

Water standard pushed

Daily News
1/8/07

Boxer, Feinstein want federal perchlorate law

BY ALEX DOBUZINSKIS
Staff Writer

California's two U.S. senators have introduced legislation to establish a federal drinking water standard for perchlorate, the rocket fuel component found on the Whittaker-Bermite site in central Santa Clarita.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, incoming chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, described the legislation as a measure to protect the health of pregnant women, fetuses and children. And she faulted the Environmental Protection Agency for not setting a

tap water standard for the chemical.

"Perchlorate is a clear and present danger to California's and much of America's health," Boxer said in a written statement entered Thursday into the Congressional Record.

California is considering setting a perchlorate standard of 6 parts per billion for drinking water. The EPA in 2005 set 24.5 parts per billion as the safety limit — but not an enforceable standard — for daily human intake of perchlorate.

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ate in drinking water.

But the agency does not impose limits on perchlorate in drinking water, as it does for other pollutants.

In Santa Clarita, the Castaic Lake Water Agency has pledged to reduce perchlorate to nondetectable levels in water from two wells the agency says were contaminated with perchlorate from the Whittaker-Bermite property.

Perchlorate was used in the aerospace industry. At the shuttered Whittaker-Bermite site, a former munitions manufacturer, it was a component in missiles

Jeffrey Dintzer, a Los Angeles attorney with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, represents companies that have been sued over perchlorate.

He said the 24.5 parts per billion limit set by the EPA, in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences, is strict enough.

"It is more than safe for our population," he said.

But environmentalists have argued for a limit even stricter than the 6 parts per billion the state is considering.

Sujatha Jahagirdar, clean-water advocate for the Los Angeles-based Environment California, welcomed the new legislation, which Boxer introduced with fellow California senator Dianne Feinstein and Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J.

latest science, and if EPA looks at the new Centers for Disease Control (study), I think the only logical place to go is a stronger standard," Jahagirdar said.

"Stronger than what California is moving forward with."

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