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Governor Newsom Signs Bill to Protect California's Drinking Water

Sacramento, CA- Governor Newsom has signed into law SB519, a bill authored by Senator Steven Bradford (D-Gardena), designed to expedite groundwater cleanup projects by allowing the Water Replenishment District and the Toxic Substances Control Board (DTSC) to apply for funds distributed by the State Water Resources Control Board and allocated for cleanup of contamination.

The SCAP (Site Cleanup Subaccount Program) includes grant dollars that are used to fund surface or groundwater cleanup projects. Existing law excludes water replenishment districts or the DTSC from the list of agencies that are eligible to apply for funds from this subaccount. SB 519 addresses this issue by ensuring that qualified entities can be considered and granted funding for remediation projects.

“Despite being well-suited to directly address the danger groundwater contamination poses to public health, water replenishment districts are ineligible to receive money that helps them fund remediation efforts,” said Senator Bradford. “The existing process is unnecessarily complicated and costly, sometimes taking years before actual cleanup begins.”

“The Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD) is responsible for protecting the water quality in our groundwater basins,” said WRD Board President John D.S. Allen. “We can’t wait until our community’s drinking water wells are contaminated before we begin cleaning up pollution. SB 519 enables WRD and the state to respond quickly to clean sites with groundwater contamination so we can keep our drinking water safe.”

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The Water Replenishment District is the largest groundwater agency in the State of California, managing and protecting local groundwater resources for four million residents. WRD's service area covers a 420-square-mile region of southern Los Angeles County, the most populated county in the United States. The 43 cities in the service area, including a portion of the City of Los Angeles, use about 250,000 acre-feet (82 billion gallons) of groundwater annually which accounts for approximately half of the region's water supply.