

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
LAHONTAN REGION**

**MEETING OF JUNE 28, 2023
BISHOP, CA**

ITEM 5

FY 22/23 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FY 23/24 STRATEGIC PLAN

CHRONOLOGY

Fiscal Year 2008-09	State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) began Annual Performance Report with performance measures established for most State and Regional Board programs, requiring regional boards to set targets for each performance measure.
2014 to 2020	Water Board staff have annually presented an informational item summarizing the priorities and accomplishments by fiscal year for the Lahontan region. No annual update was provided during March 2020 due to operational delays during the COVID 19 pandemic.
June 2021	Water Board staff presented the accomplishments of FY 19/20 and described the ongoing actions staff is pursuing to better prioritize limited resources to achieve organizational and programmatic goals in FY 21/22. The Region's first strategic narrative with organizational vision, mission, values, and goals was unveiled.
June 2022	Water Board staff presented the accomplishments of FY 20/21 and the preliminary results of the statewide 2022 CalEPA Engagement Survey where the Lahontan Region showed a marked improvement over the 2019 survey results.

BACKGROUND

The executive team developed the Lahontan Region Action Plan (Action Plan) in June 2020 to address employee feedback calling for organizational improvements in the areas of leadership, change management, setting priorities, and setting an action-driven but sustainable workload pace. The Action Plan was subsequently refined and updated in August 2020, and again in October 2020.

The Action Plan recognizes four areas where organizational improvement is needed: leadership, trust, communication, and process improvement. Lahontan Water Board executive leaders, senior management, staff and Board members worked together during 2021 to develop regional mission, vision, values and goals. These are described in the Lahontan Region Strategic Narrative for FY 2023/24 contained in Enclosures 1 and 2 of this item.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this informational item is to review the past year's progress on implementation of the Action Plan and highlight successes on performance targets and efforts toward regional goals. The following items will be discussed:

- Lahontan Region Strategic Narrative for FY 2023/24
- Accomplishments in FY 22/23
- Status of FY 22/23 performance targets
- Anticipated FY 23/24 performance targets
- Performance on Divisional Objectives for FY 2022/23, new Divisional Objectives for FY 23/24
- Staff turnover, Recruitment and Hiring
- Resource challenges and programmatic risks

Strategic Narrative Development

The region's first strategic narrative was completed during FY21/22 and presented to the Board during the June 2021 virtual Board meeting. Since then, the development and updates to the region's strategic narrative has been a culmination of efforts across all levels of the Lahontan team via a series of leadership coaching sessions and internal workshops. The strategic narrative is designed to tell our story of where we have been and where we are going as an organization. Each division and the administration unit created its own strategic narrative that explains the nesting of unit workplans and divisional objectives into the region's goals. Similarly, the region's performance targets directly relate to divisional objectives and support regional goals. Our strategic narrative considers a planning horizon of 1 to 3 years. Progress on regional goals, divisional objectives, and programmatic performance targets will be presented. Refinements in organizational goals and objectives to address emerging water quality concerns will also be discussed. The Regional Strategic Narrative for FY 23/24 can be found in Enclosure 1.

PACE

One of the areas needing improvement mentioned in the 2019 Lahontan Region-specific survey was the operational pace of the organization. During 2021, the Lahontan team embarked on a training curriculum known as The Prioritized Leader, graciously offered by the State Board's Training Academy, designed to help team leaders develop tools to prioritize the various workflow demands placed on the region's staff with the goal of creating a sustainable work pace. Many of the work items affecting pace come to the region through programmatic requirements, unplanned events (i.e. spills, complaints, and public record act requests), and emerging work drivers (PFAS, Freshwater Harmful Algal Blooms, etc.). Prioritization strategies and tools are essential to ensuring the region is purpose driven while maintaining a sustainable work pace. Several of these prioritization tools will be discussed in more detail and include:

- Line of Sight Matrix
- 4R Day (Reflection, Release, Recalibration, and Results)
- Intentional Focus Worksheet

DISCUSSION

- Quarterly Managers Meeting (QMM)

Performance Targets

Performance Targets are those objectives set by State Board at the programmatic scale for each region to accomplish by the end of the fiscal year. Annually, regions negotiate their anticipated performance goals considering program and budgetary resource allocations. During FY 22/23 the region endeavored to meet these performance targets with more staff available for programmatic work as the temporary contact tracing support duties with the California Department of Public Health expired at the end of June 2021. Also, the 2 workday per month furlough expired at the end of the fiscal year.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INPUT

Agenda materials posted on webpage.

RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational item only. No Water Board action is required for this item; however, the Water Board may provide direction to staff.

ENCLOSURE	ITEM	BATES NUMBER
1	Lahontan Region Strategic Narrative for FY 2023/24	5-5
2	Regional Mission, Vision, Values and Goals	5-17

ENCLOSURE 1

Lahontan Region Strategic Narrative **Fiscal Year 2023/2024**



STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND FOCUS

The regional strategic narrative tells the story of our team, our journey, and where we are going. It is intended to provide broad direction for the entire Lahontan Regional Water Board organization and aid in the prioritization of our limited resources to achieve the region's identified goals. Everyone in the organization does work that is vitally important for our success. The intent of this document and associated Divisional Strategic Narratives is to provide broad direction, not a detailed and comprehensive list of every project that we are working on as a team.

The *Lahontan Region Strategic Narrative FY 23/24* capitalizes on the strategic planning foundation created from our first strategic narrative and now incorporates into our strategic plans new program initiatives from State Board, emerging region-specific water quality issues, and input from the regulated community and stakeholders.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

The beginning of FY22/23 saw COVID restrictions begin to be lifted and the return to more in-person meetings, facility inspections and public events. A positive outcome of this was the China Lake Naval Weapons Center partnering meeting in January and our first in-person All-Staff meeting held in Bishop and Lee Vining in November. The All-Staff event was capped by a tour of Mono Lake hosted by the Kutzadika Tribe. This Tribal-Water Board interaction set the tone for work on water quality issues while illuminating the important racial equity work before us. Our progress on the 2020 Lahontan Region Action Plan laid the foundation for starting meaningful conversations about race and our role in ensuring Lahontan Water Board regulatory actions account

for racial equity. To that end, the team formed a Racial Equity Working Group with a working group charter, communications plan, and draft racial equity resolution.

Weather and environmental conditions also played a huge role in our regulatory efforts over the past fiscal year. Record precipitation and snowfall throughout the entire region impacted personal homelife and safety. It also hampered inspections and required team involvement in weather-related sewage spills and flooding issues, while denying safe access to some regulated facilities. Unsafe avalanche conditions prevented access to Leviathan Mine during parts of February and March. Consequently, the unusually high amount of precipitation observed during the winter temporarily prevented operation of the Acid Mine Drainage treatment system and forced a controlled bypass of pond capture systems for a week. Throughout the fiscal year our team responded well to the challenges thrown at us and our improvements in leadership, communication, process improvements, and trust building were evident in our successes.

SUCSESSES IN FY 2022/2023

We accomplished much during the past fiscal year. Here is a summary of some of our more significant successes:

Racial Equity

In November 2021, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted [Resolution No. 2021-0050](#), which among other things, encourages the Regional Water Boards to develop Racial Equity resolutions, action plans, regular updates to their Boards' and other commitments that build off of foundational efforts and commitments established by State Water Board and CalEPA. In response to that, in FY 22/23 we established an internal Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) and plan comprised of a diversity of staff, managers, and executives. The group anticipates a Board item in August 2023 with an update on the status of the group efforts and a Lahontan Water Board specific Racial Equity Resolution in early 2024.

Mono Lake Tribal Beneficial Uses

The Kutzadika (Kootzadika'a) Tribe requested we designate the CUL and T-SUB beneficial uses for Mono Lake and its tributaries following our Triennial Review in 2021. During FY 22/23 significant headway has been made in terms of critical outreach meetings with the Tribe and preparing a Staff Report for this Basin Plan Amendment that is anticipated for adoption in the fiscal year 23/24.

USGS Background Study in Hinkley

At long last, the [Natural and anthropogenic \(human-made\) hexavalent chromium, Cr\(VI\), in groundwater near a mapped plume, Hinkley, California \(usgs.gov\)](#) was released by the USGS and presented to the Lahontan Water Board on April 26, 2023. This was a significant milestone for USGS, PG&E, and the Lahontan Water Board and staff. This long anticipated report will provide key information for staff to consider to help delineate a Cr(VI) regulatory plume in the Hinkley Valley and will help establish important updates to [Cleanup and Abatement Order R6V-2015-0068](#).

Leviathan Mine

Working closely with staff from Department of Administrative Services (DAS) at State Board, the Leviathan team put together a request (Spring Finance Letter) for \$5.2 million dollars of General Funds for repair of critical infrastructure at Leviathan Mine (the Leviathan Creek Channel Diversion). The proposed corrective work includes relining the Leviathan Creek Diversion Channel side wall with reinforced concrete to prevent further deterioration of the existing concrete surface and will allow for continued use of critical site infrastructure for an additional 40 years. In early March 2023, we received news that the request for funds had been approved by Department of Finance.

Coming together as a Team

FY 22/23 marked the first year since the pandemic that we were able to have multiple in-person meetings and gatherings with All-Staff. In early November 2022, we hosted a two day All-Staff meeting in Bishop, CA. In March 2023, we hosted our first in-person, monthly All-Staff meeting and were able to connect the two offices virtually using Microsoft Teams. We anticipate more and more in-person gatherings and team building efforts in FY 23/24. Additionally, we have seen great strides from all the teams in terms of more frequent, focused, and efficient unit and division meetings.

PACE

Significant headway was made in FY 22/23 to address the pace of our workload and behavioral norms of staff and in teams that affect our work productivity and efficiency. Continued refinement of the 4R Day process and the accompanying Intentional Focus Worksheet have made the work prioritization process much more streamlined and predictable. Likewise, the teams have learned a lot about how they interact, communication, and work together and have made a lot of improvements along those lines. Finally, changes in personal work habits and behaviors have also created more efficient project/time management which has also helped immensely in terms of how individuals and teams feel about the pace of their work and moved us closer to a state of sustainable pace.

Recruitment and Hiring

FY 22/23 was a busy year for hiring and recruitment and we were very successful in terms of “getting the right people on the bus.” Staffing vacancies posed a deleterious impact on our pace that was felt region wide. For example, several of our Scientific Aide positions were vacant for over a year and the workload transferred temporarily to others or postponed until the vacancy was filled. Overall, we have filled (as of 5/22/23) 26 positions this last year that included the following breakdown by classification:

- 2 admin staff – SSA (new hires)
- 9 EG (4 internal transfers, 5 new hires)
- 5 WRCE (new hires)
- 3 ES (1 internal transfer, 2 new hires)
- 4 Scientific Aids (new hires)
- 1 Specialist – Sr. EG. Spec. (promotion)

- 2 supervisors – Sr. WRCE (promotions)
- 1 manager – Supervising EG (promotion)

It is also worth noting that the two SSA positions listed above were vacant for almost one year. We were able to successfully complete a reclassification by adding additional duties to these positions for ADA document compliance work. This effort was a huge win, and we are excited about all the hires this last year!

Bacteria Water Quality Objectives Basin Plan Amendment

The Planning and Assessment program made significant headway in FY 22/23 by completing and distributing draft documents for a Basin Plan Amendments that would remove the fecal coliform water quality objective and narrative bacteria water quality objective from the Basin Plan. The statewide e. coli water quality objective is in effect and would not be revised by the proposed Basin Plan Amendment. The Board will consider adopting this BPA in June 2023.

Enforcement

The Lahontan Water Board Enforcement program saw a number of significant improvements and successes in FY 22/23, including: 1) hired and Enforcement Coordinator, 2) on-going support from DAS to help fund retired annuitants, 3) progress with South Y PCE investigation assisted by SCAP funding, 4) completion of several settlement agreements, some in Disadvantaged Communities (DAC), 5) addressing most of our outstanding MMPs, 6) working with Office of Enforcement (OE) to develop strong working templates for compressed ACL through multiple enforcement cases, 7) significant headway in addressing violations of the Basin Plan and construction stormwater permitting through progressive enforcement, 8) development and implementation of a Complaint Tracking system, and 9) currently developing new Region 6 enforcement priorities.

JOB TO BE DONE IN FY2023/2024

PACE (on-going effort from FY 22/23)

In FY 22/23 we made great process on addressing the PACE of our work. We refined our 4R Day process to improve the Intentional Focus Worksheets and clearly identify areas where individuals and teams can RELEASE lower priority work and also focus on behavioral changes that have a net benefit in terms of improving communication and overall organizational efficiencies. At the face to face all staff meeting in Bishop in November 2022, we conducted a workshop where we revealed that sustainable PACE is different from one individual to another and that many of the gains we can achieve along those lines rest with individual and team behaviors and norms.

For FY 23/24 we will continue to utilize and improve on tools such as the Intentional Focus Worksheet and integrate the Line-of-Sight Matrix into our month to month, week to week, and even day to day prioritization exercises. We will continue to integrate tools developed from the TPL and 4R Day process into our work planning, quarterly management meetings, meeting and setting performance targets, and finally, achieving our divisional objectives and regional goals. Additionally, we will encourage and direct staff and managers throughout the organization to reflect on their own time management and project management skills and behaviors to develop more efficient and effective way to complete our highest priority goals/objectives.

Water Quality Program Performance Targets

Our region's performance targets are a standard means State Board employs to measure success in our water quality programs. The results are measured against statewide targets that are reported out to CalEPA and USEPA. We will conduct regional quarterly performance target assessments to inform management decisions on realistic performance target achievement, competing priority tasks, and workload pace considerations. Where applicable, we will meet those performance targets. However, we will be prepared to shift attention away from a performance target commitment in cases where compelling resource limitations or emerging priorities require that shift. Any shift away from performance target achievement will be evaluated and communicated well in advance among senior and executive management prior to the shift. The model we will use will come from the lesson we learned from the NPDES permit backlog mid-year review. Following an internal mid-year NPDES program performance target review, the Region was able to demonstrate to State Board our immediate program deficiencies and our long-term realistic plan to meet goals.

Telework Environment Successes

The FY 22/23 year marked the third year of telework since the pandemic. We have seen many successes over the past three years in terms utilizing technology such as Microsoft Teams and SharePoint to enhance our ability to communicate in a virtual work setting. Despite these successes, we have also discovered many inefficiencies of telework versus in office work both in terms of communication, building strong relationships and trust, and other added benefits of being in close proximity to our co-

workers. We saw great success this past year with our first face to face, in-person All-Staff meeting in Bishop, CA in early November of 2022 and our first in-person monthly All-Staff meeting in March 2023. Looking forward to FY 23/24, we will work to create more opportunities and venues for greater levels of in-person interactions between staff through in-person and hybrid All-Staff meetings, in-person Divisional meetings, and encouraging staff to plan for more internal meetings and cross training opportunities. This approach will be vitally important as we continue to on-board new staff and also to meet organizational needs, duties of the job, performance targets, and our overall regional goals.

Climate Change, Extreme Weather Events, and Emergency Management Planning

The winter of FY 22/23 brought over 200% of normal snowpack to the Sierra Nevada, as well as significant amount of rainfall to the southern portion of the region. As a result, the region's rivers, creeks, and ephemeral streams were subject to flashy, episodic, high volume flows (e.g., the Mojave River experienced surface flow for the first time in over ten years) that also produced flooding in low lying areas causing sanitary sewer overflows and damage to infrastructure such as roads, highways, and bridges. Staff response and resources dedicated to these extreme weather events has highlighted the need to finalize our Lahontan Region Emergency Response Plan (ERP) with the assistance of members of State Board's Emergency Management Program (EMP). In FY 23/24 we are committed to finalizing our ERP to be better prepared and responsive to future extreme weather events as a result of climate change. Despite the significant precipitation during the winter of 2022-2023, drought conditions and designation in much of the region have not been lifted. We will continue to follow Governor Executive orders such as Executive Order N-7-22 on March 28th, 2022, directing the State Water Board to consider adopting new water conservation emergency regulations to prepare for and mitigate the effects of worsening drought conditions. We will continue to update internal strategy and planning documents such as the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan to document lessons learned from drought, wildfire, flooding, and other extreme weather events and associated emergency response planning.

Racial Equity and Implementation of AB2108 requirements (on-going effort from FY 22/23)

In the upcoming fiscal year, we will endeavor to continue to develop a Racial Equity Resolution and Action Plan specific to the Lahontan Water Board region. We anticipate bringing an update along those lines to the Lahontan Water Board in August 2023. Additionally, we have been and will continue making great strides in terms of incorporating AB2108 requirements into all of our planning, policy, and permitting processes. As per this legislation, each regional board must engage in equitable, culturally relevant community outreach to promote meaningful civic engagement from potentially impacted communities of proposed discharges of waste that may have disproportionate impacts on water quality in disadvantaged communities or tribal communities and ensure that outreach and engagement shall continue throughout the waste discharge planning, policy, and permitting processes.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is a water quality problem that we have seen expand in our region due to climate related drivers such as drought conditions and extreme temperatures. Most recently, the AIS problem has become a widespread problem in the Tahoe Keys lagoons, however, many other surface waters in our region are experiencing similar water quality issues. To help get ahead of this problem, we have formed an internal AIS Working Group comprised of managers and technical staff across multiple programs to help identify the magnitude, scale and scope of the issue and to help identify consistency and efficiency by which we are able to use permitting and other regulatory tools to address AIS. The primary goals of a AIS Strategy document that the internal AIS Working Group is currently developing will be: 1) develop a high level of coordination and collaboration within the working group and external partners/stakeholders, 2) create greater efficiency in our permitting process, and 3) establish a mechanism/tool to better understand the scope, scale, and magnitude of AIS issues throughout the region.

Leviathan Mine (on-going from FY 22/23)

The USEPA is expected to redirect efforts of Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) and the Lahontan Water Board on the Focused Feasibility Study to address year-round capture and treatment of the five primary discharges of Acid Mine Drainage utilizing a centralized High Density Sludge Treatment Plant while parallel efforts continue on the sitewide RI/FS. To that end, we will provide our comments and technical expertise the USEPA's Proposed Plan and Record of Decision late in the fiscal year and ARCO's Remedial Investigation and Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment reports. Concurrently, we will continue to improve and refine our health and safety plans, develop a Unified Site Operations Plan with ARCO, and pursue funding and contracts to design and construct the final remedial actions.

George AFB

The Air Force has determined recently that two of its solvent plumes are moving at an alarming 250 feet per year towards the Mojave River. Monitored Natural Attenuation has been the preferred remedy selected by the Air Force due its low cost and low resource demands. Our focus will be to build relationships with key community leaders, inform stakeholders of the rapid plume movement, and develop a remediation approach with the Air Force that promotes active remediation technologies to arrest plume movement toward the Mojave River.

Mono Lake Tribal Beneficial Uses

The Kutzadika (Kootzadika'a) Tribe requested we adopt the CUL and T-SUB beneficial uses for Mono Lake and its tributaries following our Triennial Review in 2021. We will continue to coordinate with the Tribe, develop a Supplemental Environmental Document (SED), and bring a Basin Plan Amendment to the Board for adoption in late 2023. Similar efforts are under way in Region's 5 and 9 that will continue to inform us as we move forward.

PG&E Hinkley Hexavalent Chromium Remediation

PG&E has been implementing groundwater cleanup of hexavalent chromium in Hinkley in accordance with the provisions of CAO R6V-2015-0068. In light of the USGS Background Study, we will begin evaluation of the report findings this fiscal year and develop a plan and schedule for a possible CAO revision for the Board's consideration. Agricultural treatment units or ATUs are one of several remediation methodologies employed by PG&E. We will explore ways for PG&E to achieve hexavalent chromium remediation goals using ATUs that concurrently promotes water conservation objectives of the Water Supply Strategy while also reducing TDS and nitrate loading of the Hinkley aquifer from agricultural operations.

Field Presence

In the upcoming year, we will make a greater commitment at all levels of the organization to create more opportunities for staff to be in the field, whether that is through inspections, consultations with dischargers or project proponents, field tours, trainings and/or cross trainings. We need greater balance between administrative aspect of our work compared to field work and field presence with the regulated community. Much can be gained in terms of building relationships, hearing perspectives, and the understanding complexities of water quality issues and permitting needs that can be better and more efficiently achieved through field presence. This initiative speaks to all of our regional goals.

EXECUTIVE OBJECTIVES

Sustainable PACE. It is important that we seize upon gains we have made towards getting our pace from a fast sprint closer to the marathon pace utilizing tools: 4R Days, quarterly management meetings, line of sight matrix, and the intentional focus worksheets to set realistic work planning and performance targets. Executive management will endeavor to provide timely guidance on priorities where applicable.

Process improvements. Executive management will continue to work on process improvements and improving workflows in our work efforts. Improving document review timeliness was started during FY 21/22 and will be refined during early FY22/23.

Building TRUST in the organization. Trust is a precious commodity that cannot be taken for granted. We have made much progress on building trust in the organization through leadership training, communication exercises, EO and AEO office hours, all staff meetings, and periodic reports to the whole team on status of key decisions. This practice will continue into the next fiscal year.

Increase executive presence in the VVL office. Executive management will continue to be present in the Victorville branch office to be accessible to staff on a regular and continuous basis.

Expand on and Build New External Relationships

One of the chief duties of executive leadership is to build relationships with external partners, stakeholders, and dischargers throughout the region. By doing so, executive leadership will gain valuable insight into complex water quality issues from the perspective of those parties. These insights and knowledge gained through developing the relationships can then provide direction to technical staff, managers, and also help in advising the Board on key water quality issues.

ENCLOSURE 2

Vision Statement

Clean water for human uses, wildlife viability, and environmental resource protection for current and future generations.

Mission Statement

*Restore, enhance, and preserve the quality of the Lahontan Region's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses,
from mountain crests to valley floors.*

Regional Goals

Our regional goals are our North Star that helps provide focus, clarity, and direction for everything that we do. From major policy direction, prioritization of permit development or renewal, to day-to-day workplan prioritization decisions, our regional goals help us stay focused, consistent, and true to our mission, vision, and values. The goals herein were updated at the June 2021 Lahontan Water Board meeting with Board member and staff collaborative input.

Protect human health and aquatic life.

Protect/Improve aquatic resources and water quality.

Promote a safe work environment.

Provide exceptional customer service, while being realistic about resources and commitments.

Core Values

Integrity

- Act in all endeavors in an ethical and professional manner with an open mindset
- Be truthful in all actions and communications
- Honor commitments, keep promises, and build trust
- Choose to do what is right, over what is easy
- Practice our values rather than just profess them

Accountability

- Make technically and scientifically sound decisions from experience, good judgment, and collaboration
- Find solutions that contribute to desired results
- Give and seek clear direction and expectations
- Take ownership of, and responsibility for, actions, risks, and results, and use outcomes as learning opportunities
- Act with character and go the extra mile

Transparency

- Encourage open, honest, and effective communication
- Give productive feedback and the “why” underlying decisions
- Approach every situation with honest, good intentions
- Listen, collaborate, and share across the Region

Respect

- Be courteous, responsive, and professional
- Stay present in the moment and actively listen to understand others
- Treat every person with kindness and humility
- Be receptive to new and diverse ideas
- Value and recognize every individual for their unique skills, talents, and contributions

Balance

- Be clear about work priorities while maintaining reasonable time commitments
- Embrace opportunities for personal and professional development
- Maintain focus on long-term goals while meeting short-term needs
- Support a healthy personal and professional life
- Support an environment that is optimistic, enjoyable, and fun, in which relationships can prosper across our region, our organization and our communities

Leadership

Leadership is an individual or a group of individuals who influence, motivate, and guide others with clear direction and a positive approach towards successfully achieving the mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization.

Qualities and Attributes of a Leader

Approachable and creates a safe environment for all

Effective communicator

Leads by example

High moral and ethical standards

Accountable

Humble, vulnerable, and open to feedback

Decisive and timely decision-maker

Good at managing conflict

Team builder

High level of Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Visionary and Strategic Thinker