



# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

May 2013

## STATE AND REGIONAL

1. **World Water Day 2013 - International Year of Cooperation** - *Cindy Wise and Carly Nilson*

World Water Day is observed every year on March 22 to focus attention on the importance of freshwater and to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This year's theme was "Cooperation" with the objective to raise awareness of the potential for increased cooperation, collaboration, and address the challenges facing water management in light of increased demand for water access, allocation, and services. In the Eastern Sierra, the Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP) organized a World Water Day event to celebrate its five years of water collaboration as a part of the growing IRWM effort that perpetuates self-sustaining water management. Water Board staff helped to sponsor the event as part of the outreach and education component of the Rivers and Ranches grant.

From March 8 -22, the three-part event combined elementary education, display and book donations to local libraries, and culminated with a banquet and panel discussion focused on water cooperation. Lessons on water use, watershed protection and water collaboration were taught to K-6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Mammoth Lakes, Coleville, Round Valley, and Bishop elementary schools. World Water Day-themed posters were distributed throughout

the four elementary schools and local libraries. For the final part of the event, the Inyo-Mono IRWM hosted a water forum to discuss water cooperation and the connections among water, people, and the local landscape with selected panel members. Panelists included representatives from the Water Board, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Mono Lake Committee, UC Santa Barbara Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory, Inyo National Forest, Inyo County Board of Supervisors and the Fort Independence Paiute Tribe. An audience of about 100 people had the opportunity to engage with the panel, ask questions, and discuss their concerns related to water management and planning in the Eastern Sierra and beyond. Water Board staff also worked a booth at the event to distribute information about the Rivers and Ranches grant program.

2. **Bacteria Monitoring Update** - *Thomas Suk, Cindy Wise, and Carly Nilson*

Staff and contractors collected more than 800 water quality samples for bacteria analyses throughout the Region during 2012. A summary report is being prepared, and results are being loaded into the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) to facilitate public access to the data. The summary report will build upon the data presented in last year's report: [\*Bacteria Monitoring in the Eastern Sierra Nevada—Summary of Results for 2011.\*](#)

The 2012 sampling showed that the Basin Plan's bacteria objectives were exceeded at numerous locations throughout the Region. The highest concentrations of fecal indicator bacteria (i.e., fecal coliform and *E. coli*, or "FIB") were detected at the Susan River, Hot Creek (tributary to the Little Walker River), Bridgeport Valley, Bishop Creek, and at areas leased by the U.S. Forest Service for cattle grazing—Horseshoe Meadow (Inyo National Forest) and Sardine Creek (Toiyabe National Forest).

Of the 50+ sites that were sampled during 2012, Hot Creek and Bishop Creek had the consistently highest concentrations of FIB. Staff is focusing its follow-up on Bishop Creek because portions of Bishop Creek (and its receiving waters, such as the Bishop Creek Canal) are very popular for swimming and wading during the hot summer months. While the sources of FIB in Bishop Creek remain unknown, staff is concerned about the recurring high concentrations, since numerous results document fecal coliform 30-day log means exceeding 200 colonies/100ml.

On March 21, staff met with representatives of the Inyo County Health Department, the City of Bishop, and Bishop Paiute Tribe to discuss bacteria in Bishop Creek. The Paiute Tribe has been monitoring Bishop Creek for many years, and has detected intermittently high concentrations of FIB in the Creek, including above, within, and below the Reservation. When concentrations exceed the Tribe's own standards, it posts signs at popular swimming locations within the Reservation warning people to stay out of the water. The Inyo County Health Department has no funding for stream monitoring, and has not posted warning signs. The group discussed results for 2012, monitoring locations for 2013, and the need for microbial source tracking (MST) to identify the sources of the bacteria in Bishop Creek.

On March 27, staff met with scientists from the University of California's Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory (SNARL) to discuss bacteria monitoring and research plans for 2013. Final sampling locations and monitoring frequencies for 2013 will include Bishop Creek and other sites where high concentrations were detected during 2012. SNARL will also begin the process of MST to shed light on the sources of bacteria in surface waters of the Region. The Region's "Rivers and Ranches" (Prop. 84) grant contains a small component for MST, which will be coordinated with the SNARL project.

The funding currently available for SNARL will last only through 2013. On April 10, staff submitted a proposal to the State Water Board requesting additional funds to continue the Region's bacteria monitoring and MST efforts through 2015. The information is needed to support the Board's Triennial Review priority to evaluate and update bacterial standards. The MST results would allow staff to identify bacteria sources in waters of the Region, a necessary first step to addressing the numerous water bodies listed as impaired due to bacteria and pathogens. A decision on the proposal is expected by summer.

## NORTH BASIN

### 3. **Beaver Management Forum** - *Dale Payne*

The North Basin Regulatory Unit hosted a forum on beaver management at the South Lake Tahoe Board Hearing Room on April 19, 2013.

The forum provided the opportunity for interested parties to voice their concerns, identify issues, and gain an understanding of applicable regulations regarding the management of beavers in the greater Lake Tahoe area. Unfortunately, existing or planned land and water use often clash with the habitat that beaver create. Depending on the nature of a project, removal of beaver dams may result in waste discharges to surface waters and require one or more regulatory agencies to become involved in permitting or oversight. Four agencies with codes, regulations, or other involvement with beaver management were invited to serve as a panel. Also invited were local agencies, organizations, and members of the public that had interest in the topic, or were unsure how to engage with regulatory agencies in permitting or evaluating beaver management projects.

The regulatory agency panel included representatives from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDA Forest Service/Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and Water Board staff. Each panel member discussed their agency's potential involvement with beaver management.

An informative discussion followed the panel presentations. The panel received questions and comments from two local wildlife organizations regarding conservation and regulatory action and the need for streamlining of the permitting process for more simple solutions for certain types of projects, including installation of a "beaver deceiver," a pipe system that allows water to pass out of a beaver pond without overtopping the dam. A local property owner on the Upper Truckee River wanted to find a way to work with the beavers, rather than destroy them; a theme that was repeated during the forum. Another comment was aimed at the need to better understand prey-predator relationships and the control of beaver populations.

Panel members did an exceptional job of answering questions and proposing potential solutions in given beaver management situations. Participants and panel members alike commented on the helpful and enlightening nature of the forum. Based on input received and potential future demand, the Water Board will consider developing policies and general permits for beaver management activities that pose limited threats to water quality.

## SOUTH BASIN

#### 4. **Bridgeport Ranchers Organization Annual Spring Meeting** - *Douglas Cushman*

Water Board staff attended the annual spring meeting of the Bridgeport Ranchers Organization (BRO) on March 19. The BRO meets annually in the spring prior to bringing livestock into the Bridgeport Valley for the summer grazing season to discuss water quality monitoring and operational changes. Since the Water Board adopted a grazing waiver in 2007, the spring meeting is when the BRO submits the water quality monitoring summary from the previous grazing season. Water quality monitoring data collected by the BRO indicates that during the 2012 summer grazing season numerous monitoring sites in the valley exceeded 200 fecal coliform colony forming units per 100 mL of water. The 2012 Grazing Waiver does not require the BRO to conduct water quality monitoring during 2013; rather, it directs the Waiver enrollees to focus on management practice implementation that will address the sources of pathogen inputs to the surface waters in the Bridgeport Valley.

Staff also discussed the status of application packets for enrollment under the 2012 Grazing Waiver. All ranches have submitted grazing waiver applications, however, most ranches have not yet submitted a Ranch Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP) that fully complies with the requirements specified in the 2012 Grazing Waiver. Staff has arranged a one-stop-shop on May 15 in Bridgeport to help all ranchers complete paperwork for enrolling under the Grazing Waiver.

#### 5. **Owens Lake Plane Crash** - *Cindi Mitton*

A small fuel spill occurred when an Air National Guard jet crashed on Owens Lake in January 2013. The Owens lake bed is owned by the State Lands Commission. State Lands Commission staff contacted the Water Board after the incident and provided our office with

a report of results of sampling done at the time of the crash. Water Board staff coordinated with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife who also received a report of the laboratory results.

Site sampling results indicate that the residual hydrocarbons that remain at the site from the fuel spill are not widespread and are localized at the ground surface. Based on the sampling results, the threat to surface water and groundwater quality from the site appears low and further work at this site is not being requested.

Staff researched Water Board records and the records of the California Emergency Management Agency's website to try to locate a report notifying agencies of the jet crash and fuel release. Staff found that this incident was not immediately reported as it should have been by the Air National Guard through the State's notification system. Reporting through this system provides the agencies with early notification of incidents. This gives agency staff an opportunity to provide input to the field work or conduct field visits to assess environmental impacts and observe any sampling or cleanup. Water Board staff provided information regarding how to report to the California Emergency Agency for use in the event of future spills. We appreciate the contact that the State Lands Commission made to our office regarding this incident.

#### 6. **Antelope Valley Regional Water Management Group, Meetings for the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Update and the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan** - *Jan M. Zimmerman and Cindy Wise*

Water Board staff attended a meeting of the Antelope Valley Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) on March 20. The purpose was to present the stakeholders a progress report on the efforts to update the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP)

and to discuss other matters pertaining to the RWMG. Brian Deitrich of RMC led the stakeholder group meeting, and informed the group that the plan update is moving forward as scheduled and that progress is being made by the integrated flood management and disadvantaged community (DAC) subcommittees to finalize the technical memos for advisory committee (A-Team) review.

An update on available Proposition (Prop) 84 and Prop 1E grant funding opportunities was also provided to the group. On behalf of the RWMG, RMC submitted the grant application for the Little Rock Dam Sediment Removal Project in February 2013. The Department of Water Resources is currently reviewing those applications. Initial review results are expected early summer. RMC is also working on a grant application for the Boron Arsenic Pilot Study. The study will consider the feasibility of alternatives to reduce the concentration of arsenic in the potable water system. The alternatives include drilling a new well, well head treatment for the existing well, and blending with import water.

Following the IRWMP update, several stakeholders participated in a subcommittee meeting for the Salt/Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP). Strategies currently being developed for salt and nutrient management include: source control and water quality; brine volume reduction; zero-liquid discharge; and final disposal of brines and solids. In addition, progress has been made in developing the monitoring and reporting program for the plan. A number of wells have been identified for inclusion in the monitoring program. These wells were selected based on a number of criteria including availability of historical water quality data, close proximity to known salt/nutrient sources (existing and proposed projects), and ownership by RWMG member agencies. Reporting will occur on a 3-year basis. The responsible party for preparing those progress reports has not yet been identified. The group is considering whether the long term SNMP monitoring can be

included as part of the water master services if/when the adjudication process is settled.

#### **7. Fremont Basin Salt and Nutrient Management Plan - *Cindy Wise and Jan Zimmerman***

The City of California City (City) and Mojave Public Utility District (PUD) are developing a salt/nutrient management plan (SNMP) as required by the State's Recycled Water Policy. Water Board staff met with City representatives Tom Weil, City Manager, Michael Bevins, Public Works Director, and Jennifer Wood, City Council Member, on March 20, to discuss the status of the SNMP and the progress of the Fremont Valley Regional Water Management Group (RWMG). In 2010, the City together with Mojave PUD directed the initial preparation of a draft SNMP for the Fremont Basin. The planning area includes the Tehachapi East groundwater basin, one of the 12 priority groundwater basins identified for SNMP development in the Lahontan Region. The draft plan was initially prepared without input from the Regional Board; however, Water Board staff are now reviewing the scope of the draft plan and working with City representatives to schedule a presentation to the Regional Board on the proposed scope of the Fremont Basin SNMP. This presentation is a key opportunity to inform and involve the Regional Board prior to finalizing the plan. In their efforts to finalize member requirements for the Fremont Valley RWMG, the City is continuing discussions with representatives from Mojave PUD, Kern County, and Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency. As defined by the Department of Water Resources, a RWMG is a group made up of a group of three or more local agencies, where at least two of which have statutory authority over water supply or water management. Water Board staff offered to provide assistance to reach out to these entities to discuss the pros and cons of RWMG and integrated water management planning, the regulations regarding recycled

water use, and implications for salt and nutrient loading in the basin.