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Fla. environmental regulators delay consideration of controversial water-pollution limits

By [Kevin Spear](#), Orlando Sentinel

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Environmentalists declared at least a temporary victory after persuading the state Environmental Regulation Commission to put off the adoption of limits for more than 30 water pollutants.

The state Department of Environmental Regulation had proposed adding 34 toxic chemicals to an existing list of 36 pollutants with the potential to show up in rivers and lakes and endanger human health. Exposure to the chemicals is primarily through the eating of fish caught in such waters.

Environmental advocates from across the state urged the commission Tuesday to require more-stringent limits for the toxic and cancer-causing agents, which can be found in pesticides, petroleum, plastics and industrial compounds.

"Sometimes, miracles happen," said Linda Young, director of the Florida Clean Water Network, who credited several activists with having swayed the commission, including Orlando business consultant Dick Batchelor.

Batchelor, a member of the Environmental Regulation Commission in the 1990s, had written a letter for the editorial pages of several Florida newspapers, including the Orlando Sentinel.

"The state has the audacity to propose changes that would weaken current protection of our water from toxic chemicals, including: benzene, chlordane, PCBs, chloroform, carbon-tetrachloride, bromoform, tetrachloroethene," Batchelor's letter stated.

"Many other toxins would be regulated in Florida for the first time, but at levels that are significantly less stringent than recommended by the federal" Environmental Protection Agency, he said.

DEP officials insisted the new pollution limits would be more stringent than those set by the EPA.

"While the proposed criteria are protective of the public health and our waterways, we understand the complexity of the proposed rules and the Commission's decision to continue the hearing," the agency said in a prepared statement.

Commission members asked that the matter be brought back for consideration by this fall.

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