



BIOASSESSMENT IN THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN



What is it?

[Bioassessment](#) is the use of resident instream communities (such as benthic macroinvertebrates and algae) as indicators of stream health. SWAMP has developed a robust statewide [bioassessment program](#) for California, and is also supporting the development of [biological objectives](#) for freshwater streams and rivers throughout the State. During 2011-2012, the Lahontan Regional Water Board (Region 6) has taken the lead to coordinate bioassessment programs in the Lake Tahoe Basin, covering two states (California & Nevada), multiple counties, and numerous agencies.

Why is it important?

Bioassessment is used to judge whether streams are healthy, or not. Many entities in the Lake Tahoe Basin are conducting bioassessments, but they have used different collection methods, different data storage systems, and different tools for “scoring” stream health. This has made it difficult to share or compare results, or to develop common standards across state lines—until now. In 2011, staff at the Lahontan Regional Water Board brought together numerous agencies, such as the [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency](#), the [California Department of Fish & Game](#), and university researchers, to foster the use of consistent methods for field collections, data storage, and data analysis. After several meetings, all entities agreed to use common methods so that data could be easily shared and compared. The Region





further coordinated efforts by the consortium to identify and sample “reference sites” (i.e., minimally disturbed sites), which can now be used to set consistent biological expectations for streams in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This coordinated effort reduced the number of samples that each party needed to collect, and saved money for all.

How will this information be used?

The information gathered by all groups will be available via a common database ([CEDEN](#)), and will allow all entities to cost-effectively judge stream health in their jurisdiction or area of interest within the Lake Tahoe Basin. It will also allow the development of consistent thresholds (i.e., standards or “biocriteria”) for stream health—even across state lines for the two states that share the Tahoe Basin.

More information is available on the Lahontan Water Board’s [SWAMP webpage](#).