

Bay dumping hasn't slowed

Press Democrat

San Francisco—Despite laws and fines meant to punish polluters of the San Francisco Bay, illegal dumping from oil refineries and sewage plants continues and critics of the large companies that line the shores say the penalties are too soft.

It's been nearly a year since a state law requiring a minimum \$3,000 fine for illegal discharges from chronic polluters. State and regional boards set limits on the amount of waste that can legally be dumped into the bay and fines are issued if a company incurs two or more serious violations within a six-month period.

But nearly a year after the law was enacted, some \$200,000 in fines against 17 area businesses have been levied—with no end in sight. The companies are labeled repeat polluters, but it's hardly a deterrent says Jonathan Kaplan, director of Northern California Water Keepers.

“Now they're being illuminated as violators, but the fines themselves in a majority of the cases aren't large enough to deter further pollution,” Kaplan said.

The former Tosco refinery in Avon, the Equilon refinery in Martinez, Posco Industries in Pittsburg and Zeneca Inc. in Richmond have all been fined in the past year under the law.