

LAHONTAN REGION (REGION 6) WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE CHAPTER JANUARY 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The water resource protection efforts of the State Water Resources Control Board and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards are guided by a five year Strategic Plan (updated in 2001). The Strategic Plan lays out the Boards' mission as "To preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources, and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations." To help accomplish this mission, a key component of the Strategic Plan is a watershed management approach for water resources protection.

To protect water resources within a watershed management context, a mix of point and nonpoint source discharges, ground and surface water interactions, and water quality/water quantity relationships must be considered. These complex relationships present considerable challenges to water resource protection programs. The State and Regional Boards are responding to these challenges with the Watershed Management Initiative (WMI). The WMI is designed to integrate various surface and ground water regulatory programs while promoting cooperative, collaborative efforts within a watershed. It is also designed to focus limited resources on key issues.

Past State and Regional Board programs tended to be directed at site-specific problems. This approach was reasonably effective for controlling pollution from point sources. However, with diffuse nonpoint sources of pollutants, a new regulatory strategy was needed. The WMI uses a strategy to draw solutions from all interested parties within a watershed, and to more effectively coordinate and implement measures to control both point and nonpoint sources.

For initial implementation of the WMI, each Regional Board identified the watersheds in their Region, prioritized water quality issues, and developed watershed management strategies. These strategies and the State Board's overall coordinating approach to WMI are contained in the Integrated Plan for Implementation of the WMI. The Integrated Plan for Implementation of the WMI contains a chapter prepared by each Regional Board. Region 6's targeted watersheds, priorities, and watershed management approach are discussed in the *Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's Watershed Management Initiative Chapter (Chapter)*.

Region 6 staff are divided into two offices, one in South Lake Tahoe and one in Victorville. The Region is managed as three divisions: North Lahontan Watersheds, Planning and Toxics, and South Lahontan Watersheds. The Planning and Toxics Division is responsible for water quality planning (Basin Planning, TMDLs), Leviathan Mine site restoration, and toxic cleanup efforts. The North Lahontan Watershed Division has three main Units or Watershed Management Areas (WMAs): Northern WMA, Lake Tahoe Basin WMA, and the Carson/Walker WMA. The South Lahontan Watershed Division has three main WMAs: Mono-Owens WMA, the Mojave WMA and the Antelope Valley/Other Southern WMA. Priorities for FY 04-05 are shown in Table ES-1.

Initial watershed management efforts in the Region are focused in five targeted watersheds. The Lahontan Regional Board approved the list of targeted watersheds (at regularly scheduled Board meetings in February and March 1996) and identified the Truckee, Upper Truckee, Carson, Upper Owens, and Mojave Rivers as the highest priority watersheds. The Northern WMA includes one targeted watershed: Lower Truckee River. The Lake Tahoe Basin WMA includes the targeted watershed of the Upper Truckee River, the largest tributary to Lake Tahoe. The Carson/Walker WMA includes the targeted watershed of the Carson River. The Mono-Owens WMA includes the targeted watershed of the Upper Owens (Long Hydrologic Area) and the Mojave River is a targeted watershed in the Mojave WMA.

The targeted watersheds were selected based on their resource value, the significance of known water quality problems, and opportunities for implementing current and future RWQCB programs within a 'true' watershed context. This context requires a focus on integrating existing regulatory responsibilities and other program activities to meet region-wide and watershed-specific objectives. Effective application and integration of the regulatory and non-regulatory programs and tools requires intra- and inter-agency coordination, stakeholder involvement, program management, planning, monitoring for effectiveness and technical training on an on-going basis. One staff person is assigned as a Watershed Management Planning Lead for each of the five targeted watersheds. Each Watershed

Lead is responsible for coordinating most functions of the Regional Board associated with watershed management, regional monitoring, TMDL development and implementation, basin planning, core regulation, and nonpoint source pollution control within the targeted watershed.

The current level of Regional Board funding supports an adequate level of regulatory and non-regulatory activities in all watersheds in the region but does not provide additional resources to focus and increase efforts where high priority problems have been identified or in higher priority watersheds. Additional funding would provide more opportunity for, and result in more, watershed-specific problem solving. Planned activities (funded and unfunded) are described for each targeted watershed *in Section Two of the Chapter* and for the region in *Section Three of the Chapter*.

Watershed Management Contacts:

For more information or copies of the Watershed Management Initiative Chapter, contact Cindy Wise, Watershed Coordinator for Region 6, at (530) 542-5408 or CWise@waterboards.ca.gov. For questions specific to the targeted watersheds, contact the appropriate Watershed Management Planning Leads as shown below. Additionally, readers can visit Region 6's website at www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan

Truckee River -- Scott Ferguson at (530) 542-5432
Upper Truckee River – Doug Smith at (530) 542-5453
Carson River -- Alan Miller at (530) 542-5430
Upper Owens River -- Cindi Mitton at (760) 241-7413
Mojave River -- Mike Plaziak at (760) 241-7404
Antelope Valley – Mike Plaziak at (760) 7404

Table ES-1 Priorities for FY 04-05 for Lahontan Region

Priority water quality issues in the Region are nutrient and sediment discharges to surface waters, NO₃ in groundwater, MTBE, acid mine drainage, and reuse of wastewater. Priorities are determined from the need to protect, restore, or enhance water quality. They can be mandated by the Regional Board, legislation, statute, regulation, State Board, Cal-EPA, or USEPA. These are not necessarily arranged in priority order; however, TMDL-related work is considered a high statewide priority. These priorities are further highlighted in the watershed and region-wide sections of this document as appropriate.

Regionwide	
Improve knowledge of ambient water quality	Focus on Martis Creek and Mojave River.
Clean Water Act 303d list update	Impaired waters need to be identified.
Caltrans NPDES Storm Water Control Program, Projects and Enforcement	Caltrans' large construction projects, ongoing maintenance activities, and snow and ice control methods have significant adverse effects on water quality regionwide. Coordinate, oversee and enforce as necessary to ensure implementation of NPDES Permit and programmatic requirements. Review statewide permit renewal.
Aquatic Pesticides Basin Plan Amendments -	The Basin Plan, in effect, prohibits the use of aquatic pesticides in waters of the Region (with certain exceptions). The SWRCB has adopted two statewide General Permits that authorize use of aquatic pesticides in a manner that currently conflicts with certain Basin Plan objectives. Prepare Basin Plan amendments to authorize uses of aquatic pesticides under specific circumstances, namely to control vectors and aquatic weeds.
Timber Waiver Policy	Review timber harvest plans. Ensure compliance with waiver policy. Select high priority timber harvests for inspection and monitoring to ensure conditions are implemented.
Basin Plan Amendments -	Assigned beneficial uses for various water bodies may not exist or be attainable. Prepare use attainability analyses to determine appropriate beneficial uses for the water bodies in question and propose changes in beneficial use designations if appropriate.
Financial Assurance Documents (FADs)	Ensure that FADs for all applicable facilities are current and sufficient. Track FADs' annual submittals for adequacy and completeness.
Grazing	Assess/inventory grazing allotments in 303 (d) listed watersheds (for nutrients or sediments). Develop strategy for addressing sites with greatest impacts to water quality. Consider waivers or general permits for regulation. Pursue enforcement actions for sites with past history of violations.
Memorandums of Understanding (TRPA/LRWQCB MOU, County /LRWQCB Septic MOU, USFS/LRWQCB MOU)	Ensure that MOUs are being adhered to such that water quality is being protected. Ensure appropriate control measures are being implemented when water quality problems are identified.
Water Recycling	Develop regionwide or discharger specific water recycling permit.
Dairies.	Develop regionwide dairy regulation strategy.
Compliance Assessment of Prioritizing Enforcement	Develop a clear and consistent process to identify significant potential enforcement cases.
Ground Water Monitoring	Complete comprehensive review of current ground water monitoring data and locations to determine adequacy for detecting ground water impacts from discharges.

Northern Watersheds	
Allied Petroleum Spill and Leak Cleanup/Susan River Watershed	Municipal drinking water wells are threatened. Continue investigation and cleanup efforts.
Lake Tahoe Water Quality and Nonpoint Pollution Prevention Studies & TMDL/Lake Tahoe Watershed	Loss of pelagic and near shore famed clarity; specific causes have not been fully characterized. Issues include complex source analysis and implementation planning. Data from water quality and NPS pollution prevention studies is crucial for development the Lake Tahoe TMDL . Nutrient and sediment TMDL is being developed in conjunction with the bi-state interagency effort (Pathway 2007). Agencies involved include Nevada, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and U.S. Forest Service. Maximize pollutant load reductions from watershed restoration and stormwater treatment/erosion control projects.
Municipal Stormwater Permit Updates/Lake Tahoe Watershed	Municipal stormwater permit for Lake Tahoe Basin. Significant effort required to get stormwater management plans from local governments and prepare jurisdictions for TMDL implementation requirements.
Tahoe Tom's Gas Station Cleanup/ Lake Tahoe Watershed	Contaminated soil and groundwater threaten numerous drinking water wells.
Meyers Beacon Gas Station Cleanup/ Lake Tahoe Watershed	Drinking water wells threatened and/or impacted. Continue cleanup efforts.
Shorezone Issues-401 WQC for private piers and Basin Plan Amendments/Lake Tahoe Watershed.	Based on an assessment of potential impacts to water quality, the RB may choose to prepare a Basin Plan amendment to lift the prohibition on new pier development in spawning areas. Pollutants include exhaust components from motorized watercraft and pollutants associated with the construction of piers including the re-suspension of nutrients and bottom sediments.
Squaw Creek TMDL/ Truckee River Watershed	Complete TMDL and continue work on implementation to reduce sediment loading.
Truckee River TMDL, Construction/Stormwater Issues / Truckee River Watershed	Increases in sedimentation threaten to violate water quality standards. Significant urbanization, subdivision, and roadway development in the watershed threatens to increase sediment loads and other pollutants in stormwater. Complete impairment verification studies. To reduce sediment loading, continue to regulate activities and discharges through a combination of CEQA review, NPDES stormwater permits, 401 WQC and waivers. Continue to work with other partners such as the Town of Truckee, Placer County, and the local watershed group to improve mitigation and water quality monitoring as part of project development.
Leviathan Mine/Carson River Watershed	Acidic mine drainage to creeks. State owns property; Superfund site; 303(d) listed waters. Continue treatment and stabilization efforts.
Colorado Hill Mining District and Other Abandoned Mines, Alpine County/Carson River Watershed	Past mining activities and mine waste disposal resulted in ground and surface water pollution at many sites that is affecting water quality and beneficial uses. USFS is implementing treatment and cleanup activities requiring Regional Board review.
Southern Watersheds:	
Molycorp/ Ivanpah and Shadow Valley Watersheds	Past mine waste disposal resulted in ground water pollution at many sites. Constituents including TDS and NO ₃ have migrated offsite and affected water quality. Continue to work with local, state and federal agencies on ground water investigations and corrective action plans.
PG&E Hinkley/ Mojave River Watershed	Hexavalent chromium and total chromium ground water plume exists at the site. Monitor ongoing remedial actions.
Searles Valley Minerals/ Searles Lake Watershed	Continue cleanup of past disposal sites and implement controls on permitted dischargers to address wildlife impacts from discharges at three facilities.

Los Angeles County SD #14 –Lancaster/ Antelope Valley Watershed	Monitor discharger actions to reduce adverse impacts to Edwards Air Force Base operations and develop requirements for new disposal options . Use Basin Plan amendment process to prescribe site-specific objectives for Paiute Ponds.
Los Angeles County SD #20 –Palmdale/ Antelope Valley Watershed	Pollution and degradation of ground water by NO ₃ and TDS. Continue to monitor discharger’s actions to reduce impact of discharge on groundwater and remedial measures.