

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: **Judith Unsicker**
(530) 542-5462

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Lahontan Water Board Seeks Public Input On List of Polluted Waters

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE – The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is seeking public comments on proposed changes to a list of polluted water bodies. This list is comprised of waters that require Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), which are strategies used to meet water quality standards.

The federal Clean Water Act requires a TMDL for each surface water body that is so polluted that attainment of standards cannot be ensured through conventional water pollution control measures. If a water body is impaired by more than one pollutant, separate TMDLs are required for each pollutant. The changes proposed by the Lahontan Board are to the federal Clean Water Act's Section 303(d) list.

Most of the proposed changes to the list are additions of streams in the Lake Tahoe, Carson River, and Walker River watersheds. The most common problems are nutrients and bacteria; the latter problem has been documented in streams near livestock grazing. Other proposed additions affect Monitor Creek, a Carson River tributary affected by acid mine drainage, and Searles Lake, where industrial petroleum discharges have been linked to bird kills.

Proposed deletions from the current list include waters such as Mono Lake and Hot Creek near Mammoth. These waters have high concentrations of salts or toxic elements, such as arsenic, that come entirely from natural volcanic or geothermal sources, and are not "pollutants" as defined in the Clean Water Act. Waters can also be removed from the list if restoration programs are in place and are expected to be successful in the near future. An example is Snow Creek near the north shore of Lake Tahoe, where the California Tahoe Conservancy has recently completed a \$4.2 million project to remove contaminated fill and restore the creek channel and adjacent wetlands.

Recommended changes to the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of polluted waters, and to priorities for developing TMDLs, are available on the Lahontan Regional Board's website, at www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb6. Written public comments will be accepted through Dec. 28, 2001, and the Regional Board will take action on the recommendations at its January 9-10, 2002 meeting in South Lake Tahoe, California.

For further information, please contact Judith Unsicker at (530) 542-5462. Ms. Unsicker can also be reached via e-mail at unsij@rb6s.swrcb.ca.gov.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

www.swrcb.ca.gov · email: info@exec.swrcb.ca.gov · 916.341.5250