



## Regional Water Quality Control Board Lahontan Region

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### **LAHONTAN WATER BOARD** **CONTINUES TO MAKE FUEL REDUCTION EASIER**

*Water Board moves to update timber waiver, agreements with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the US Forest Service*

**SOUTH LAKE TAHOE** – The Lahontan Regional Water Board is asking for public input on three efforts to speed fuel reduction in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The deadline for initial comments is April 30, 2008. The Board will then draft its proposals and again ask for public input before taking any action. The Lahontan Water Board expects to finalize these changes in the second half of 2008.

Land management and fire protection agencies will remove designated trees and brush to reduce fire risk around Tahoe Basin communities over the next 10 years. The Lahontan Water Board has directed its staff to revise the following three documents to expedite fire protection efforts:

- Timber Waiver
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and the Lahontan Water Board
- MOU between USDA Forest Service's Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and the Lahontan Water Board

The Regional Water Board has pushed for improved fire prevention and protection over the past 18 months. These efforts began with the Board's then-Chair Amy Horne's directive to change the Timber Waiver "if we find this waiver is slowing implementation or setting unnecessary obstacles or hurdles."

The Lahontan Water Board proposes modifying the Timber Waiver to streamline permitting for removal of more trees and brush without board notification.

The Board also wants to modify its existing MOU with TRPA so that permit-seekers no longer have to apply separately to the Lahontan Water Board.

The Board's MOU with the Forest Service will also establish TRPA as the lead permitting agency. This depends on the Forest Service continuing to meet the Lahontan Water Board's requirements to protect Lake Tahoe water quality and limit sediment flow to the Lake.

The Lahontan Water Board must fully analyze the potential environmental impacts on the Tahoe Basin before it can to change these agreements.

The Lahontan Water Board has also directed staff to allow equipment use in stream environment zones (SEZs) to remove excess fuels where needed to protect health and safety. A Lahontan Water Board member and staff also participated in California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission meetings and have worked with other agencies to streamline the permitting process.

A subcommittee of the Lahontan Water Board has been established to ensure that all issues related to modifying these documents are addressed in a timely manner and to review existing regulations. In appointing the subcommittee, Jack Clarke, Chair of the Lahontan Water Board stated, "The Water Board must be a partner in working with those conducting fuel reduction activities. I encourage the public to submit suggestions to improve how the Water Board conducts its business to protect water quality, while facilitating important fuel reduction work in the Lahontan Region."

The Lahontan Water Board is one of nine regional boards in the state. Its principal duty is to protect and restore California's water quality east of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada crests from the Oregon border through the Mojave Desert. To do so, it sets water quality standards and waste discharge requirements; enforces federal and state water quality statutes, regulates cleanup of sites that threaten water quality, and educates the public about water quality issues. The Lahontan Water Board consists of up to nine individuals, appointed by the Governor, and a professional staff comprised mostly of scientists, engineers and geologists. For more information, go to .

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