

Groups may sue EPA on water rules

Times Staff Writer

Eight environmental groups notified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday that they will sue EPA unless it reverses its approval of Florida's new rules on polluted waterways.

Until this spring, EPA officials had opposed the new rules as too lax. But in April, four months after Gov. Jeb Bush complained to his brother about EPA opposition, the EPA sent the state Department of Environmental Protection a letter saying Florida's rules were fine.

Linda Young of the Clean Water Network contended that the EPA's approval clears the way for weakening federal laws that are supposed to protect the nation's rivers, lakes and streams.

Two years ago the DEP proposed dropping 200 rivers, lakes, streams and bays from its list of 712 polluted waterways that need needing special protection, including the Hillsborough and Alafia rivers, the Tampa Bypass Canal and Tampa Bay.

The move stirred a flood of protest and prompted DEP officials to back off the proposal.

The new rules govern the selection of waterways for the list and require the setting of limits on how much new pollution can be added.