

Water Quality Coordinating Committee Fall 2014

Supporting Water Quality Restoration in the Lahontan Region

During its February 2014 Board meeting, the Lahontan Water Board sealed the deal on the first stage of a new and innovative Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) Program. The Program will create a more streamlined funding source for restoration work in the Lahontan Region while reducing Water Board staff expenditures on SEPs. The Program will create partnerships between the Water Board and local/regional watershed groups that develop and implement a variety of water quality improvement projects when funds are available. The Program will create a pipeline for administrative civil liabilities to flow to projects supported by the region's communities and the Water Board. The Water Board's partners in this endeavor will have open, community-involved project development and selection processes, and proven track records for effectively completing projects. The Water Board's project selection criteria reflect its strong preference for on-the-ground restoration work. Water Board staff will encourage those on the hook for administrative civil liabilities to direct a portion of the liabilities to the Water Board's partners, who will then effectively use the funds for specific projects meeting the Program's selection criteria.



Perazzo Meadows-Needing Help



Perazzo Meadows-Help on the Way

The Lahontan Water Board's first move towards implementing the SEP Program was to partner up with the Truckee River Watershed Council (<https://www.truckeeriverwc.org/>). The Water Board provided the Watershed Council with a little more than \$700,000 to start and complete three restoration projects within the Truckee River watershed. Each of the three projects will result in restoring creek,

wetland, and floodplain habitat that have been damaged by a variety of legacy and more recent activities.

The Lahontan Water Board selected the Truckee River Watershed Council based upon its proven track record of developing, funding, and completing small, medium, and large-scale watershed restoration projects such as the Perazzo Meadows Restoration Project (<https://www.truckeeriverwc.org/projects/perazzo>). The Watershed Council uses a stakeholder-based collaborative process involving its members who include private industry, public agencies, local businesses, non-profits, and individual citizens. These members are all interested in the Watershed Council's primary objective of protecting, enhancing, and restoring the Truckee River watershed, which coincides nicely with the Water Board's goals and objectives. The Watershed Council has steadily increased its capacity for developing and completing watershed restoration projects since coming into existence in 1996.



Perazzo Meadows-Success

The Lahontan Water Board will apply lessons learned during its pilot project with the Truckee River Watershed Council to a region-wide rollout of its new SEP Program. Water Board staff plans to begin reaching out in 2015 to local and regional watershed groups across the region as SEP partners. Our new partnerships will allow the Water Board to move dollars from those who have perhaps damaged the Lahontan Region's precious waters to those that can restore them.

Another Lahontan Regional Board action that supports restoration in the Truckee River and Little Truckee River watersheds is the Basin Plan amendments that the Board adopted in April 2014 that removed an impediment to certain restoration projects. Previously, the Board could only approve a restoration or erosion control project if the project was solely for the purpose of restoration or erosion control. That inadvertently eliminated multi-purpose projects such as redevelopment that included a restoration component as well as other project features, such as low-income housing or a hotel.