Lahontan Regional Water Quality
Control Board

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

December 2001

NORTH BASIN

1. ***Electronic Analytical Data (AB 2886)*** *- Lisa Dernbach*

   Assembly Bill 2886 added sections to the California Water Code requiring that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) develop emergency regulations for underground storage tanks (USTs). The new regulations require UST owners and operators to submit electronic analytical data for soil and water samples via the Internet to the SWRCB'S Geotracker database. The State Board has designated the Electron Deliverable Format (EDF) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the standardized format for electronic data submittal.

   Since September 1, 2001 UST owners and operators have been required to submit electronic data using EDF to Geotracker. To comply with the requirement, laboratories have been submitting electronic analytical results from site investigations and monitoring reports. Electronic data is submitted in addition to hard-copy reports, which still must be mailed to the appropriate regional board. After January 1, 2002 electronic analytical data shall include the following information: a site map, the location of the sampling point (either latitude and longitude or GPS coordinates), and groundwater information, such as water table depth.

   Despite training provided by the State Board during the past summer for consultants, laboratories, and responsible parties, very few have submitted electronic data to Geotracker. Staff plans to send out a form letter to UST owners and operators reminding them of the regulations and requirements for electronic data submittals. Reports in paper format without appropriate electronic data could be viewed as being incomplete. The Geotracker website and electronic data can be accessed at: http://geotracker.swrcb.ca.gov.

2. ***Mono County Proposition 13 Watershed Assessment Contracts*** *– Bud Amorfini*

   Mono County submitted two Proposition 13 proposals to the SWRCB to conduct watershed assessments and develop associated management plans. One proposed was for the West Walker River watershed and one was for the Upper Owens River/Mono Basin watershed. Both proposals were selected for funding in the amount of $198,000 each and Regional Board staff will be managing the contracts concurrently.

   The objective of both projects is to develop watershed management plans that describe an array of options to meet water quality goals throughout each basin while balancing economic, recreational, and ecological values. Project success will rely on establishing a viable consensus process with interested stakeholders in the watersheds.

Specific elements of the contracts include: 1) organizing watershed councils and conducting quarterly meetings; 2) conducting watershed assessments by compiling and analyzing existing physical, chemical, biological, and cultural information related to aquatic and land resources; 3) establishing a regional land trust role (Eastern Sierra Land Trust) for watershed planning and wetlands protection; and 4) developing watershed management plans.

The projects should be underway by the first quarter of 2002, and the first organizational meeting for the watershed councils are planned to be held in April 2002. The project schedule includes completing the watershed assessments by February 2004, developing the watershed management plans by June 2004, and preparing final reports by August 2004.

3. ***Meyers Beacon Gas Station, El Dorado County*** - *Lisa Dernbach*

The Regional Board had to "take over" the cleanup of this leaking underground storage tank (UST) site in 1998 when the site owner failed to take action. The Regional Board's consultant, Secor, excavated approximately 900 cubic yards of soil contamination at the Meyers Beacon Station in late October. This amount is 500 cubic yards less than the amount planned to be removed. Failing excavation walls were compromising the UST) basin and building foundation and required immediate backfilling with clean material.

Staff plans to contract for the installation of a soil vapor extraction system next spring to remediate remaining soil contamination in the UST basin. With cost savings from the excavation, Secor will initiate a groundwater investigation in December for a detached MTBE plume that has migrated off site. The plume may pose a threat to the Upper Truckee River and a South Tahoe Public Utility District municipal well, about 800-ft in the downgradient direction. Staff has obtained access to collect groundwater samples from the Tahoe Paradise Park and California Tahoe Conservancy. A report documenting the investigation results should be submitted in February 2002.

4. ***$82 Million in Water Quality/Watershed Grants Available through Prop 13, Phase II*** - *Cindy Wise*

The Costa-Machado Water Act of 2000 (Prop 13), approved by California voters in March 2000 authorized $1.97 billion in general obligation bonds to support safe drinking water quality, flood protection and water reliability projects throughout the state. Over the next several years, the SWRCB and the nine Regional Boards will help to allocate $763.9 million of it to local projects.

For Phase II of Prop 13, the SWRCB, in partnership with CALFED, just released a *Request for Concept Proposals* to announce the availability of $82 million for water quality and watershed projects. All concept proposals must be received at the SWRCB no later than February 1, 2002. State and Regional Board staffs will review concept proposals by March 2002 and invite selected applicants to develop full proposals by May 2002. State and Regional Board staffs will recommend projects for funding in September 2002, with the SWRCB making its final funding decisions in October 2002.

Statutory requirements on grants available in this phase dictate that major portions of it go to fund projects in CALFED Drinking Water/Watershed Programs and in coastal

nonpoint source pollution control programs. An additional requirement is that 60% overall must go to six designated Southern California counties. Because of these requirements, in the Lahontan Region, only projects in Los Angeles or San Bernardino counties will be eligible to compete for $32 million of the Phase II funds. Projects that serve small communities (population of 10,000 or less) will have a competitive advantage. Additional information is available at www.swrcb.ca.gov/prop13/index.html

5. ***Storm Water Workshops*** – *Robert Larsen*

The Lake Tahoe Watershed Assessment, released May 2000, identified storm water runoff as one of the most controllable sources of pollutants responsible for clarity decline at Lake Tahoe. In response, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and other resource agencies have emphasized implementation of projects to control the volume and improve the quality of urban runoff. Designing storm water treatment facilities to remove nutrients and fine sediments, however, continues to be a challenge. The Regional Board and the California Tahoe Conservancy recently hosted two separate storm water workshops in an effort to learn more about storm water characteristics and encourage informed discussions about the problems associated with storm water management.

On December 5 Regional Board staff hosted a presentation by Dr. John Sansalone. Dr. Sansalone is a professor at Louisiana State University and has done extensive research on the physical and chemical characteristics of solids in storm water runoff. His research addresses particle size distribution, specific surface areas, and sediment bound pollutants. Dr. Sansalone gave two talks, one on the characteristics of suspended sediments and another on the characteristics of snow melt and the implications for best management practice (BMP) design and selection. Two storm water consultants, Roger James and Eric Strecker, also gave presentations related to storm water monitoring and the selection of appropriate treatment technologies. Mr. James is a consultant with Water Resources Management and former executive officer of the San Francisco Regional Board. Dr. Strecker, one of the leading BMP effectiveness researchers in the country, works with Geosyntec in Washington state.

The following day, December 6, the California Tahoe Conservancy held its bi-annual Water Quality Improvement Workshop. The workshop was framed around the Conservancy's new guidelines for erosion control projects. The guidelines emphasize pollutant source control, treating runoff near the source, minimizing conveyance, focussing on appropriate hydrologic design, and using infiltration for final treatment. A representative from the El Dorado County Department of Transportation discussed some of the challenges associated with the Conservancy's guidelines, and Regional Board staff member Lauri Kemper discussed the Regional Board's regulatory role and support of the Conservancy's guidelines. Alan Hayvaert with the Tahoe Research Group presented some recent BMP monitoring data and discussed the unknowns associated with storm water BMPs in the Lake Tahoe basin. Ed Wallace with Northwest Hydraulic Consultants gave a presentation on hydrologic design for water quality improvement comparing current design standards with several alternatives. Finally, Eric Strecker spoke on BMP performance and hydrology, emphasizing the pitfalls of

traditional BMP assessment. Questions and participation were encouraged during all presentations, resulting in a great deal of useful dialogue. The afternoon was reserved for open discussion, during which workshop participants talked about the importance of having clearly defined goals, planning on a watershed scale, and exploring alternatives when designing treatment facilities.

6. ***Marina Oil Recovery "Summit"*** - *Mary Fiore-Wagner*

Regional and State Board staff recently participated in the 2001 Marina Oil Recovery Summit which focussed on preventing pollution in waterways and promoting clean boating. The meeting was sponsored by El Dorado County Environmental Management Department and funded by a grant from the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Participants included marina operators, the City of South Lake Tahoe Mayor Pro-tem and El Dorado County Supervisor, state and regional regulatory agencies, environmental health departments, public works departments, non-profit Bay and Coastkeepers, and marina product vendors.

Representatives from the California Coastal Commission, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), the Lahontan Regional Board, and the State Water Resource Control Board outlined regulations designed to control non-point source pollution associated with marinas and recreational boating. Regional Board staff gave an overview of the state's role in the regulation of Lake Tahoe marinas. The presentation highlighted the NPDES General Industrial Permit for Lake Tahoe Marinas and included a discussion about beneficial uses and water quality objectives and the Regional Board's enforcement authority to protect water quality. Past and future water quality research was also presented. Participants learned about the results of the 1998 Lake Tahoe Watercraft Study which supported the TRPA's ordinance to ban boats powered by two-stroke carbureted engines. Regional Board staff also gave an overview of upcoming research designed to study the harmful effects of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are a by-product of combustion that impact reproduction, growth, and survivability of aquatic organisms at very low levels (parts per trillion). Aquatic toxicity testing conducted in Lake Tahoe during 1997 indicated ambient levels of exhaust components from motorized watercraft caused photo-enhanced and direct toxicity to fish and zooplankton. Future research will evaluate the ecological risk of PAHs found in Lake Tahoe and recommend management measure to protect water quality and beneficial uses.

State Board staff presented information about recent efforts to develop specific legislative and regulatory language for the design and operation of new and existing marina fuel storage, piping, and dispensing systems. The State Board has contracted with Underwriter's Laboratory to develop standards that will address onshore underground storage tanks, onshore aboveground storage tanks, and over water storage tanks that are integral with a floating pier. The expected publication date for the standard is June 2002. The State Board is also exploring funding sources to possibly provide grants or low interests loans where upgrades are necessary.

7. ***Status of Olympic Valley's Contaminated Groundwater Sites and Threat to the***

Municipal Drinking Water System, Placer County *– Douglas F. Smith*

Olympic Valley, also known as the Squaw Valley area, contains seven contaminated groundwater sites. Four of the seven sites are related to leaking underground storage tanks (USTs) and staff handles the cases under the UST Program. The other three sites are not associated with a UST, so staff handles them under the Spills, Leaks, Investigation, and Cleanups (SLIC) Program. The constituents of concern in the groundwater at these sites are total petroleum hydrocarbons such as diesel (TPH-d), BTEX and MTBE. Of all seven contaminated groundwater sites in the Olympic Valley, only one site, known as the Opera House, poses an immediate threat to an adjacent municipal drinking water supply well.

Squaw Valley Ski Corp (Ski Corp) is the responsible party for the Opera House UST site and three other UST sites, two of which are located up on the mountain at the Squaw Valley Ski Resort near the top of the tram. TPH-d in the groundwater at the Opera House site threatens one of Squaw Valley Public Service District's (SVPSD) municipal supply well. Although this well is currently not in use, efforts are being made by Ski Corp and SVPSD to make this well operational.

The three SLIC sites are located at the base area of Squaw Valley Ski Resort. Intrawest is the responsible party for the newest SLIC site. Soil and groundwater contamination was discovered during excavation activities for the new Preferred Parking Structure. A workplan has been submitted to Regional Board staff to conduct a site investigation to determine the vertical and lateral extent of soil and groundwater contamination and possible source areas of the TPH-d contamination.

With the exception of the Opera House UST site, the other UST and SLIC sites do not appear to immediately threaten the existing municipal water supply wells in Olympic Valley. However, staff continues to oversee the monitoring and cleanup at these sites to ensure the groundwater contamination is being contained and either actively or passively cleaned up.

SOUTH BASIN

8. ***Molycorp Cleanup and Abatement Order Compliance Status Update*** *- Steve Fischenich/Curt Shifrer*

The Regional Board staff adopted Revised Waste Discharge Requirements (Revised WDRs) for Molycorp's Interim Plan for operation of its tailings pond (P-16) in November 2000. Molycorp subsequently installed a liner on a portion of the existing tailings surface within P-16. Molycorp is currently mining and discharging tailings to the lined area. Progress continues on the Environmental Review for a new long-term tailings disposal facility. The revised WDRs require Molycorp to stop discharging to P-16 by November 6, 2002 and complete closure (final cover) by October 1, 2004.

In March 2001 I issued an Amended Cleanup and Abatement Order (Amended CAO), requiring Molycorp to improve capture and removal of the leakage underlying P-16. Current leakage is from dewatering through tailings settlement and drainage of free liquid from tailings. Ground water levels at the two extraction well sites have dropped over 100 feet. Levels further from the wells continue to drop steadily. Molycorp collects captured leakage and

evaporates it using onsite evaporators. The residual salts are taken offsite for disposal.

A Revised Report of Waste Discharge (RWD) was recently submitted by Molycorp for the closure of the New Ivanpah Evaporation Ponds (NIEP). Staff has determined that additional information is needed prior to determining the RWD complete, including additional ground water modeling, results of historical wastewater testing, completion of a risk assessment report, and further analysis of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. The additional information is expected to be received in March of 2002.

9. ***Mojave River/El Mirage Dairy Issues Update*** - *Steve Fischenich*

I issued a 13267 letter to Desert View Dairy in Hinkley requesting the characterization of nitrate concentrations in ground water at the dairy. Crop nutrient uptake data. This information is expected to be submitted by late January 2002.

Proposed WDRs are planned for the April 2002 Board meeting for the Meadowbrook Dairy and A&H Dairy (El Mirage). These WDRs will require ground water monitoring wells to monitor the impacts of the dairy operation on the local ground water.

Ducommun Aerostructures (formerly Aerochem – El Mirage) has submitted a report describing the extent of hexavalent chromium in ground water beneath the site. DTSC is the lead agency for overseeing this site. DTSC staff is, however, coordinating the investigation of chromium problems with Regional Board staff.

10. ***Antelope Valley Public Landfill Completes Installation of Composite Liner*** - *Greg Cash*

Waste Management Inc. has recently completed construction of a composite liner system at the Antelope Valley Public Landfill No. 1 for the third phase of this landfill. Amended WDRs were adopted by the Regional Board in October 2001 for Phase three through five.

The construction activities consisted of grading an existing cut-slope (approximately 100,000 square feet), placement of a geosynthetic clay liner, placement of a 60-mil high density polyethylene geo-membrane, and construction of a leachate collection and recovery system. Board staff conducted several inspections during the construction phase of the project, to ensure that the composite liner system was being installed in accordance with the WDRs. The Discharger is currently finalizing the Assurance/Quality Control Report for this work and will submit this report to the Regional Board for review during the month of December 2001 or early part of January 2002.

11. ***Air Force Converting "Hot Spot" Monitoring Wells Into Extraction Wells at former George Air Force Base*** - *Jehiel Cass*

During the April 2000 monitoring event, an unexpectedly high concentration of trichloroethene (TCE) was detected in upper aquifer near monitoring well NZ-55 at Operable Unit 1 (OU1) at the former George Air Force Base – now Southern California Logistics Airport. Since the April 2000 monitoring event, increased concentrations of TCE were also detected in at least four other monitoring wells representing "hot spots" of increased TCE contamination. The cause of increased TCE concentrations in the

hot spot wells may be related to a reduced amount of treated ground water currently being recharged into the upper aquifer percolation ponds due to the partial reduction in the amount of ground water extracted from the lower aquifer. Because of the high concentration of TCE at well NZ-55, the Air Force is now converting this monitoring well into a ground water extraction well. This well will be online by mid-January 2002. The Air Force is preparing a revised hydrogeologic "Conceptual Site Model" and computerized ground water flow and transport model. Following completion of these models in about June 2002, the Air Force will propose to either convert other existing monitoring wells into extraction wells or install new extraction wells to contain the OU-1 TCE plume during federal fiscal year 2003.

12. ***IMC Chemicals Inc., (IMCC), Trona –*** *Kai Dunn*

Improving Technology

IMCC's own on-site laboratory received certification from the California Department of Health Services for U.S. EPA Method 418.1 for TRPH and Method 8015B for TPH-Kerosene. Based on studies completed, shortening the holding time for IMCC samples improves data quality. Having an on-site State certified lab for these methods is beneficial to have quicker turnaround and reduced cost. IMCC has agreed to monthly duplicate sampling for analysis by an off-site certified lab for quality assurance purposed. Board staff concurred with the proposed sampling protocol and requested IMCC submit a revised Sampling and Analysis Plan.

Compliance with Board Order

Daily reporting data from IMCC shows that interim effluent limitations set forth in the WDRs have not been exceeded during the month of November 2001. Ten bird deaths were reported during the same period. IMCC installed plastic vegetation on the edge of the west side of the bird pool. However, bird traffic is low now, so the effectiveness of the vegetation cannot be gauged.

IMCC is in compliance with the schedule for submittal of reports. IMCC has currently submitted the work plan to establish background concentration of phenol and formaldehyde, a report of site characterization and a work plan for site cleanup. Board staff is reviewing these reports and will provide comments.

Basin Plan Beneficial Uses

Board staff reviewed the Report of Comparison of Searles Dry Lake Ephemeral and Process Pond Brine Composition submitted by IMCC. The report provides information regarding seasonal measurements and salt concentrations in the Searles Lake natural ephemeral surface waters. Waters on the surface become salt saturated almost immediately. The report will be instrumental in Regional Board staff's evaluation and recommendation to the Board of appropriate beneficial uses for surface water of Searles Lake.

13. ***Stormwater Controls, Town of Mammoth Lakes Updates*** *– Kai Dunn and Doug Feay*

Contractors have implemented erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) at construction sites in the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Most sites appear adequately protected for winter although some maintenance was needed at some sites.

Inspections by Board staff at sites that have had enforcement actions include Eagle Run and Sierra Star Parkway. Sierra Star Parkway was issued a Notice of Violation and Eagle Run was issued a CAO. The Eagle Run Condominium site is in compliance with the CAO. The Sierra Star Parkway site, needed some improvements of its BMPs. Staff issued a Notice to Comply (NTC) to the Discharger during the inspection and the Town also followed up with the Discharger to obtain documentation that the violation was corrected. A follow-up inspection confirmed compliance with the NTC.

Over the next months, the Town and Regional Board staff will work closely to develop more effective communication and review of projects for compliance.

14. ***Stormwater Erosion Control Workshop –*** *Doug Feay*

On December 3, 2001, Board staff participated in a stormwater workshop sponsored by California Department of Transportation, District 9. The event was held at the Caltran's office in Bishop California and focused on compliance with the Caltrans General Stormwater Permit and Nonpoint Source pollution prevention at construction sites. Attending the event were Caltrans staff from the Sacramento and Bishop offices. Also represented at the event were staff from Mono County, Inyo County, Town of Mammoth Lakes, United States Forest Service, Bishop Paiute Tribe and the Department of Fish and Game. Approximately 70 people attended the workshop.

The workshop was well received by everyone. Caltrans is planning another workshop next year due to the favorable response. More similar workshops are being planned for field inspectors regarding erosion control at all types of construction sites.