

Former sewage manager indicted in SF Bay case

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San Francisco—A former sewage plant manager was indicted on 16 charges involving the pollution of San Francisco Bay in a rare flexing of federal muscle in the area of environmental crime.

Raymond Guanill, who managed the treatment facility in Rodeo for nearly five years until November 1997, was accused Thursday of bypassing the chlorine system that helps purify treated sewage before it's dumped back into the bay, and failing to report problems to state officials.

Guanill, 47, of Fairfield, also was accused of ordering the cancellation of tests to check the purity of water being discharged. Most of the allegations date from 1996 and 1997.

The six most serious counts carry prison sentences of up to three years and fines of \$50,000 each, although under federal guidelines it's unlikely sentences that severe would actually be imposed.

Guanill resigned in November 1997 when the state disclosed that he was under investigation. Early the following year, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board alleged the plant violated its permit on 473 days between 1995 and 1997, releasing some 290 million gallons of improperly treated waste water.

The plant is located on San Pablo Bay, which feeds into San Francisco Bay. It serves 2,801 homes, businesses and schools about 15 miles northeast of San Francisco.

Late last year, an Associated Press review of Justice Department computer records indicated the U.S. Attorney's Office in San Francisco ranked last in the nation in filing criminal charges in environmental cases.

Only 12.5 percent of such cases referred to the region's federal prosecutors over the last seven years resulted in criminal charges and not one polluter was sent to jail, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse in Washington D.C.

That was well below the national average of 41 percent, according to TRAC, which has processed Justice Department data since 1992.

This is the second case that has been filed by that office since.