

AMENDMENT TO THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN
FOR THE LAHONTAN REGION

REVISING THE
REGIONWIDE PESTICIDE WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVE
TO A
REGIONWIDE WASTE DISCHARGE PROHIBITION

Executive Summary

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) may initiate amendments to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region (Basin Plan) at any time in response to issues of concern. The Basin Plan's existing pesticide water quality objective prohibits application of pesticides to surface waters (with variance for rotenone use by the Department of Fish Game.) The strict application of the pesticide water quality objective is an issue of concern for the Water Board because the use of aquatic pesticides is necessary for the protection of public health and safety or the maintenance or restoration of certain beneficial uses (e.g., cold and warm freshwater habitats, drinking water supply, and rare, threatened, or endangered species).

The use of aquatic pesticides, when done for purposes of protecting public health or restoring beneficial uses of water may be justified for certain situations where alternatives to aquatic pesticides may be infeasible or inadequate to achieve effective control of pests. In such cases, the Water Board may find that any temporary degradation to water quality caused by pesticide use is consistent with the maximum benefit to people of the State, provided that there are no long-term impacts to water quality necessary to support beneficial uses. Regulating aquatic pesticide use by establishing a new waste discharge prohibition with conditional exemptions will provide the Water Board the opportunity to allow certain applications of aquatic pesticides that are consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the State, while limiting temporal and spatial impacts as much as possible.

The proposed amendment presents an approach that allows the Water Board to protect water quality from the unauthorized use and unintended effects of aquatic pesticides and their residues, while still allowing some lawful discharge of aquatic pesticides where that use is in the public interest.

This Staff Report and associated CEQA analysis concludes that the adoption of the proposed Basin Plan amendment, which will allow the conditional use of aquatic pesticides, may have less-than-significant environmental impacts in many cases, while acknowledging and accepting the potential for significant environmental impacts for some uses of aquatic pesticides where long-term benefits to the people and environment of California outweigh those significant environmental impacts.