of a surface water body that is considered to be “impaired” and if the system is confirmed as contributing to the “impairment”, advanced supplemental treatment and effluent monitoring will be required unless the property agrees to connect to a centralized wastewater (sewer) collection system.

Note that the regulations as currently proposed hold individual homeowners and businesses with OWTS to be directly responsible to the Water Board for compliance with all new regulatory requirements. If an individual fails to comply, the Regional and State Water Boards have authority to take various enforcement actions against the property owner, including the issuance of monetary fines.

If you have questions about the scheduled workshop or about the proposed regulations, please contact the Calaveras County Environmental Management Agency - Onsite Sewage Department at (209) 754-6400.



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