

Davis signs 2 pollution measures

Press Democrat

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Sacramento—In a move environmental groups say will go a long way to toughen the state's response to water polluters, Gov. Gray Davis on Tuesday signed two bills requiring regulatory boards to issue minimum fines against violators.

But in a written message accompanying the signings, the governor questioned the bills' rigidity and asked lawmakers for another bill to reinstate fining flexibility to the state Water Resources Control Board and regional water quality boards.

Environmentalists hailed the signing of AB 1104 and SB 709 as "groundbreaking," because the new system removes the boards' discretion by requiring minimum \$3,000 fines against water polluters. A recent study by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office found that the boards issued fines in only 1 percent of 4,748 reported violations.

He asked lawmakers for another bill returning discretion to the boards "to modify a penalty if the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of a violation warrant it, particularly as it relates to small communities."