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Contact: Lorenza Munoz, [213-458-6279](tel:213-458-6279)

Email: lmunoz@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Christina Villacorte, [213-447-1277](tel:213-447-1277)

Email: cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov

Company in Hot Water for Black Water in Gardena

Concerned about reports of black and foul-smelling tap water in Gardena, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has urged state regulators to tighten the reins on the public utility responsible for that city's water supply.

Acting on a motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the board recently called on the California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to send a letter to the investor-owned Golden State Water Company (GSWC), directing it to "fully and properly cooperate" with the state's water quality directives and recommendations.

The board also asked regulators to ensure the tap water is safe by ordering a laboratory analysis, and to require GSWC to promptly notify the public about all of its efforts to improve water quality.

"Several Gardena residents and business owners have been complaining about black and foul-smelling water coming out their faucets and showers since late January," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "This is unacceptable."

At the request of the EPA, the county Department of Public Health recently conducted an investigation. The discoloration was traced to sediment and biofilm, the product of years of water treatment and less frequent flushing of water mains.

The EPA and California Public Utilities Commission are in charge of regulating GSWC. The board, however, could press for legislative changes to boost the county's oversight powers.

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