

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROPOSED BASIN PLAN AMENDMENT: *WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVE FOR PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS TO WATER*

Description of the Proposed Activity

The proposed activity is the adoption of an amendment to the Lahontan Regional Water Board's (Water Board) Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) to change the water quality objective for pesticides. The current pesticide water quality objective essentially prohibits pesticide application to water by requiring the pesticide concentration to not exceed the lowest detectable levels (Basin Plan pg. 3-5). Detectable limits decrease with the advancement of laboratory techniques and other detection technology. The proposed Basin Plan Amendment (BPA) would amend the water quality objective so that proposals for aquatic pesticide use could be brought to the Water Board for discretionary board level consideration and approval.

The Basin Plan defines pesticides to include insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, fungicides, molluscicides, piscicides and all other economic poisons. An economic poison is any substance intended to prevent, repel, destroy or mitigate the damage from insects, rodents, predatory animals, bacteria, fungi or weeds capable of infesting or harming vegetation, humans, or animals (Food and Agriculture Code 12753).

Currently, addition of pesticides to water for any purpose is in conflict with the water quality objective. There may be situations where the use of pesticides could be considered appropriate. These uses include the protection of public health (e.g. vector control, protection of municipal supply waters) and the preservation of ecological integrity and associated protection of water quality (e.g. invasive species control, endangered species recovery). The proposed BPA would amend the water quality objective to provide the Water Board with the discretion to approve specific aquatic pesticide applications and regulate the project under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program.

The proposed BPA will not by itself require specific project implementation. Adoption of the proposed BPA could indirectly result in the application of pesticides to surface waters. The Water Board is required by the California Environmental Quality Act to analyze impacts and mitigation measures that are a reasonably foreseeable consequence of adopting the BPA.

The project, under the California Environmental Quality Act, is the amending of a water quality objective. The proposed BPA is a region wide amendment. The project area is the Lahontan Region (Figure 1). The Lahontan Region is defined in terms of drainage basins by Section 13200(h) of the Porter-Cologne Act. For

planning purposes, the Lahontan Region has historically been divided into North and South Lahontan Basins at the boundary between the Mono Lake and East Walker River watersheds. The entire Lahontan Region is about 570 miles long and has a total area of 33,131 square miles.

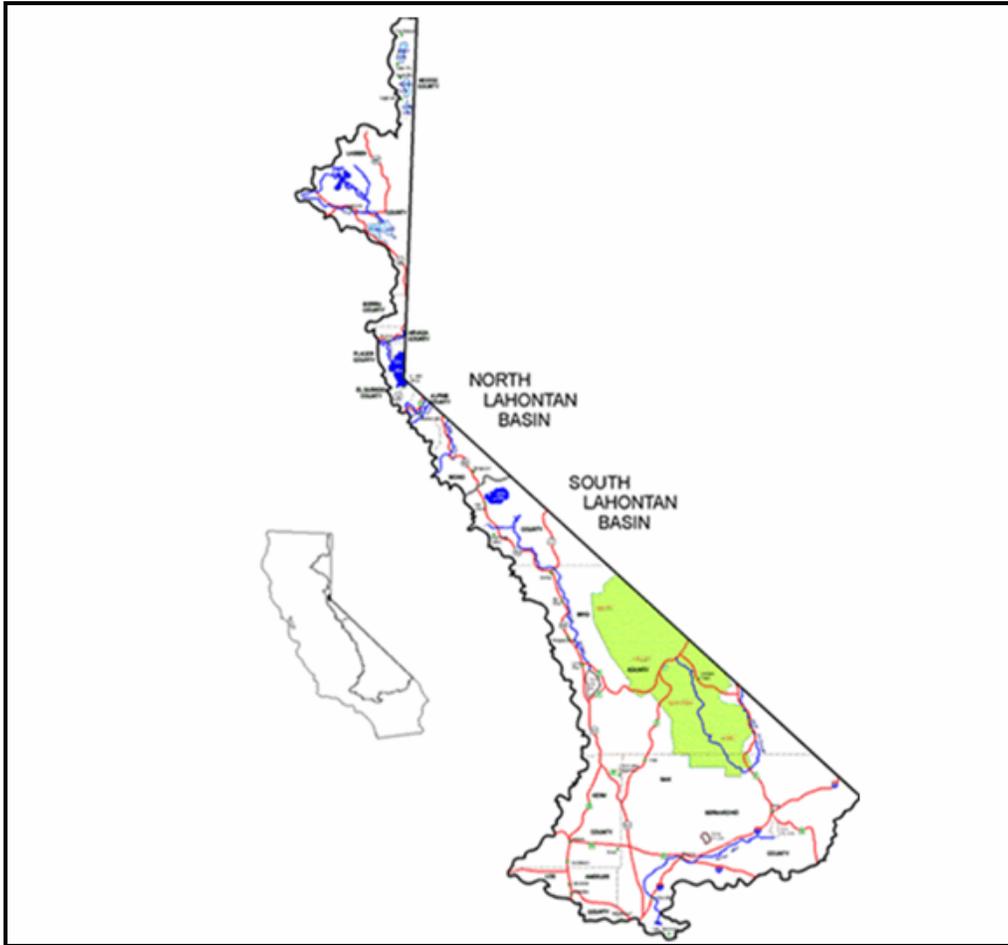


Figure 1. Lahontan Region