

# State Water Resources Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## STATE WATER BOARD OK'S \$400,000 FOR CONTINUING CLEANUP OF LEVIATHAN MINE

**SACRAMENTO**— The State Water Resources Control Board today approved the Lahontan Regional Water Board's request for \$400,000 from the California Cleanup and Abatement Account to treat up to approximately two million gallons of polluted liquid at the Emergency Pond Water Treatment Project at the Leviathan Mine in the Sierra.

Leviathan Mine is an inactive sulfur mine in Alpine County. Historic mining practices resulted in acidic mine drainage into the Carson River watershed. Protection of human health and the environment of that watershed are key concerns in the Leviathan Mine cleanup project.

In 1985, the Lahontan Regional Water Board completed a pollution abatement system at the mine resulting in improvements in water quality. However, that system did not address all pollution problems at the mine and seasonal contaminated discharges to Leviathan Creek continued.

In May 2000, the United States Environmental Protection Agency designated Leviathan Mine a federal Superfund Site. The state is required to perform specific cleanup and remediation actions at the mine including preventing pond overflows that occurred each spring prior to the initiation in 1999 of summer pond treatment efforts.

During the winter, acidic mine drainage collects in a series of ponds at the mine and contains high concentrations of metals and arsenic. Last year's heavy rain recharged groundwater in the mine area, and, as a result, acidic mine drainage flows to the ponds are greater than in years past. This year's heavy rains, with the increased acidic mine drainage flows, will result in the ponds overflowing in late-April or early-May if no action is taken.

"Left untreated and uncontrolled, the discharge from the ponds would destroy aquatic life in Leviathan Creek and waters downstream and might render the water a hazard to human health. Clean up is necessary to protect water quality in two states and in waters that flow through lands controlled by the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California," said Board Chair Tam Doduc. "A discharge would also violate US EPA's mandate and might result in increased liability to the state as part of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment that is underway," she said.

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## **2-2-2 Leviathan Mine**

The Lahontan Regional Water Board plans to contract for emergency pond water treatment to prevent pond overflow. Because the mine is remote, at 7,000 feet elevation in an isolated part of Alpine County, access is difficult except during the summer and early fall. It is anticipated that equipment, treatment supplies, and personnel will need to be transported to the site using over-snow vehicles.

Photos of the site are available at

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb6/Leviathan/PDFs/leviathan\\_website\\_2005.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb6/Leviathan/PDFs/leviathan_website_2005.pdf)

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