EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
June 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

Contents

1. Personnel Report — *Sandra Lopez*

New Hires

- Lee Weathersbee, Scientific Aid, Regulatory and Enforcement Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will be reviewing Self-Monitoring Reports submitted from facilities under permit. The reports will be associated with discharges to land, and surface water.

Vacancies

- Assistant Executive Officer for the Lahontan Region
- Senior Water Resource Control Engineer Supervisor (Eastern California Cannabis), Victorville. This position will be responsible for implementing the Water Board's Cannabis Cultivation Regulatory Program in the Lahontan and Colorado River Regions. The Eastern California Cannabis Supervisor will provide the lead responsibility for making policy recommendations, providing technical expertise orally and in written documents, evaluating and drafting engineering reports, staff reports, other technical documents, and performing analysis on

technically complex and politically sensitive assignments related to cannabis in the Lahontan and Colorado River regions.

- Senior Environmental Scientist Specialist, South Lake Tahoe. This position will act as Regional Monitoring Coordinator and will lead development of tools to evaluate water-quality at a regional and watershed scale, provide technical expertise and mentorship in surface water monitoring program development and implementation, and lead regional efforts to evaluate and report on water quality in relation to many complex issues including the effects of climate change, fire, and drought.

- Senior Water Resource Engineer Supervisor, South Lake Tahoe. This position supervises the technical staff in the Leviathan Mine Cleanup Unit. The unit also works closely with a Senior Water Resource Engineer Specialist, a Senior Engineering Geologist Specialist, and attorneys. The combined team works together to implement the Water Board's Leviathan Mine site cleanup and program.

- Scientific Aid, Non-Point Source and Forestry/Dredge & Fill Units, South Lake Tahoe. This position will review and evaluate water quality data, assist with harmful algal bloom response, and assess compliance with water quality orders and permits associated with grazing, restoration, timber, and forestry activities.

2. **Overview of the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program** — *Jeff Brooks*

Program Description

The statewide Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program is designed to protect public health, safety, and the environment from releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances. A UST is defined as "any one or combination of tanks, including pipes connected thereto, that is used for the storage of hazardous substances and that is substantially or totally beneath the surface of the ground" (certain exceptions apply). The UST program consists of four main elements: the Leak Prevention Program, Office of Tank Tester Licensing, cleanup of petroleum releases from UST systems, and Low Threat Closure, as well as enforcement activities.

Leak Prevention and Licensing

Staff from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) are involved in the Leak Prevention Program and the Office of Tank Tester Licensing. These programs aim to prevent leaks from UST systems and ensure that tank testers are properly licensed.

Cleanup and Enforcement

Lahontan Water Board staff within the Cleanup/Site Investigation and Enforcement (CSIE) Unit work to assist UST operators and owners with the cleanup of petroleum releases from UST systems. Work is guided by the SWRCB UST Low Threat Closure Policy (LTCP) - SWRCB Resolution 2012-0016 (State Water Resources Control Board

Resolution No. 2012-0016). The staff collaborates with the SWRCB Office of Enforcement to conduct necessary enforcement activities. Enforcement activities ensure compliance with UST program requirements.

Funding and Resources

Funding for UST site cleanup (assessment, monitoring, remediation, etc.) and regulatory agency oversight is provided by the UST Cleanup Fund (Fund). The Fund is derived from motor vehicle fuel tax revenue. The Fund helps petroleum UST owners and operators meet federal and state financial responsibility requirements for tank operations. It reimburses eligible expenses for cleaning up leaking USTs. It also provides resources to Regional Water Boards and local regulatory agencies to handle emergency situations or clean up abandoned sites. These sites pose threats to human health, safety, and the environment due to UST petroleum releases. The Fund is currently scheduled to sunset in January 2035.

Geotracker Data Management System

The SWRCB Geotracker data management system is used by regulatory agencies to manage leaking UST site case files and data. Geotracker contains records for sites requiring cleanup, such as Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Sites. It allows users to view integrated data sets from multiple State Water Board programs and other agencies. Viewing occurs through a Google Maps Geographic Information Systems (GIS) interface.

Case Management and Closure

New cases for CSIE Unit oversight typically come from referrals by local county environmental health agencies. This occurs when petroleum-contaminated environmental media (e.g., contaminated soil) are discovered during UST system upgrades or removals. The CSIE Unit receives approximately seven referrals per fiscal year. We currently oversee about 60 LUST cases, closing approximately four to eight cases each fiscal year. The statewide UST Program is mature, with the majority of less complex cases already closed. Remaining, more complex open cases are managed strategically toward eventual closure. The LTCP provides criteria for case closure. Use of the criteria ensures consistency across the state in handling and closing cases. Case closure with residual contamination is allowed if it poses a low threat to human health, safety, and the environment.

(Source for article - Underground Storage Tank Program | California State Water Resources Control Board)

3. **Standing Item—City of Barstow Nitrate** — *Aileen Chea*

This standing item describes the compliance status for the City of Barstow (City) with waste discharge requirements (WDRs) and various compliance orders issued by the Water Board regarding historical disposal practices from its wastewater treatment plant.

Waste Discharge Requirements

Discharge from the Barstow Wastewater Treatment Plant is currently regulated by waste discharge requirements, Board Order No. R6V-2019-0252 (Board Order). This Board Order requires monitoring and reporting of nitrate effluent and groundwater monitoring wells. Submitted monitoring reports must include maps and graphs to show nitrate trends in groundwater. Additionally, the Board Order established an effluent limit for total nitrogen of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and a receiving water maximum contaminant level for nitrate as nitrogen of 10 mg/L.

According to self-monitoring reports submitted by the City (2024 fourth quarter report), the monthly total nitrogen concentrations in effluent samples averaged 7.18 mg/L and effluent concentrations of nitrate as nitrogen averaged 3.8 mg/L for the year 2024. Groundwater sample data results, in conjunction with groundwater flow patterns, indicate the nitrate concentrations predominantly increase from upgradient to downgradient in the Soapmine area north of the Mojave River as the mass of nitrate in groundwater diffuses and migrates eastward, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

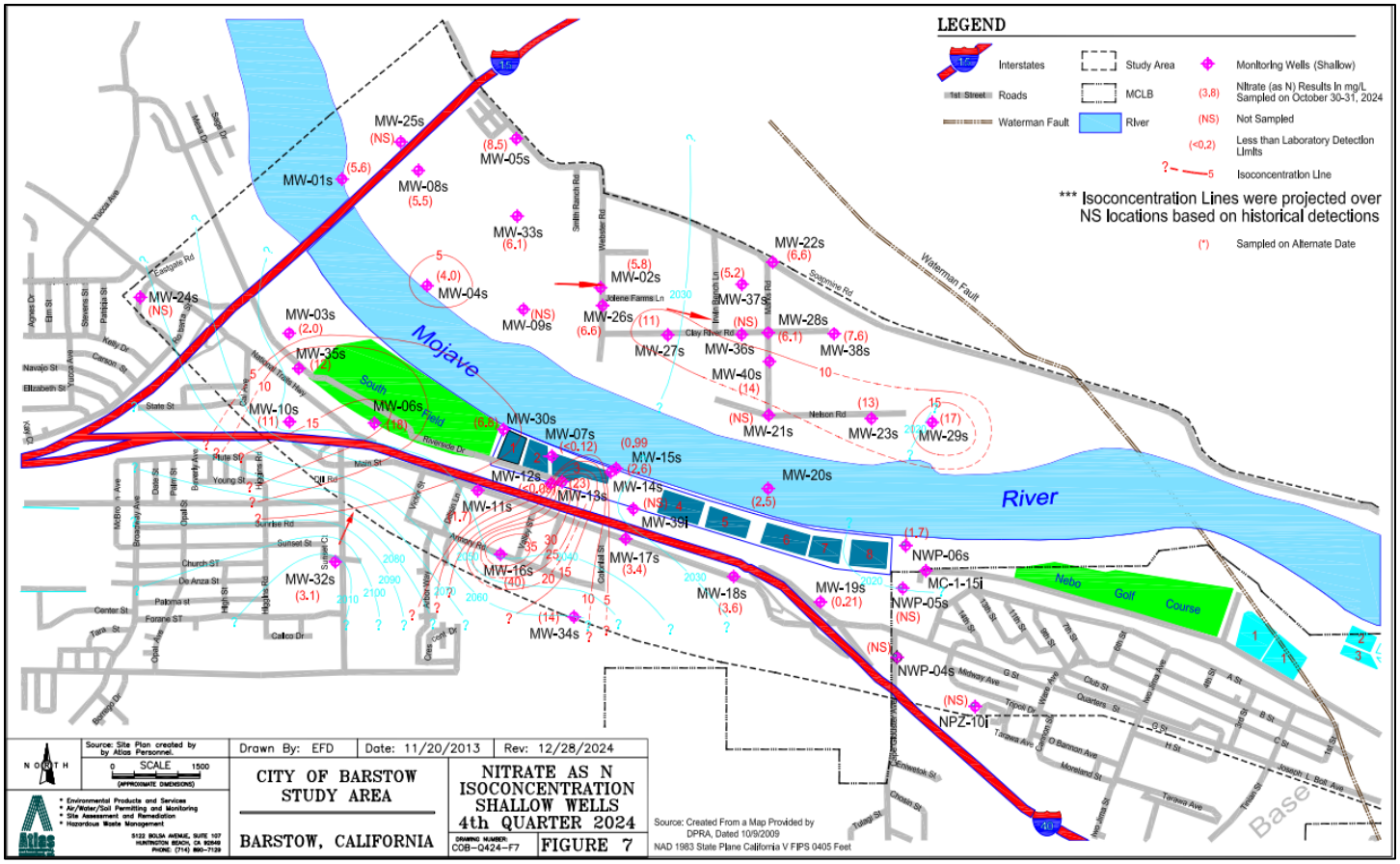

Figure 3.1—Map illustrating groundwater gradient and sampled nitrate concentrations based on shallow groundwater monitoring wells from the City's 4th Quarter 2024 Groundwater Monitoring Report.

Nitrate Pollution Groundwater Cleanup

The Water Board adopted Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) No. R6V-2013-0045 requiring the City to address nitrate polluted groundwater on the north side of the Mojave River. The cleanup status remains on hold until a comingled perchlorate plume, not the City's responsibility, is addressed.

Residential Well Sampling and Replacement Water in the Soapmine Road Area

The City continues to conduct quarterly sampling of residential drinking water wells to measure nitrate concentrations in groundwater, as required by CAO No. R6V-2007-0017. If a residential well sample contains a nitrate as nitrogen concentration equal to or greater than 5 mg/L, then the City must provide that residence with uninterrupted replacement water in the Soapmine Road area. For the first quarter of 2025, the City sampled 34 out of 42 residential wells (results shown in Figure 3.2). This count can vary based on the number of occupied residences in the Soapmine Road study area at the time of sampling.

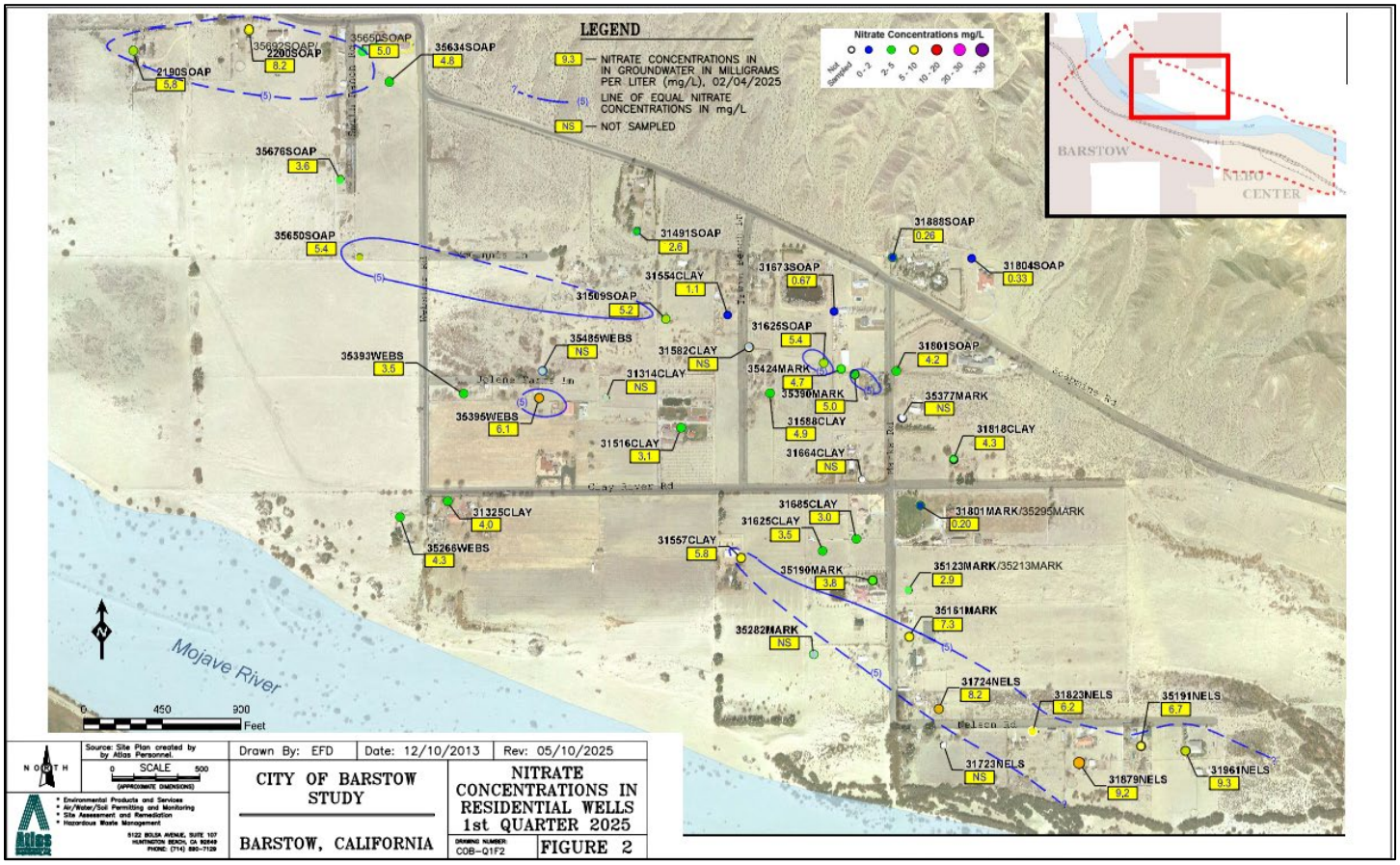

Figure 3.2— Map illustrates residential well locations and concentrations of sampled nitrate as nitrogen as reported in the City's first quarter 2025 report.

In aggregate, the nitrate concentration trends have become relatively stable, with a decreasing trend in residential wells sampled since quarterly monitoring began

(illustrated in Figure 3.3). According to the City's submitted first quarter 2025 report, 14 wells sampled contained nitrate as nitrogen concentrations exceeding the replacement water threshold concentration of 5 mg/L. However, the City is providing 16 residences within the required study area with uninterrupted replacement water service (bottled water).

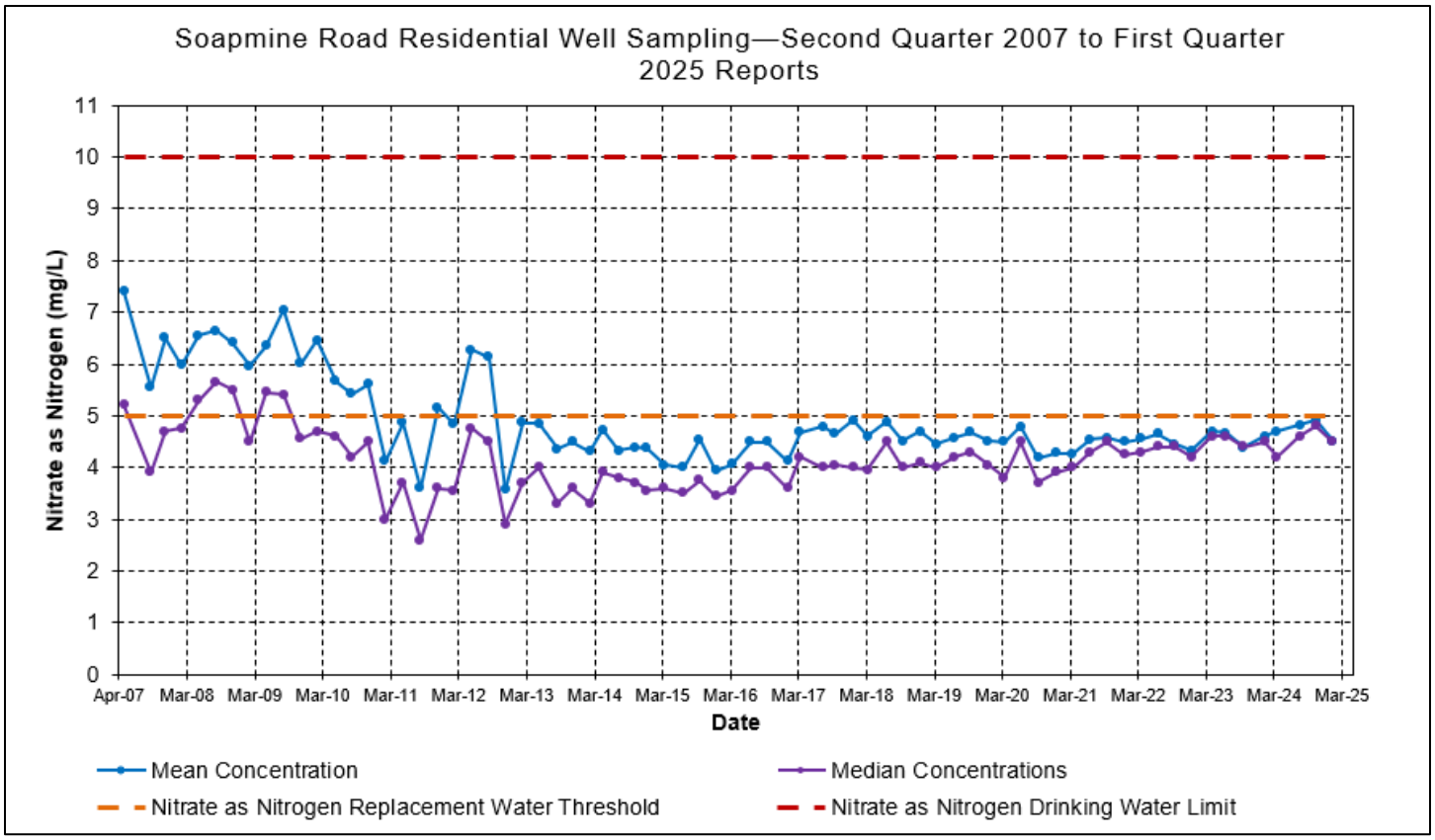

Figure 3.3—Chart illustrating sampled nitrate as nitrogen concentrations from residential wells reported on a quarterly basis compared to the replacement water threshold concentration contained in the CAO and the drinking water limit.

Based on the difference between the historical groundwater impact and current sampling data, the City has requested that the Water Board to modify residential well sampling and replacement water requirements in CAO No. R6V-2007-0017, as follows.

1. Reduce sampling frequency for some residences from quarterly to either semi-annually or annually based on nitrate as nitrogen sample concentrations consistently measuring less than 5 mg/L.

2. Permanently cease well monitoring and bottle supply delivery to upgradient private wells (2190 Soapmine Road and 2200 Soapmine Road) affected by contamination from an unknown source, unrelated to the current cleanup.

3. Increase nitrate as nitrogen trigger threshold concentration from 5 mg/L to 10 mg/L for drinking water supply.

4. Cease supplying uninterrupted water service if 2 years of testing report nitrate and nitrogen concentrations below 10 mg/L.

Water Board staff are working with the City to address the City's request to revise CAO No. R6V-2007-0017 during this fiscal year.

4. Annual Hinkley Community Barbecue sponsored by the Independent Review Panel (IRP) Manager — *Amanda Lopez*

Lahontan Water Board staff members Amanda Lopez, Engineering Geologist, and Christina Guerra, Senior Engineering Geologist, attended the Annual Hinkley Community Barbecue on June 7, 2025. The event was sponsored by Project Navigator, Independent Review Panel (IRP) Manager, and held at the Hinkley Community and Senior Center. Raudel Sanchez, Anthony Vu, Lorena Barahona, and Margaret DeAngelis of the IRP were present, along with approximately 150 community members. The meal was prepared by volunteer community members. The event also featured a bounce house and a raffle. The annual barbecue provides Water Board staff with an opportunity to enhance relationships with community members through direct engagement and availability to respond to inquiries.

Figure 4.2: Hinkley Community BBQ 2025 Billboard sign

5. Site Cleanup Subaccount Program — *Jeff Brooks*

The Site Cleanup Subaccount Program (SCAP) provides grants for projects investigating and remediating water contamination. The Health & Safety Code established the program in 2014. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)

oversees the funding. Funded projects address harm or potential harm to the environment or human health and safety.

SCAP funded projects must meet a variety of criteria. The following list describes these project criteria:

1. Remediates the harm or threat of harm to human health, safety, and the environment from surface water or groundwater contamination.

2. A regulatory agency must issue a directive to a responsible party to complete the relevant work, unless it is infeasible to issue a directive.

3. Lacks a funding source, such as a responsible party with financial resources.

4. Includes any combination of site characterization, source identification, or implementation of cleanup.

5. Excludes petroleum contamination from leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs). Those sites are eligible for funding from other sources within the state-wide underground storage tank cleanup fund.

The Deputy Director of the SWRCB Division of Financial Assistance approves SCAP grants and contracts. The program's funding flexibility includes:

- No request limits during the application process.

- No required cost match.

- A continuous pre-application process with no deadlines.

- An annual appropriation of $34 million derived from motor vehicle fuel tax revenue.

The SWRCB uses priorities to decide what projects to fund. These priorities include:

- Projects that are a significant threat to human health or the environment and disadvantaged or small community impact.

- Cost and environmental benefit of the project,

- Lack of availability of other sources of funds

- Environmental justice factors

The environmental justice factors align with State Water Board Resolution No. 2021-0050 and the Racial Equity Action Plan. The State Water Board staff evaluate the CalEnviroScreen score for the project location. The CalEnviroScreen map displays

pollution and population data to identify California communities most vulnerable to pollution's effects.

Lahontan Water Board staff and responsible parties apply for SCAP funding for various environmental investigation and cleanup projects. Current and recent projects funded within the Lahontan Region include:

- The Termo Store. Located in the Termo area and investigates petroleum leaks from above ground storage tanks.
- Former Normas Cleaners. Located in South Lake Tahoe and investigates chlorinated solvents.
- Former NuWay Dry Cleaners. Located in Victorville and addresses chlorinated solvents.
- The Barstow Perchlorate project. Located in the Barstow area and investigates perchlorate contamination.
- The South Y Project. Located in South Lake Tahoe and investigated chlorinated solvents. The funds are fully used. Based on Lahontan records, the South Y Project is the largest funding award ever distributed by SCAP.

SCAP accelerates the assessment and cleanup of properties. The fund provides this benefit statewide. Funded projects improve human health risk determination and expedite risk remediation or mitigation.

Source for article - Site Cleanup Subaccount Program | California State Water Resources Control Board

6. **Sierra Meadows Partnership Annual Gathering** — *Liz van Diepen*

Water Board staff Liz van Diepen attended and co-facilitated a breakout session at this year's Sierra Meadows Partnership Annual Gathering on the shores of Lake Almanor. Participation in this event fosters communication and collaboration between restoration implementers, academia, and regulatory agency staff. The Sierra Meadows Partnership's primary function is to promote connections, information sharing, and project tracking to help increase the pace and scale of meadow restoration, protection, and conservation in the Sierra Nevada. This year's gathering saw the most diverse group of attendees yet, with representation from tribes, academia, ranches, non-profit organizations, community outreach groups, and restoration project implementers. Attendees spent two half-days visiting restored meadows and one full day in the classroom, learning about meadow research, community engagement successes, and project planning and implementation needs.

Staff from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Cutting the Green Tape program and Water Board staff co-facilitated the Compliance & Permitting breakout session; the other two sessions focused on implementation approaches and knowledge

gaps in meadow science. In the Compliance & Permitting session, staff discussed various tools for restoration permitting and received feedback from restoration practitioners. We highlighted the need for strong relationships, early engagement during the planning process, monitoring tailored to project goals, and adaptive management in dynamic systems. Participant feedback included frustration about 1) inconsistent requirements from various staff and Regional Boards with variable levels of experience, 2) burdensome permitting processes despite adoption of the 2022 Statewide Restoration General Order and Programmatic EIR (a 401 Water Quality Certification and Waste Discharge Requirements that covers impacts to both Waters of the U.S. and Waters of the State outside of federal jurisdiction), and 3) the need to apply for permits to conduct minor hand work with minimal potential to adversely affect water quality. The current post-Sackett regulatory environment presents an opportunity to waive WDRs in a much larger portion of our region than prior to 2023, as fewer waters are considered Waters of the U.S. At this point in time, the Lahontan Region possesses flexibility in permitting activities within Waters of the State that are outside of federal jurisdiction, with the potential to greatly reduce or eliminate permitting burdens to low-threat restoration work.

Figure 6.1: Attendees discuss efficacy of a beaver dam analogue that was used to restore Childs Meadow near Lassen National Park