



EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT
January 1 – January 31, 2025

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1. Personnel Report – *Sandra Lopez*

New Hires

- Jacqueline Royer, Environmental Scientist, Planning & Assessment Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will work in the TMDL program to restore impaired waters and will work on Basin Planning priorities. The position requires work based in science, policy, and public process.

Redirects

- Ed Hancock, Environmental Scientist, from Cannabis unit to Non-Point Source unit, South Lake Tahoe. The redirect is the result of BL 24-20 and 24-24.
- Jairo Luque, Water Resources Control Engineer, from Cannabis unit to Forestry/Dredge and Fill unit, South Lake Tahoe. The redirect is the result of BL 24-20 and 24-24.

Vacancies

- Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor), Non-Point Source Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will provide Senior level responsibility and oversight of NPS Unit staff in making policy recommendations, providing technical expertise, evaluating and drafting environmental documents, and performing sensitive assignments related to NPS water quality issues throughout the Lahontan region and the Lake Tahoe Basin. Project specific work in the Lake Tahoe Basin includes oversight of the implementation of the Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load and Lake Tahoe's nearshore water quality.
- Scientific Aid, Regulatory and Enforcement Unit. This position will be reviewing Self-Monitoring Reports submitted from facilities under permit. The reports will be associated with discharges to land, and surface water. The facilities vary from construction sites to wastewater treatment plants.
- Scientific Aid, Non-Point Source and Forestry/Dredge & Fill Units, South Lake Tahoe. This position will review and evaluate water quality data, assist with harmful algal bloom response, and assess compliance with water quality orders and permits associated with grazing, restoration, timber, and forestry activities.

2. Summary of the Public Outreach Meeting to Present the 2024 Timber Waiver – *Jeremy Feinberg*

Forestry Program staff conducted a public outreach meeting to offer an opportunity for the public to learn more about new requirements and revised conditions of Board Order No. R6-2024-0035 Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Waste Discharges Resulting from Timber Harvest and Vegetation Management Activities in the Lahontan Region ([2024 Lahontan Timber Waiver](#)), in relation to the 2014 Timber Waiver.

The presentation followed the outline below and an opportunity to ask questions was provided at the end of each section:

- A. Applicability
- B. Revisions to support pace and scale
- C. New water quality protection measures
- D. Prescribed fire: a brief overview of revised requirements
- E. Revised monitoring and reporting requirements
 1. General
 2. Category Specific

One question was received during the presentation regarding the potential permitting approach for a pending project permitted by CAL FIRE using a 1038 Exemption to the California Forest Practice Act; this project will require the construction of temporary road which poses an increased water quality risk and will require Category 6 coverage. Another question was received via email prior to the presentation regarding the

applicability of the 2024 Timber Waiver and requirements of projects enrolled under the prior iterations of the Timber Waiver; staff believe this was adequately answered in the presentation.

Attendance:

- 2 in person, representing Truckee Fire Protection District
- 25 online, representing Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Tahoe Resource Conservation District (TRCD), Inyo National Forest, Alpine Watershed Group, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Liberty Utilities, American Rivers, other USFS National Forest personnel, Lake Valley Fire and the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC)
- Water Board Chair, Dr. Amy Horne attended remotely

To view a recording of the outreach meeting visit
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECBGMGIXqAg>.

3. Spill Response - East Fork Carson River Helicopter Incident – *Brian Grey*

The Lahontan Water Board is responsible for responding to spills which have the potential to threaten human health and the environment. Communication and coordination between the various agencies responsible for responding to and evaluating potential cleanup actions are critical components in successful spill response programs. The incident following describes challenges Lahontan Water Board staff can face when performing spill responses and the importance of interagency communication to determine appropriate resources and response actions.

Incident Summary

The Water Board received notification from the California Office of Emergency Services (OES) spill report system on October 22, 2024 that a privately owned helicopter had “crashed” in the East Fork Carson River that day (Photo 3.1). Information was limited in the initial spill report, but staff later learned an owner/pilot had attempted to land his helicopter on a gravel bar in the river approximately five miles downstream from Markleeville (in Alpine County) to access a fishing spot. The helicopter subsequently slid into the river and became submerged and inoperable with no injuries reported.

Due to the remote location of the incident, access to investigate potential environmental threats (e.g., from helicopter fuel and fluids) proved difficult. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) staff unsuccessfully attempted to access the incident location via poorly maintained native surface roads. CDFW staff subsequently performed a “fly over” the next day and located the submerged helicopter. Those staff were unable to

determine whether an aviation fuel and/or other hydrocarbon release had occurred and immediate spill response actions were needed.



Photo 3.1: Helicopter in East Fork Carson River taken by CDFW

The following day, CDFW staff drove two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) to within 1.5 miles of the incident location and hiked the remaining distance. CDFW staff did not observe any signs of an aviation fuel/hydrocarbon release or any helicopter debris in the East Fork Carson River in the vicinity of the incident location. On October 25, 2024, the helicopter was removed from the river by a heavy lift helicopter company contracted by the helicopter's pilot/owner.

Lahontan Water Board staff also learned of a previous crash involving the same pilot. Staff discovered that incident when searching for responsible party information on the internet. Similar to the 2024 crash, that incident occurred at the Horseshoe Bend area of the East Fork Carson River in 2014.

Agency Coordination and Actions

Water Board staff was kept apprised of the spill response actions schedule through coordination and consultation with the United States Forest Service (USFS), CDFW,

and the Alpine County Sheriff's Office. CDFW plans to recover costs for their response actions but not pursue a criminal case against the pilot. USFS communicated procedures to get a permit for landing aircraft on USFS land to the pilot/owner and do not plan to take any further actions. No further actions were taken by Water Board staff.

4. 2026 Integrated Report Released by the State Water Board – Daniel McClure

The State Water Resources Control Board released the draft 2026 California Integrated Report (IR) for a 45-day public comment period on January 30, 2025. The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that States report on the quality of their surface waterbodies every two years. To meet this requirement, California develops the IR, an integrated response to statutory requirements consisting of the CWA section 303(d) list of surface waters not meeting standards, as well as an overall assessment of the quality of the State's waters, required by CWA section 305(b). Placing a waterbody on the 303(d) list initiates the prioritization of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development, or development of other water quality protections, to attain water quality standards.

California's IR is developed in "cycles" and submitted to the U.S. EPA every two years. Each Integrated Report cycle consists primarily of data assessments from waters within three Regional Water Quality Control Boards¹. The IR due in 2026 focuses on assessment of waters in the Lahontan, Colorado River Basin, and North Coast regions. To ensure timely submission to U.S. EPA, the State Water Board is administering development of the IR, in collaboration with staff of the "on cycle" Regions.

A multi-year process, the 2026 IR reflects the work of Planning and Assessment Unit staff, in collaboration with State Water Board staff, to assess surface water data for over 3,000 pollutant-waterbody combinations. The 2026 IR would add 151 new waterbody-pollutant listings in the Lahontan Region to the 303(d) list and would remove 35. The 2026 IR would result in 372 total listings in the Lahontan Region. The draft 2026 IR staff report includes a summary of new 303(d) listings, de-listings, and highlights key assessments for the Lahontan Region.

To coincide with the public comment period for the draft 2026 IR Staff Report, Lahontan staff contacted key stakeholders who have previously participated in IR development to discuss specific listing and delisting decisions proposed for the 2026 IR. During the comment period State and Regional Water Board staff scheduled a virtual public workshop to provide an overview of the 2026 IR and answer questions, and the State Water Board will hold a public hearing to receive oral comment, on March 18. State Water Board consideration of the 2026 California Integrated Report is scheduled for Winter 2025/26, after approval the 2026 IR will be submitted to U.S. EPA.

The State Water Board [website for the 2026 IR](#) has the draft 2026 IR as well as notices with the latest details on the workshops, hearings, and comment periods for the 2026 IR.

¹ The other six Regional Water Quality Control Boards may assess high-priority data, and make listing or delisting recommendations, or propose other changes as "off-cycle" assessments.

Additional Resources

[State Water Board Surface Water Quality Assessment Program Webpage](#)

[California Integrated Report Fact Sheet](#)

[Lahontan Water Board - Water Quality Assessment Webpage](#)

**5. Green Valley Farms, An Unregulated Confined Animal Facility in Hinkley –
John Morales**

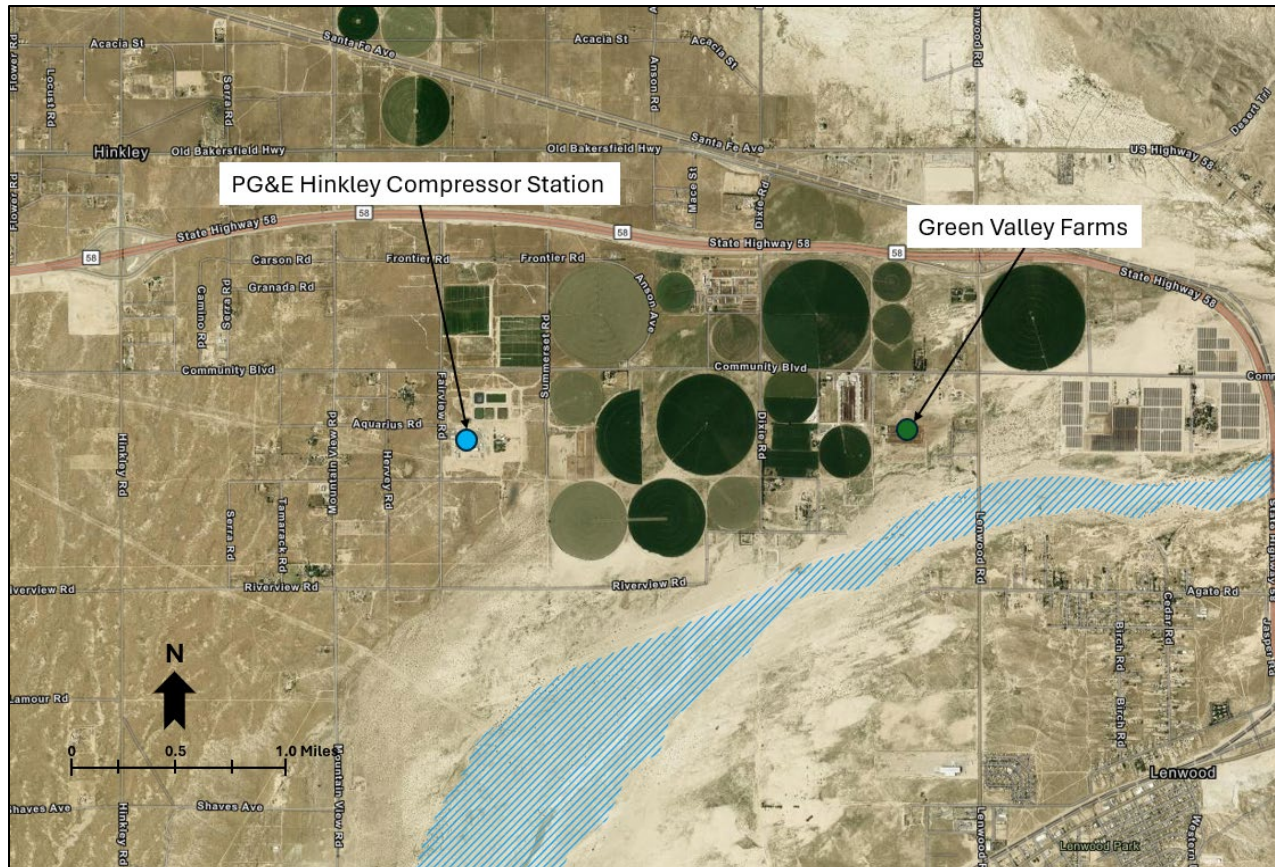


Figure 5.1: Google Earth aerial image showing location of Green Valley Farms in the Hinkley Valley

Water Board staff from the Victorville office (Jan Zimmerman, Reggie Tan, Anna Garcia, Sergio Alonso, and John Morales) performed an inspection of the Green Valley Farms (Facility) located in Hinkley (Figure 5.1) on January 29, 2025. The Facility is a 75-acre Confined Animal Facility (CAF) housing approximately 800 animals. Since 2010, the Facility has operated as a cow-calf operation where heifers give birth (Photo 5.1) and the calves are raised with their mothers until they reach a certain age and weight before they are transferred to the Alamo Mocho Ranch, a feed lot, which is also located in Hinkley. Green Valley Farms and Alamo Mocho Ranch are both owned and operated by Hector Huerta, and neither facility is currently regulated by the Water Board.



Photo 5.1: A 1-day old calf isolated from the rest of the animals at Green Valley Farms in Hinkley.

The purpose of the inspection was to meet with Mr. Huerta and his consultant, Paul Johnson, and to observe current site conditions in anticipation of developing individual waste discharge requirements for the CAF. Approximately 10-acres of the Facility is dedicated to corral space, approximately 20 acres is used for manure stockpiling and equipment staging, and the remainder of the site (closest to the Mojave River) appears to be unused vacant land. The corrals are oriented east-west and graded to drain to east end of the property, the feeding lanes are lined with a 10-foot wide concrete apron, and manure is removed and stockpiled in various locations onsite and allowed to dry. During the inspection, staff took note of key locations where Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be appropriate to protect water quality from discharges emanating from the corrals and topographic low points with potential for ponding during rain events.

As part of the Facility, Mr. Huerta manages 600 acres of alfalfa to supplement feed for the CAF and uses the stockpiled manure as top-dressing (fertilizer) for the alfalfa fields during the winter months (November to February). According to Mr. Johnson, the entire amount of manure generated at the Facility is used as top-dressing, no excess manure is generated and/or exported offsite. Mr. Johnson also indicated that the Facility follows a Nutrient Management Plan for the use of manure on the alfalfa fields.

During the inspection, staff inform Mr. Huerta that his Facility will be considered for regulation as a CAF as part of the Regional Board's strategy to issue individual waste discharge requirements for CAFs in the region. Mr. Huerta and Mr. Johnson thanked

staff for inspection and indicated that they are willing to do the “right thing” to protect water quality. An inspection of Mr. Huerta’s Alamo Mocho Ranch feed lot is anticipated for later this year.

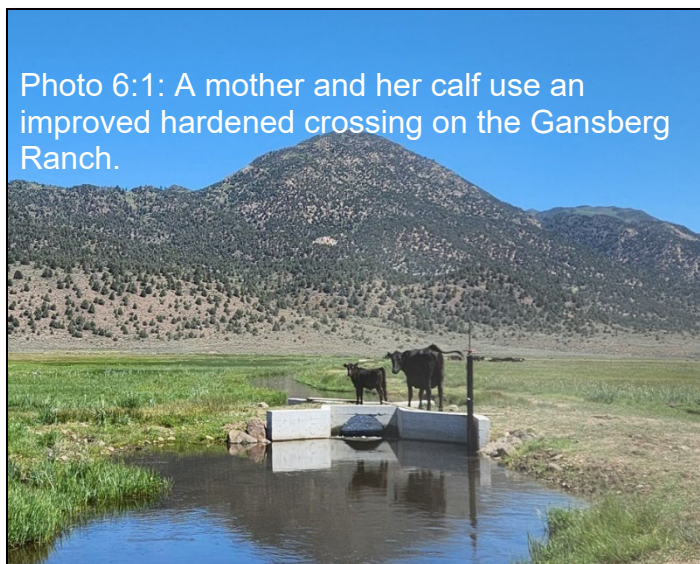
6. Standing Item - Grazing Status, 2025 Update – *Mo Loden*

This Executive Officer’s report article is a standing item, prepared annually to present an update on projects addressing water quality impacts associated with grazing operations in the Lahontan Region. The following updates cover the period from February 2024 through January 2025 and pertain to efforts underway in Bridgeport Valley, Eagle Lake, Bishop Creek, and West Fork Carson River. These efforts, each in a different stage of development or implementation, utilize different strategies to address grazing-related impacts, as seen in Table 6.1 below.

Grazing Community (County)	Strategy Approach
Bridgeport Valley (Mono County)	Regulatory: General Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirement R6-2023-0006
Eagle Lake (Lassen County)	Investigative: 13267 Letters for BLM, USFS, and private lands adjacent to Eagle Lake
Bishop Creek (Inyo County)	Non-regulatory: Bishop Creek Vision Plan
West Fork Carson River (Alpine County)	Non-regulatory: West Fork Carson River Vision Plan

Table 6.1: Region 6 Grazing Summary

Bridgeport Valley: In 2007, the Lahontan Water Board adopted the first Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Grazing Operations in the Bridgeport Valley, renewing it approximately every five years since. The [2023 Waiver](#), adopted on March 1, 2023, which will expire on March 1, 2028, aims to track and improve water quality impacts caused by private grazing operations within the Bridgeport Valley. The Annual Reports, due by mid-January, provide a concise way for dischargers to document each ranch’s BMPs for improving water quality to meet the interim goal of 150 colony-forming units (cfu) per 100 milliliters (ml) for *E. coli*. All enrollees are currently in compliance with the 2023 Waiver requirements. No water quality sampling was required in 2024 and will next occur in 2026.



On June 14, 2024, site inspections were conducted at two ranches: Sceirine and Gansberg. The owner of the Gansberg Ranch led Water Board staff on a tour that highlighted a variety of BMPs, including upgraded concrete headgates and hardened crossings, the latter of which can also serve double duty as irrigation controls in some cases. The Gansberg Ranch—one of the most downstream in the Valley—is adjacent to Bridgeport Reservoir, and according to the rancher, is fenced at the highwater mark. Approximately two of the five total miles of Buckeye, Swauger, and Robinson Creeks that flow through the property are not fenced nor are most of the six miles of irrigation ditches. Based on staff's brief visual observations, the waterways showed minimal trampling impacts from cattle even in areas without fencing. The overall intact, vegetative banks may be an indicator that the hardened crossings are well placed and being used in an effective way. However, cow patties were observed along the streambanks, and in the absence of designated vegetated buffer strips or stream exclusion fencing, there is potential for fecal matter to wash into nearby surface waters during stormwater events.

The Sceirine Ranch has segments of Virginia, Green, and Summers Creeks flowing through the property. One hundred percent of the ranch is in a conservation easement. A Sceirine Ranch owner led staff on a general tour of the property providing history and describing projects from afar, such as a pond restoration, tiered rock dams, invasive weed treatment areas, and an emergency flood project. During the site visit, the range was experiencing challenges with an inundation of Mormon crickets. The rancher estimated that the crickets had reduced forage across approximately 300 acres, and this level of impact was the worst seen in nearly three decades.

Both the Sceirine and Gansberg owners reported that they were still catching up on ranch repairs from the historic 2022–2023 winter, and therefore, new BMP efforts have been on hold.

Other Related Updates: Staff provided a letter of support to the Eastern Sierra Land Trust for their successful application to the Sierra Meadows Partnership Grant Program to restore Huntoon Valley which is part of the impaired Swauger Creek watershed. The Ullman Ranch, a 2023 Waiver enrollee located within Huntoon Valley, will benefit from the restoration goals to identify stream incision sources and develop effective solutions while maintaining the land as an active ranch. Staff are optimistic this project will support the Bridgeport Grazing Waiver's water quality goals.

Eagle Lake: In 2019, the Lahontan Water Board sent Water Code Section 13267 letters to owners of grazed lands adjacent to Eagle Lake. Since then, lakefront property managers and owners who maintain livestock on their land are required to submit annual grazing plans to the Water Board by May 15, before the start of grazing operations each year. For the sixth year, the Water Board received

Photo 6.2: Staff viewed an upland water trough that draws cattle away from the Eagle Lake shoreline at Five Dot Ranch.



adequate grazing management plans. The goal of the plans is to reduce the discharge of livestock waste to surface waters. In late September 2024, Water Board staff conducted four site inspections with private and public grazing owners and/or managers. Observations indicated that overall livestock grazing is being managed in a sustainable manner and contact with lake water is minimal. Ranchers are using a variety of strategies to keep cattle away from the lake's edge, such as setting up alternative water sources and mineral licks, keeping gates closed, and using fencing. In some spots, the shoreline's deep mud naturally prevents cattle from accessing the lake. However, on firmer, rocky shorelines, like those southwest of Spalding, cattle have easier access to the water. It is important to maintain safe alternates to drinking water for the cattle in both rocky and muddy areas along the lake. Similar to last season, the Water Board received no complaints regarding grazing this year.

These updates and more are provided annually in the Eagle Lake newsletter. To see past issues, please visit the [Lahontan Rangelands and Grazing webpage](#).

Vision Plans: [Vision Plans](#) are an advanced restoration plan that focus on community-implemented actions to address water quality impairments in lieu of developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which could require more stringent regulation. If the water quality objectives are not met within each Vision Plan's respective 10-year attainment date from adoption, then TMDL development or other regulatory actions may be taken. Consistent with USEPA guidance on advance restoration plans, these Vision Plans include monitoring and reporting elements to enable the Board to track progress on implementation actions and water quality improvements.

Bishop Creek: The [Bishop Creek Vision Plan](#) (BCVP) was the first Vision Plan developed in the Lahontan Region, adopted at the September 2022 Board meeting, initiating the beginning of the implementation phase. In 2024, substantial implementation progress was made: The Water Board and Bishop Paiute Tribe collaborated to host a well-attended water quality check-in meeting; submittals of the first round of BMP reports from various ranchers and agencies were requested and

received throughout the watershed; and Ranch Water Quality Plans (RWQP) were drafted following site visits for all remaining leases identified in the BCVP, which led to several new grant-funded on-farm improvement projects. Half of the total 13 BCVP ranches have begun implementing their RWQPs.

On June 24, 2024, staff met in Bishop separately with representatives from the Bishop Paiute Tribe, City, and University of California's Cooperative Extension to discuss critical aspects of the BCVP to improve communication, foster collaboration, and show commitment to the project. On the following day, staff were able to join a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) consultant who provides year-round, weekly bacteria sampling throughout the watershed. The field trip provided invaluable ground truthing of the complex and unique watershed and produced helpful recommendations to improve the monitoring program.

In November, LADWP submitted the 2024 *E. coli* data in a timely manner. Staff anticipate the data will be available in CEDEN for evaluation by March 2025. 2023 data can be summarized at a high level: *E. coli* (100 cfu/ml) continues to be exceeded primarily in the downstream portions of the watershed below urban and grazing land uses and during the irrigation months from April to October.

West Fork Carson River: The [West Fork Carson River Vision Plan](#) (WFCRVP) was adopted at the October 2023 Board meeting. Two ranches have been identified as being included in the plan thus far: the Woollystar Ranch and Ace Hereford Ranch. Continued information gathering may lead to more ranches being included in the WFCRVP. Both the Woollystar and Ace Hereford Ranches have been toured by Water Board staff and have draft RWQPs waiting on landowner review. Finalization of these plans is expected in early 2025 and will help prioritize BMPs to mitigate nutrient, sediment, and bacteria runoff from discharging to the West Fork Carson River.

Statewide Efforts

Updated Guidance Document: Over the last few years, State Board has been working on a statewide guidance document titled 'Managing Water Quality on Grazed Lands' that will update the [1995 California Rangeland Water Quality Management Plan](#). The updated guidance document is intended to promote effective grazing management practices through a non-regulatory approach focused on education and outreach. Water Board staff were actively involved in the development of the updated grazing guidance in previous years, but due to State Board staff transitions and ongoing vacancies the document made no progress in 2024. When State Board's resources and capacity allow, the document expects to undergo another round of edits and then will be circulated for public review.

Legislative Updates: The [SB-675 Prescribed Grazing bill](#) was signed into law on September 27, 2024. The bill promotes prescribed grazing for vegetation management, especially for fire prevention and environmental conservation, and seeks to provide financial support and create programs to encourage sustainable prescribed grazing. There are more than 68 million acres of land across the state that could potentially be

treated through prescribed grazing. Anticipated new work for Water Board staff may include review of guidance documents, inspections, outreach, increased meeting attendance, review of annual reports and monitoring plans, potential enforcement actions, drafting regional and individual permits, and review and comment of statewide efforts including general permits. The increased workload could result in a budget change proposal, creating more staff positions in the region.

Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC): The [RMAC](#), authorized by Section 741 of the Public Resources Code of the State of California, advises the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection on rangeland matters. Its mission is to address rangeland issues, offer recommendations, foster collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies, and develop solutions based on current, data-driven environmental, social, and economic information, while considering diverse perspectives. As often as possible, Water Board staff participate in RMAC meetings, occurring approximately every other month. In addition to attending meetings in 2024, Water Board staff also provided reviews and feedback on two RMAC-produced documents, a 'Prescribed Herbivory for Vegetation Treatment Projects' whitepaper and the 'State Lands Grazing Guidebook'. Water Board comments focused on the need to protect water quality from the impacts of prescribed grazing and provided information and resources on appropriate strategies.