

A presentation slide with a background image of a lake and trees. The text is centered and reads: "Mojave River Basin Plan Amendment", "CEQA Scoping Meeting", and "April 24, 2018". On the left, it says "Jennifer Watts, Ph.D. Environmental Scientist". On the right is the "CALIFORNIA Water Boards" logo. A small number "1" is in the bottom right corner.

**Mojave River Basin Plan Amendment**

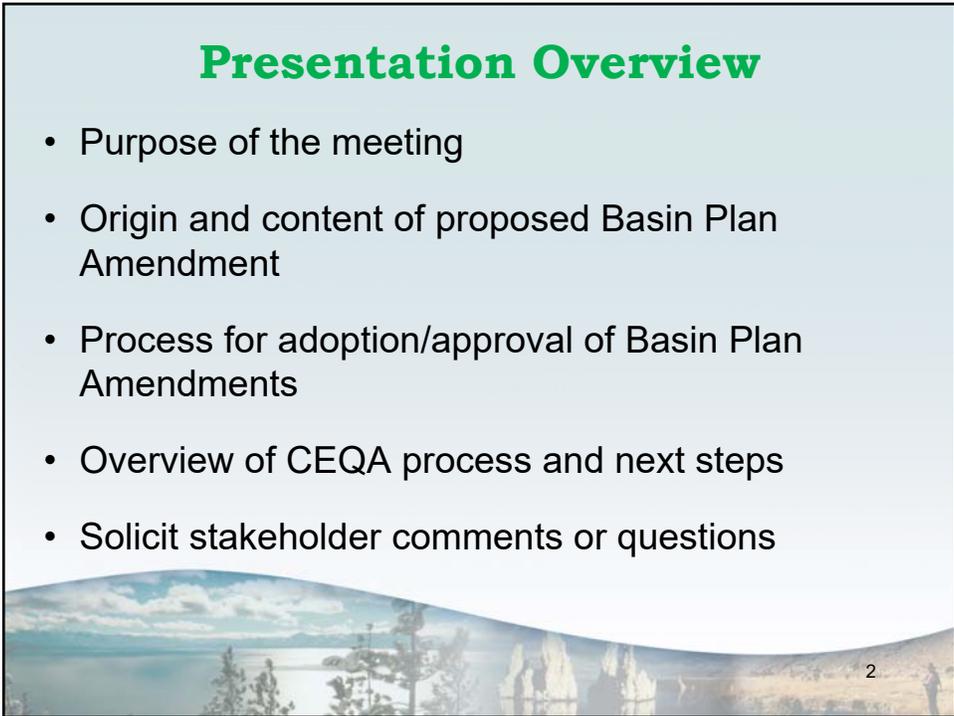
**CEQA Scoping Meeting**

April 24, 2018

Jennifer Watts, Ph.D.  
Environmental Scientist

CALIFORNIA  
Water Boards

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A presentation slide with a light blue background and a wavy bottom edge. The title "Presentation Overview" is in green. Below it is a bulleted list of five items. The background image at the bottom shows a landscape with a lake and trees. A small number "2" is in the bottom right corner.

**Presentation Overview**

- Purpose of the meeting
- Origin and content of proposed Basin Plan Amendment
- Process for adoption/approval of Basin Plan Amendments
- Overview of CEQA process and next steps
- Solicit stakeholder comments or questions

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## Purpose of Meeting

- Inform the public and interested agencies about proposed changes to the Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Basin (Lahontan Basin Plan)
- Provide opportunity for public comments and input on the scope of the environmental analysis, as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Answer questions regarding the proposed project and the Basin Plan Amendment Process



## Proposed Basin Plan Amendment (BPA)

- Lahontan Water Board prioritized several Mojave River-related issues that involve potential changes to Basin Plan
  - Includes both surface water and groundwater issues
- Proposed BPA addresses only surface water issues
  - Add BIOL and RARE Beneficial Uses to Mojave River and Deep Creek
  - Remove COLD Beneficial Use for a portion of Mojave River
  - Clarify application of surface water quality objectives



## Regional Board BPA Adoption Process

- Engage stakeholders early to solicit their input
- Circulate draft staff report, environmental checklist, proposed BPA language
  - Solicit and respond to public comments
- Hold Public Hearing for Lahontan Water Board to consider adoption of proposed BPA



## State Water Board, Office of Administrative Law and US EPA

- Present to State Water Board for consideration and approval
- Submit to Office of Administrative Law for approval
- Submit to US EPA for approval
- **Amendment becomes effective after EPA approval**



## Mojave River – A Unique River

- Mojave River is a “**spatially intermittent**” river
  - Some segments have perennial surface water,
  - Most segments are dry with flow occurring underground
- Flashy system with periodic high storm flow events
- Groundwater pumping from the floodplain aquifer has lowered groundwater elevations
  - Fewer locations where perennial flows exists
  - Reduced flows where surface water does exist
  - Impacts on riparian vegetation health and habitat quality



## Add BIOL and RARE Beneficial Uses to the Mojave River and Deep Creek

**BIOL Definition:** Preservation of Biological Habitats of Special Significance.

Beneficial uses of waters that support designated areas or habitats, such as established refuges, parks, sanctuaries, ecological reserves, and Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS), where the preservation and enhancement of natural resources requires special protection



## **RARE Beneficial Use**

**RARE Definition:** Rare, Threatened, or Endangered

Beneficial uses of waters that support habitat necessary for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species established under state and/or federal law as rare, threatened or endangered.



## **Locations for adding New Beneficial Uses**

- Deep Creek upstream of Mojave Forks Dam
- Bear Valley Road to Helendale portion of Mojave River
- Mojave River at California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Camp Cady Wildlife Area
- Mojave River at Afton Canyon



## Mojave River Watershed



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## Deep Creek above Mojave Forks Dam

- Perennial stream that, together with W. Fork Mojave River, forms headwaters of the Mojave River
- Designated as Wild Trout Stream by California Fish and Game Commission

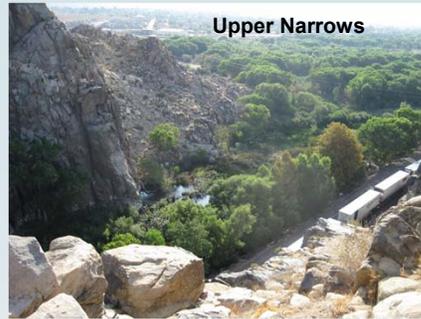


- Popular hiking and fishing area
- Healthy wildlife and riparian habitat

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## Mojave River from Bear Valley Rd to Helendale

- Two sections exhibit perennial flow:
  - Upper to Lower Narrows
  - Downstream of Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority (VWVRA)
- Designated by CDFW in Mojave Basin Adjudication for potential habitat restoration
- Goals are to establish a diverse and productive desert riparian habitat for wildlife and recreation use



Upper Narrows



Downstream of VWVRA



Lower Narrows

## Camp Cady CDFW Wildlife Area

- 1900-acre Wildlife Area designated in 1980 to protect desert riparian habitat
- No surface water since the mid-90s
- Identified in Mojave Adjudication for re-establishment of riparian vegetation



Road to Camp Cady

## Afton Canyon

- Perennial surface water present
- BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Part of the Mojave Trails National Monument
- Abundant wildlife utilizes habitat in Afton Canyon
- Unique geological features



## Remove COLD Beneficial Use for Mojave River downstream of Lower Narrows

- Entire length of the Mojave River is designated for both COLD and WARM Freshwater Habitat Beneficial Uses
  - Beneficial uses of waters that support cold (or warm) water ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation and enhancement of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, and wildlife, including invertebrates
- VVWRA requested re-evaluation of COLD designation downstream of discharge point



## Rationale



Riparian vegetation downstream of VVWRA

Fish currently found in the Mojave River are warm water non-native species

- Only native fish (Mojave tui chub) was extirpated from the Mojave River in the 1960's

Surface water temperatures show extreme variation

- Influenced by seasonal changes in air temperature
- Maximum temps over 86 °F (30 °C)
- Not conducive for cold-water species

Difficult to assess temperature impacts due to discontinuous flow



## Difference between COLD and WARM

Parameter	COLD	WARM
Water Temperature	No change allowed	5 °F change up or down
Dissolved Oxygen		
30 Day Mean	6.5 mg/L	5.5 mg/L
7 Day Minimum	5.0 mg/L	4.0 mg/L
1 Day Minimum	4.0 mg/L	3.0 mg/L
Ammonia	Equation based on pH and Water Temperature slightly more restrictive for COLD	



## Recommendation for Removal of COLD

- Remove COLD BU for the Mojave River downstream of the Lower Narrows to its terminus at Soda Lake
- Removal of COLD requires completion of a Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) per Clean Water Act requirements
  - Staff will prepare a UAA to provide the documentation required by US EPA



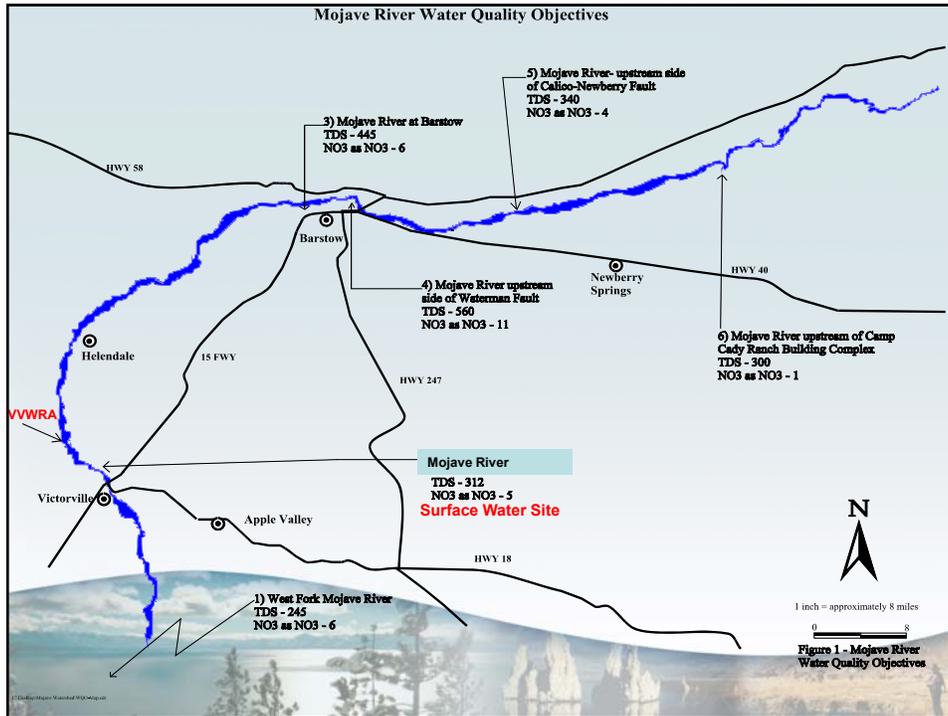
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## Clarify Mojave River Surface Water Quality Objectives

- Site Specific Objectives are for groundwater, except at the Lower Narrows
  - See Table 3-20 in Lahontan Basin Plan
- Permit writers need consistency
  - VVWRA surface water discharge permit based on region-wide surface water standards
- No surface water continuity at discharge point
  - No surface flow upstream of VVWRA
  - Downstream flow becomes subsurface near Helendale



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## Rationale for Suggested Clarification

Barstow objectives for TDS and Nitrate apply to ground water at a location approximately 26 miles downstream from VVWRA's discharge

- Add Clarification to Chapter 4 Implementation regarding application of region-wide surface water objectives to discontinuous water bodies

## Input Requested on Scope of Environmental Assessment

- Basin Planning uses a CEQA equivalent process
  - Uses environmental checklist to identify potential impacts of the proposed action
  - Must consider impacts to resource areas such as air quality, water quality, biological resources, agricultural resources, recreation, etc.

**We seek your comments on the scope of our environmental analysis.**



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## Next Steps

- Fall 2018
  - Draft Staff Report and environmental documentation
  - Lahontan Water Board Workshop
- Spring 2019
  - Lahontan Water Board Adoption Hearing



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**Thank you!**

Questions or comments?

Mojave Basin Planning  
listserv sign-up available at:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email\\_subscriptions/reg6\\_subscribe.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg6_subscribe.html)

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**Mojave River in Afton Canyon**

