

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
RESOLUTION NO. 80-15

APPROVAL OF THE STATE BOARD'S  
ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS POLICY AND ACTION PLAN  
REVIEW AND REVISION PROCESS

WHEREAS:

1. The California Legislature has declared that the State Water Resources Control Board and each Regional Water Quality Control Board shall be the principal state agencies with primary responsibility for the coordination and control of water quality.
2. Alternative systems constitute the set of wastewater management devices suited to serve rural or small communities which involve nonconventional technology. Conventional technology includes the standard gravity sewer and generally accepted central treatment and disposal techniques.
3. Over 2.5 million residents of the State of California are presently served by individual on-site septic tank and leachfield systems. These systems are in great demand in newly developing areas of the State. Many sites are unacceptable for septic tank systems due to limitations of soils, topography, or hydrology.
4. Even with an 87½ percent Clean Water Grant, the cost of conventional wastewater collection and treatment facilities is prohibitive for a number of unsewered communities. Furthermore, these conventional systems may be more energy intensive than low-cost, low-technology alternatives.
5. In some cases, alternative systems have been found to be more cost effective and reliable than conventional wastewater management methods.
6. The Clean Water Grants program provides increased incentives for the implementation of alternative wastewater management systems to eligible public wastewater agencies.
7. There is little application of alternative systems in California and, thus, there is limited knowledge concerning their place in water quality control programs.
8. State and local agencies with health protection and land use planning responsibilities need information on alternative systems. The State Board must concentrate its efforts to encourage and promote rational use of alternative systems so as not to degrade beneficial waters of the State or create public health or nuisance conditions - efforts that must involve the Regional Boards, local government health agencies, and other state agencies.

9. The State Water Resources Control Board adopted the Alternative Systems Action Plan in March 1978 to demonstrate its support for the use of alternative wastewater disposal systems in California. This document recommends a variety of actions to encourage the generation of data on alternative systems and to expedite their application in the State. The Action Plan was given wide distribution to the general public, present and potential Clean Water Grant applicants, public agencies, and officials as implementation of the Action Plan would require cooperation of federal, state, and local agencies.
10. The Action Plan identifies the State's alternative systems effort through research, demonstrations, technical seminars, data gathering, and programs and materials for providing alternative systems information to the general public.
11. Implementation of alternative wastewater management systems involves some element of uncertainty as to their successful performance. This uncertainty necessitates careful consideration of the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of such systems to provide reasonable assurance that they will prevent nuisance and pollution of the State's waters.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the State Water Resources Control Board does hereby reaffirm its support and encouragement to increase efforts and emphasis on the use of alternative wastewater disposal systems.
2. That it is the policy of the State Board to encourage the implementation of alternative treatment systems in suitable locations provided a reasonable design, construction, and operation and maintenance plans, and mitigation plan in the event of system failure exist and are found adequate to provide reasonable assurance that water quality and public health will be protected.
3. That the State Board shall continue to sponsor specific research and demonstration projects to advance the knowledge and implementation of these systems subject to the availability of funds.
4. That the Regional Boards are encouraged to maintain awareness of alternative system activities in their Region and to stay current on alternative system technology.
5. That the Regional Boards are encouraged to issue either waste discharge requirements for experimental systems or approve a general local agency experimental program for alternative systems. The State Board is available for developing experimental programs. Regardless of the option selected, experimental alternative systems are encouraged to be supported if it appears--

- a. that connection to or construction of a conventional wastewater management system is less cost effective than an alternative system or is not in the public interest;
  - b. that, in the case of a privately owned alternative treatment disposal system, the prospective owner of the system has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the appropriate agency, a technical and financial capability sufficient to ensure that the system will be properly operated and maintained for the life of the dwelling unit that it serves; and
  - c. that the appropriate agencies may require the prospective owner of a system to provide a financial plan sufficient to guarantee that the system will be operated, maintained, monitored, or replaced, as may be needed, to meet waste discharge requirements.
6. The Executive Director is directed to review the Alternative Systems Action Plan and update it as required to ensure consistency with this policy and to provide an accurate representative of the status of ongoing alternative system efforts. Changes to the Action Plan will be presented to the Board as an information item at the time they are integrated into the plan.
7. That State Board Resolution No. 78-10 is hereby rescinded.

#### CERTIFICATION

The undersigned, Executive Director of the State Water Resources Control Board, does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on March 20, 1980.



Clint Whitney  
Executive Director