



Enforcement News

Red Balloons Entering San Francisco Bay Brings Stiff Response from San Francisco Regional Water Board

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Oakland - The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) has fined national marketing company TrashTalkFCM \$7,000 for a promotional event that resulted in hundreds of red, latex balloons falling into San Francisco Bay. The company has agreed to a stipulated settlement as a result of the incident.

The balloon release happened on March 2, 2011, as part of a promotion for a video game being debuted at the San Francisco Game Developers Conference. The company says the balloons were expected to rise high enough into the atmosphere that they would burst into small pieces. The necessary lift did not occur due to unforeseen weather conditions, and hundreds of the balloons drifted into the Bay.

The balloons presented a potential hazard to birds and aquatic life in San Francisco Bay and the sensitive areas surrounding it. These sensitive areas include the Farrallon Islands Area of Biological Significance (ASBS), Point Reyes Headlands Reserve ASBS, the Duxbury Reef ASBS and the James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve ASBS. These areas are specifically set aside to shelter marine life and maintain the quality of coastal waters.

The marketing company, TrashTalkFCM, has agreed to the settlement for an unauthorized discharge into the waters of the United States, which is a violation of California Water Code. Regional Water Board Executive Officer, Bruce Wolfe, signed the agreement this week after a 30-day public comment period. The company has assumed sole responsibility for the incident, and has cooperated fully with the cleanup and investigation, including sending boats onto the Bay the day of the incident to collect the balloons.

To see the stipulated agreement visit:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/public_notices/pending_enforcement.shtml

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore California's water resources and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations. For more information on the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, visit their website at:

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/>

To see all enforcement actions by the State Water Boards please visit:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/press_room/press_releases/2011enforcement.shtml