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Contra Costa tightens Keller Canyon landfill grant fund rules

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
Contra Costa Times
 Posted: 05/24/2011 03:09:44 PM PDT
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Seven months after Contra Costa's auditor issued a scathing report over allegations of irregularities in the county's distribution of \$14 million in trash fees for every load dumped, the board of supervisors adopted a set of fixes Tuesday.

The board expanded the Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund grant advisory committee and clarified rules under which its members operate, mandated regular reporting to the county, tightened financial controls and restricted where the money may be spent.

Seventy percent of the roughly \$1 million a year in fees collected for trash dumping at the landfill on the outskirts of Pittsburg must go to programs within Bay Point, portions of Pittsburg and schools where Bay Point children attend. The balance may be spent elsewhere in Pittsburg and Antioch.

It excludes the Discovery Bay Community Services District and the Byron Municipal Advisory Committee, which have received it in the past.

The board rejected the Ambrose Recreation and Park District's appeal for a seat on the newly constituted panel and a permanent earmark of 35 percent of the money to its programs. It operates Bay Point's parks and recreation facilities.

"I have said and I continue to say that I am proud of the Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund and where we are today," said Supervisor Federal Glover, whose office administers the fund and has come under the strongest scrutiny. "But this is an opportunity to change things, and I embrace the

recommendations."

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Retired elected county Auditor-Controller Steve Ybarra's staff in 2010 examined misconduct allegations directed at Glover and the grant award panel.

Four Discovery Bay residents filed the initial complaint, saying they turned to Ybarra after other agencies refused to intervene.

Ybarra concluded in a November report that the county in the past five years had awarded nearly \$200,000 more than it had collected.

Since 1998, the county's fund has been managed from the office of the District 5 supervisor, whose territory includes the landfill.

The money has been spent in myriad ways, including salaries of sheriff's deputies and code enforcement and school resources officers in Bay Point, and numerous youth and community programs. Nearly 90 percent of the grants of the past decade have gone to programs in Bay Point and Pittsburg, Glover said.

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