Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 2014

STATE AND REGIONAL

1. **GirlsRISE (Raising Interest in Science and Engineering) Workshop -** *Cindy Wise*

   GirlsRISE is a nationwide initiative to raise girls' interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and address the national need to cultivate diversity in preparing the next generation of scientists and engineers. The California Academy of Sciences is the regional hub for the South Pacific area to assist in implementing the initiative. In July, staff participated in a local Girls RISE workshop (hosted by the U.C. Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center) focused on building participants' capacity to develop and deliver STEM outreach and activities that are attractive, relevant and impactful to girls, as well as other underrepresented groups, in the fields of science, engineering, and mathematics. The workshop was geared toward providing informal science educators such as Water Board staff with tools and techniques to engage and motivate minority girls in grades 6-12 to explore and pursue STEM in their further education and as careers. Staff benefited from the hands-on experience in the workshop using tools to assess the effectiveness of its water quality education programs for relevance across gender, race, ethnicity and other dimensions of diversity. Staff can now use these new skills to modify and improve existing educational activities and in the development of any new activities.

NORTH

2. **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Activity in Truckee and Little Truckee River Hydrologic Units, Nevada County –** *Alan Miller*

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) operates four dams in the Lahontan region: Lake Tahoe Dam, Prosser Creek Dam, Stampede Dam and Boca Dam. I issued a Water Quality Certification Order in 2013 allowing the Bureau to raise the Stampede Dam height by over 11 feet to prevent overtopping, improve the spillway, and make other modifications to prevent a failure of Stampede Dam due to extreme flood. That project was scheduled to begin in 2014 and has been delayed.

Staff participated in a meeting with the Bureau on June 27, 2014 concerning proposed modifications to the Boca Dam on the Little Truckee River. This dam is located a short distance below Stampede Dam and impounds much less water. Bureau studies indicate this dam has a structural weakness that may not withstand earthquake forces that could cause the earthen dam to slump and overtop. The proposed fix involves reconstructing engineered fill at the base of the dam to resist shear forces, involving massive excavation and earthmoving (hundreds of thousands of cubic yards), including within the reservoir. The Bureau has contacted the Water Board to jointly conduct environmental review and planning processes. The Water Board will be the Lead Agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (prior to considering Water Quality Certification), and the Bureau will conduct a National Environmental Policy Act review. Construction is expected no sooner than the winter of 2015-2016, and will likely need to be coordinated with the work planned at nearby Stampede Dam.

On July 2, 2014 staff received an application from the Bureau to conduct geotechnical investigations involving test-pit excavation and drilling at the Prosser Creek Dam on a tributary to the Truckee River. The geotechnical investigations are to investigate potential liquefaction issues that are associated with seismic concerns and dam structural stability.

Staff is not aware of any activities being planned for the Lake Tahoe Dam, which controls flow to the Truckee River.

3. **Leviathan Mine Activities, Alpine County –** *Chris Stetler*

Water Board staff Doug Carey and Chris Stetler met with representatives from US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), US Army Corps of Engineers, Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), and ARCO's consultants on August 7, 2014 to discuss the Leviathan Mine project. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the USEPA's new Remedial Project Manager, Lynda Deschambault, an overview of the project and to report the status of activities at the Leviathan Mine Superfund Site.

During the meeting, ARCO representatives expressed their opinion that their two year (2012-2013) surface water quality data set satisfies the objectives set forth in the Statement of Work for surface water investigation required by USEPA's Administrative Order to ARCO for Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) at Leviathan Mine. ARCO stated that they were in the process of preparing a more complete evaluation and summary of existing data to substantiate their conclusions regarding the adequacy of the existing data set.

The meeting attendees discussed various concerns about the preliminary summary, and identified the importance of considering the more than 10 years of historical surface water quality data collected by Water Board staff along with the data collected as part of ARCO's focused 2-year water quality sampling effort. Consideration of specific site activities that may have impacted water quality sampling events was also identified as a needed data assessment step, because without such assessment the data appear to have significant variability. Samples collected when ARCO was not capturing acidic mine drainage (AMD) at two of the AMD discharge locations can have a significant effect on surface water quality downstream of the mine. Also, when the Water Board or ARCO are discharging treated AMD to the stream, water quality is quite different than when no treated discharge is occurring. Water Board staff agreed to assist ARCO in identifying such discrete site activities that effect water quality sampling results. ARCO expects to complete a more thorough evaluation and summary of the existing water quality data in early October 2014. USEPA and Water Board staff will have another opportunity to review the evaluation and summary at that time

4. **Water Quality Presentation at Lassen County Fair -** *Cindy Wise and Carly Nilson*

   Lassen County's Cattle Women's Association and Farm Bureau asked staff to participate in its Kiddies Day event at the Lassen County Fair. The event featured environmental activities as well as branding, roping, and milking, in celebration of National Dairy Month. On July 17, staff used its tabletop watershed model to illustrate watershed processes, causes of water pollution, and ways to prevent water pollution. Over 100 children and parents participated in the event. This was an important outreach effort serving a more remote part of the Region plus an opportunity to partner with the agricultural stakeholders who planned the Kiddies Day event.

5. **Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Program Meeting -** *Tobi Tyler*

   Water Board staff met with a group of Lake Tahoe stakeholders on Friday, July 18, 2014, to begin a dialogue about some of the concerns expressed by Tahoe stakeholders regarding the use of the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) on projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

   Some of the concerns included how higher CRAM scores in the Basin might affect availability of future funding sources in the Basin, whether CRAM scores are sensitive enough to exhibit differences pre- and post-project, and whether CRAM was going to be required in future permits.

   Staff made a presentation at the beginning of the meeting that gave the background on the USEPA Grant project and the rationale behind the State Water Resources Control Board's adoption of the USEPA's Level 1 (mapping), 2 (rapid assessment), 3 (intensive assessment) approach in the Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy (CRAM is a Level 2 methodology). The presentation emphasized that billions of dollars have been spent on restoration projects throughout the State with little to show in accountability for that investment and little to no public access to information on these restoration projects. These points became the rationale for Senate Bill 1070 in 2006 that called for coordinated, scientifically-verifiable monitoring, public access to monitoring information, and for

the California Water Quality Monitoring Council to begin following up on these improvements in accountability and outreach. CRAM is being used or required in several Water Board regions for both mitigation and restoration projects. I am working with my staff to explore options on how CRAM might best be applied in the Lahontan Region.

At the meeting, we listened to the participants' concerns, responded where appropriate, and discussed follow-up meetings to further address concerns, some of which were not directly related to CRAM, such as the current lack of TMDL water quality crediting for stream and wetland restoration and the need to track pollutant load reductions from these projects. We stated that we did not believe that higher CRAM scores would hurt Tahoe's chances of available funding as Lake Tahoe because of the lake's Outstanding Natural Resource Water status. However, future grant funding for all restoration projects in the state is going to become more difficult and expectations for greater accountability and public outreach will be higher.

SOUTH

6. **Trona Community Service Area 82 Wastewater Treatment Units** – *John Morales*

   The San Bernardino County Service Area (CSA) 82 serves two small unincorporated communities of Pioneer Point and Trona. All of the wastewater collected discharges into large septic tanks and is conveyed to the Searles Lake Bed (not a water of the United States) domestic wastewater and comingles with effluent from Searles Valley Minerals. Septage sludge drying beds are located on the eastern edge of the Searles Lake bed. Dry sludge is periodically removed to a landfill.

   The CSA 82 has requested the Water Board to support an upgrade project for the collection and disposal pipeline system. The existing sewer outfall pipeline will be replaced with approximately 11,000 feet of new pipeline and a new pump lift station will be constructed. Septic tanks would still be used to remove solids, although the two outfall lines will be combined into a single outfall near Trona. The construction of the proposed project will begin about March 2015.

   Staff provided a letter of support to San Bernardino County and advised them to proceed with the proposed project under the existing Waste Discharge Requirements.

7. **Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority - Upper Narrows Pipeline Replacement Project** – *John Morales*

   This is a status report of the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority (VVWRA) Upper Narrows Pipeline Replacement Project resulting from the December 2010, 42.9 million gallon raw sewage spill to the Mojave River.

   Upon discovery of an interceptor breach, VVWRA developed and implemented plans to construct an emergency bypass. The constructed temporary bypass line involved the construction of about one mile of pipe, one crossing over the Mojave River, and associated lift station pumps.

   On January 14, 2011, staff issued an Investigative Order, requiring VVWRA to submit information regarding the manner and schedule for repairing the collection system. VVWRA began planning and designing a permanent bypass around the Upper Narrows. VVWRA elected to bore a tunnel beneath the Mojave River to accommodate flow from the Town of Apple Valley. An additional bore will continue through the bedrock formation called Hospital Hill bypassing the river in the Upper Narrows area. The approximately 7,000 feet of new pipeline will allow for entirely gravity flow in the VVWRA trunk interceptor pipeline through the Upper Narrows. (see map)

   There are four locations at the site with known soil and groundwater contamination. Among the four locations is the former Nuway Dry Cleaners Cleanup Site. Previous environmental assessments at the site have identified the soil and the groundwater to be contaminated with perchloroethylene or PCE, a solvent used in dry cleaning operations. As the project proceeds, additional soil and groundwater samples will be sent to a laboratory for analyses.

   Contaminated soil will be removed offsite for appropriate disposal. Extracted groundwater removed for dewatering the

tunnel containing detectable solvents will be treated and discharged to the VVWRA collection system. Extracted groundwater from the east bore, near the Kemper Campbell Ranch, will not likely contain pollutants and will be used for irrigation water on the ranch land.

On June 23, 2014, staff met at the site with construction personnel from VVWRA and its contractors to discuss the progress of the project to date. Discussions during the meeting included the on-site treatment process, disposal criteria, re-use of groundwater for irrigation purposes, applicable permits, and scheduling.

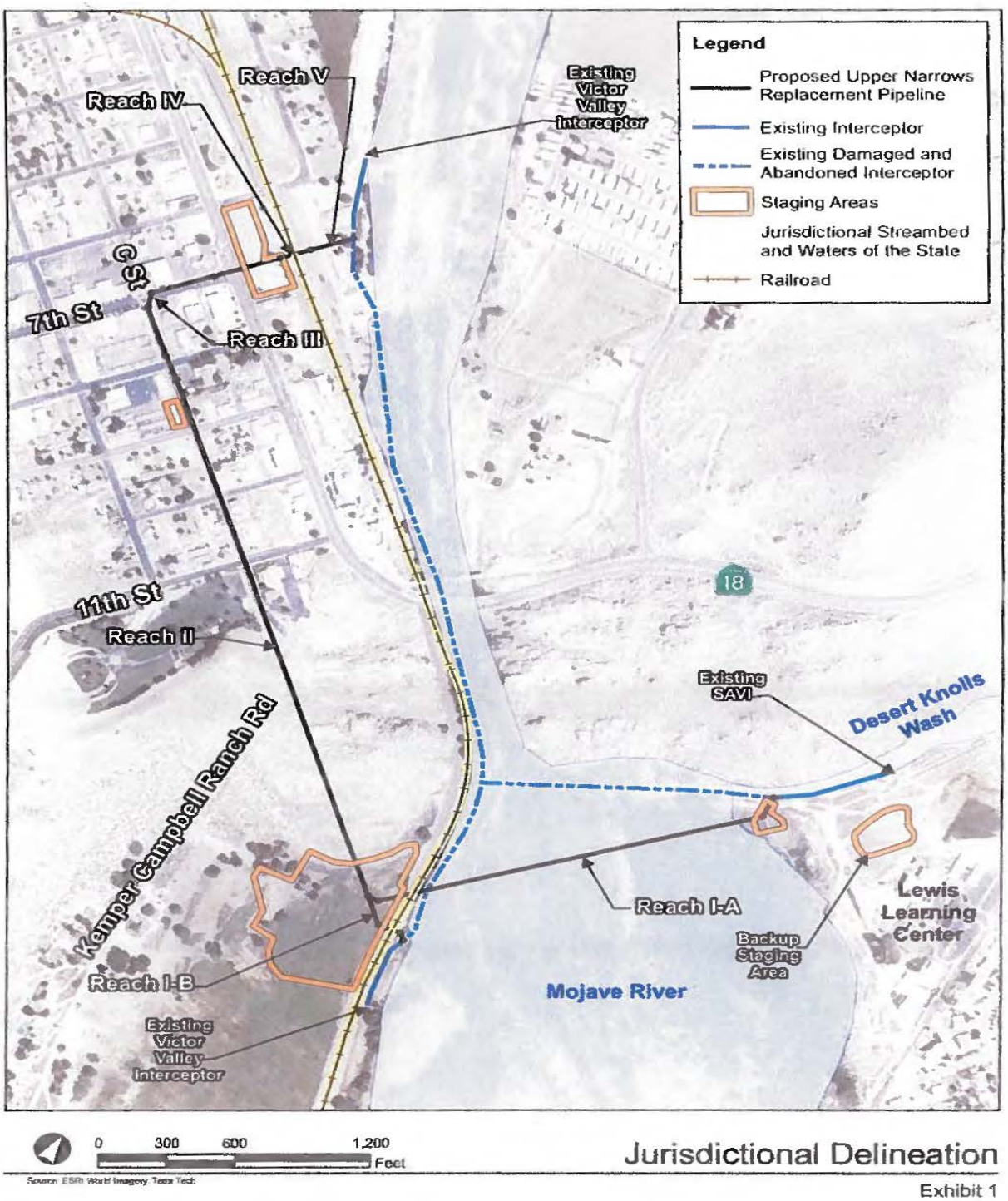
Tunnel boring is scheduled to begin as early as September 2014; the project is expected to be completed by March 2015.

8. **Former George Air Force Base, Victorville, San Bernardino County Record of Decision, Operable Unit 5 Sites OT072, OT073, and OT074 –** *Linda Stone*

The Air Force submitted a draft final Record of Decision (ROD) in June 2014 for the former George Air Force Base (GAFB) skeet range sites, OT072, OT073, and OT074, which are part of Operable Unit 5 (OU5).

The ROD presents the Air Force's selection of a no-further-action remedy for the sites based on its findings that the sites do not pose an unacceptable risk for unlimited use. Staff reviewed the proposed remedy and determined that it complies with the Water Board's applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements. Staff recommends concurrence with the final ROD and that the Executive Officer sign the final ROD indicating Water Board's concurrence. The skeet range sites were used for recreational target shooting and the ground surface contained lead shot and clay target fragments. Remedial investigations found that surface and near surface soil contained elevated levels of metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Interim remedial actions at these sites included the excavation of over 2,000 tons of contaminated soil, which were disposed of as hazardous waste at a Class I landfill. The Air Force also performed lead shot recovery at the unexcavated portions of the skeet ranges. Two of the three skeet ranges have been redeveloped and buildings have been constructed on these sites. The third site is an unpaved area adjacent to buildings. The Air Force's risk assessment found that the remaining soil contamination does not pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment. The nearest surface water body, the Mojave River, is approximately 800 feet from the closest skeet range site and the depth to groundwater is over 100 feet. Because metals and PAHs have low mobility, the relatively low concentrations of these contaminants in site soils are not considered a threat to water quality. If there are changes to the conditions from that described above, an updated item will be provided to the Water Board.

George Air Force Base was placed on the National Priorities List (Superfund) in 1990 due to multiple releases of contamination that had impacted soil and groundwater. Most of contaminated sites at the former GAFB are being addressed under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERLCA). Under the CERCLA process, the Air Force acts as the lead agency for remedial actions at GAFB, with federal regulatory oversight by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Water Board is the lead State agency. GAFB was closed in 1992 under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process and the property is being operated by the City of Victorville and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.



Jurisdictional Delineation

Exhibit 1