EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
January 1, 2026 – January 31, 2026

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1. Personnel Report — *Sandra Lopez*

Vacancies

- Water Resource Control Engineer, Cannabis Unit, Victorville. This position will provide oversight of cannabis cultivation projects under the statewide Cannabis General order, will assist in the review of engineering and technical reports, and will assist others in the Unit.

- Environmental Scientist, Cannabis Unit, Victorville. This position will provide oversight of cannabis cultivation projects under the statewide Cannabis General order and will assist the Unit in conducting correlations between cannabis discharges and impacts to water quality and/or the environment.

- Environmental Scientist, Planning and Assessment Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will work in the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) to design, prepare, and carry out field investigations. Work duties will also include

management and analysis of environmental data to support development of the Integrated Report and projects associated with the TMDL and Basin Planning Programs.

- Water Resource Control Engineer, Regulatory and Enforcement Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will help protect water quality in the Lahontan Region by regulating waste discharges to Waters of the State via National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) permits resultant from wastewater and stormwater.

- Engineering Geologist, South Lake Tahoe. This position is housed within the Nonpoint Source Unit and will provide oversight of Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation. This includes coordination with multiple Lake Tahoe agencies and partners and oversight of Lake Tahoe focused permits.

- Senior Engineering Geologist, Department of Defense Unit, Victorville. This position will assign and direct the work of the unit, supervise staff performing tasks related to department of defense and site cleanup program sites, prepare annual work plans, and track budget expenditures.

- Analyst I, Administrative Unit, South Lake Tahoe. This position will provide support to technical and administrative staff, ensure documents comply with accessibility standards, assist with process improvements, prepare agenda items and staff documents for distribution, and provide administrative support at regional board meetings held throughout the region.

- Analyst I, Administrative Unit, Victorville. This position will provide support to technical and administrative staff, ensure documents comply with accessibility standards, assist with process improvements, prepare agenda items and staff documents for distribution, and provide administrative support at regional board meetings held throughout the region.

2. **Supporting Natural Disasters Project Based Learning in K-12 —** *Christina Guerra and Tiffany Steinert*

Christina Guerra, a Senior Engineering Geologist, and Tiffiany Steinert, an Engineering Geologist from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, were invited to Gus Franklin Jr STEM Elementary School on January 29, 2026. Gus Franklin Jr STEM Elementary School is recognized as a 2026 California Blue Ribbon School. Water Board staff participated as community partners in project-based learning (PBL) to help students think critically about mitigating the harmful effects of natural disasters on humans and the environment (Photo 2.1 and Photo 2.2). PBL is a teaching method in which students spend an extended period researching and addressing a real, interesting, and complex problem or challenge using a step-by-step approach. Mrs. Sena, a fourth-grade teacher, is part of the Adelanto Elementary School District's first PBL training cohort and has been given the opportunity to teach using the PBL method. Students were organized into groups to research and create presentations on various

natural disasters such as blizzards, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and wildfires. Their aim being to showcase their understanding of how to design and construct solutions to lessen the effects of these natural disasters on humans and the environment.

To engage students, Christina started by sharing photos she had taken of local ephemeral stream flows and flooding that lead to the damaging of roads in the Antelope Valley because of the 2025 holiday storm events. During the session, Water Board staff shared their knowledge on earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding, and volcanoes. They explained the hazards associated with each phenomenon and discussed various methods used to mitigate their impacts, including laws and regulations, earthquake and structural engineering, hazard mapping, land use planning, monitoring, and forecasting. Students had the opportunity to ask questions, deepening their understanding of disaster preparedness and resilience. Mrs. Sena believes that PLB has had a positive impact on her students and is hopeful there will be an opportunity for students to present their research, design, and construction solutions to the school board.

Photo 2.1. Christina Guerra explains to the students what government agencies do to try and prevent the harmful impacts of natural disasters.

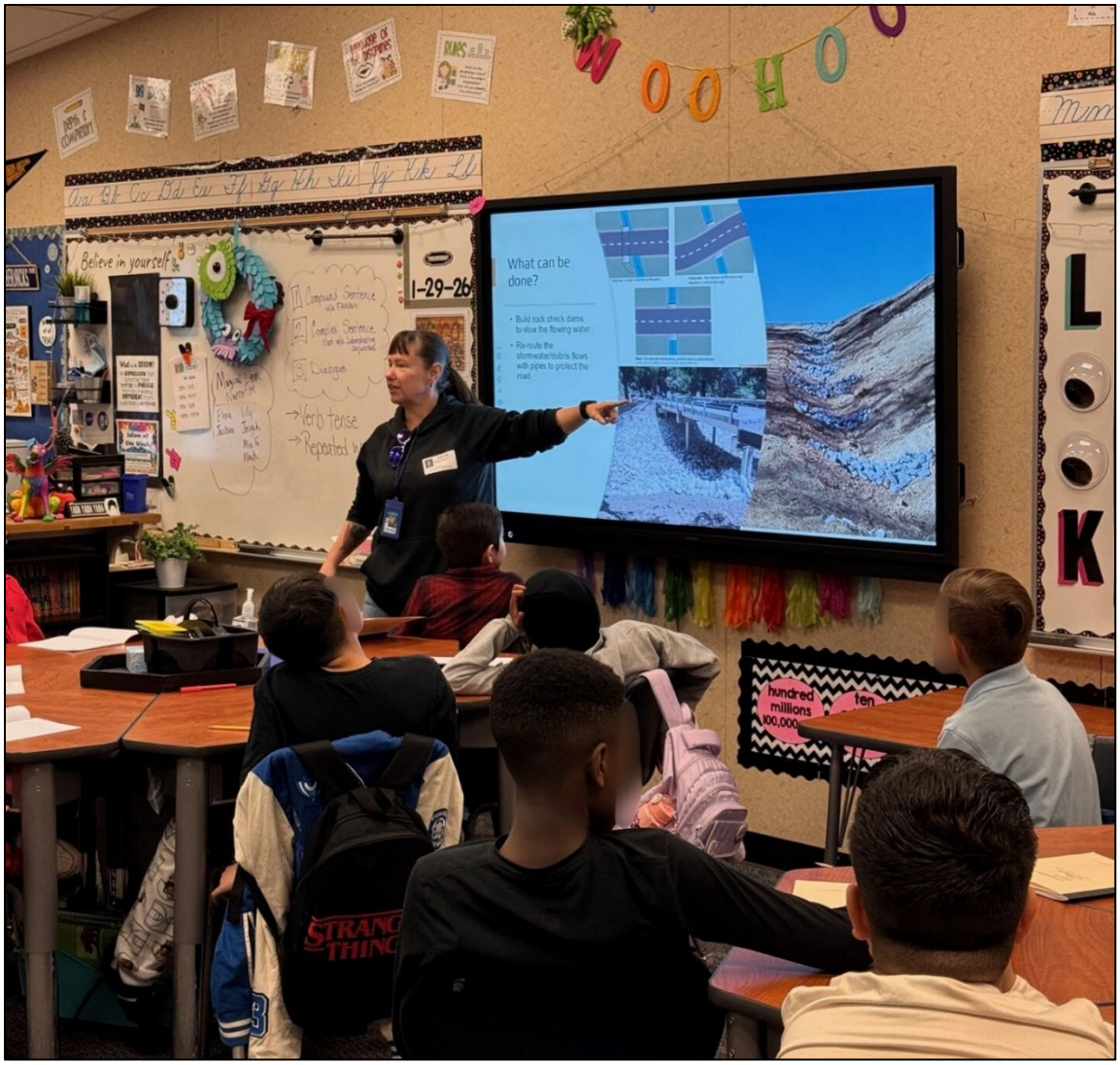

Photo 2.2. Tiffany Steinert explains how to mitigate flood damage through changes in structure design.

3. **Renaming Washeshu Creek in Support of Racial Equity —** *Kelly Huck and Danny McClure*

   On September 8, 2022, the U.S. Department of the Interior voted to rename nearly 650 geographic features that contained the word *"squaw."* This action marked a significant step toward removing a term from federal use that has historically been an offensive ethnic, racial, and sexist slur, particularly toward Indigenous women. For decades, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and Native American communities across the country have advocated for the removal of the term "squaw" from geographical landmarks and business names in their ancestral lands.

   In California, 82 geographic features were renamed in 2022, including 11 within the Lahontan Region. See below table for a complete list of features renamed in the Lahontan Region:

New Name	Removed Name	Feature Class	County	Latitude	Longitude
Washeshu Creek	Squaw Creek	Stream	Placer	39.2115732	-120.198528
Sawabü Flat	Squaw Flat	Flat	Inyo	37.0499308	-118.049258
Mill Peak	Squaw Peak	Summit	Modoc	41.4188102	-120.218884
Olympic Valley	Squaw Valley	Valley	Placer	39.2117291	-120.99027
Bull Spring Mountain	Squaw Mountain	Summit	San Bernardino	35.4704619	-115.866405
Needle Spring	Squaw Spring	Spring	Inyo	35.910213	-117.009578
Mojave Peak	Squaw Tit	Summit	San Bernardino	35.3626296	-115.831918
Washeshu Peak	Squaw Peak	Summit	Placer	39.1805181	-120.269649
South Corral Valley	Squaw Valley	Valley	Lassen	40.7033438	-120.981775
Hukaht Canyon	Squaw Canyon	Valley	Los Angeles	34.376824	-117.975074

In the U.S. Department of the Interior's press release there is a complete list of all features renamed accompanied by an interactive map.

Of particular importance to the Lahontan Region is the renaming of Washeshu Creek in Placer County. The creek's new name comes from "Wa she shu", the Washoe word for "people" (The Washoe spelling for "Wa she shu" separates the words, but the USGS map spells the landmarks as one word.)

Washeshu Creek lies within an 8.2-square-mile alpine watershed approximately six miles northwest of Lake Tahoe, between Tahoe City and Truckee. The creek was listed on the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired waters in 1992 due to sediment impairment. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on July 27, 2007, to address sediment-related issues, including settleable materials, suspended materials, and turbidity. The TMDL website has since been updated to reflect the creek's new name; however, previously published TMDL documents retain the former waterbody name. Lahontan Water Board staff also worked with State Water Board and USEPA staff to change the official name of the TMDL in the EPA ATTAINS database to the TMDL for Sediment in Washeshu Creek and to update the name of the creek in current and future Integrated Report documents and maps.

Since 2013, Washeshu Creek has also served as a monitoring location for the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP). As an important tributary to the Truckee

River, the creek has been sampled quarterly to identify potential additional impairments and to better characterize sedimentation issues. More recently, the SWAMP program conducted a comprehensive inventory of monitoring locations along Washeshu Creek to ensure the updated name is reflected across all internal and public-facing databases. These efforts also prompted broader discussion at a quarterly SWAMP Round Table meeting, encouraging similar naming updates statewide.

Photo 3.1: Washeshu Creek SWAMP monitoring location

Acknowledging the renaming of Washeshu Creek aligns with Lahontan's regional goal of integrating racial equity into water quality decision-making and regulatory actions. This action also supports the commitments outlined in Lahontan's Racial Equity Resolution. Renaming the creek in Water Board documents and correspondence demonstrates respect for Indigenous communities, honors tribal input and cultural values, helps foster trust between Lahontan and historically marginalized communities, and advances inclusive and culturally relevant engagement. It also supports Lahontan's commitment to maintain a workforce culture that is inclusive and actively anti-racist, mitigates bias, and has competency around issues of race and equity. This small act reinforces Lahontan's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity across the region's valued natural areas, intended to benefit the entire community.

4. **Standing Item - Grazing Status, 2026 Update —** *Mo Loden*

This Executive Officer's report is a standing item, prepared annually to present an update on projects addressing water quality impacts associated with grazing operations in the Lahontan Region. The following updates cover the period from February 2025 through January 2026 and pertain to efforts underway in Bridgeport Valley, Eagle Lake, Bishop Creek, and West Fork Carson River. These efforts, each in a different stage of development or implementation, utilize different strategies to address grazing-related impacts, as seen in Table 4.1. For additional context and high-level information on the background of each grazing community, please visit our Rangelands and Grazing webpage.

Table 4.1: Region 6 Grazing Summary

Grazing Community (County)	Strategy Approach	Start of Implementation
Bridgeport Valley (Mono County)	General Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirement R6-2023-0006	2007
Eagle Lake (Lassen County)	Investigative: 13267 Letters for BLM, USFS, and private lands adjacent to Eagle Lake	2019
Bishop Creek (Inyo County)	Bishop Creek Vision Plan	2022
West Fork Carson River (Alpine County)	West Fork Carson River Vision Plan	2023

Bridgeport Valley: No water quality sampling was required in 2025 and will next occur in 2026. Annual Reports, due by mid-January, provide a concise way for dischargers to document each ranch's best management practices (BMPs) for improving water quality to meet the interim goal of 150 colony-forming units per 100 milliliters for *E. coli*. As of February 3, eight of nine enrollees have submitted the 2025 Annual Report and are in compliance with the General Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Grazing Operations in the East Walker River Watershed (also referred to as the "2023 Waiver") requirements. The remaining ranch is considered out of compliance until its report is received.

On September 23, a compliance inspection was conducted at the Bridgeport Meadow Ranch, an approximately 680-acre site with 670 irrigated acres. The ranch lies at the upstream end of the area covered by the 2023 Waiver, with no other ranches under the waiver positioned further upstream. The East Walker River and Summers Creek flow through portions of the property. Almost 100% of the ranch is protected under a conservation easement. The inspection toured several NRCS-funded projects completed in September 2024 through a conservation easement grant, which included

Photo 4.1: One mile of stream exclusion fencing installed on the East Walker River at Bridgeport Meadow Ranch.

three retention settling ponds, a mile of stream-exclusion fencing (Photo 4.1), a hardened crossing, a new buffer filter strip, and multiple upgraded culverts and headgates. These measures are designed to reduce pollutant discharges such as sediment, nutrients, and bacteria from cattle operations into surface waters.

Other Bridgeport Related Updates

In September 2024 and again in 2025, staff received reports of cattle in the southern portion of Bridgeport Reservoir. Staff learned that the Walker River Irrigation District (WRID) manages this land and issues grazing leases to private grazing operators on approximately 600 acres located north of town up to the Bridgeport Reservoir's shore. This leasing practice has been in place since the 1990s or earlier. The frequency and duration of cattle in the reservoir is unknown. Staff conducted a site visit to the WRID grazing allotment on September 23, 2025. Staff remain attentive to the issue to better understand the extent of direct cattle access to the reservoir and will continue exploring strategies to limit the potential of bacteria, sediment, and nutrient discharges to surface waters and the downstream reservoir.

Photo 4.2: Picture of head cut on Ullman Ranch, which is anticipated to be the primary focus of future restoration efforts.

On November 12, staff met with Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) at the Ullman Ranch to discuss a project funded by a Sierra Meadows Partnership block grant. The planning project is managed by ESLT and supports pre-project monitoring and the development of 65% conceptual design plans for a stream restoration project. The proposed restoration will aim to remediate stream incision and address a moderate head cut (Photo 4.2) on Swauger Creek, which flows through the Ullman property, an enrollee under the 2023 Waiver. ESLT is motivated to pursue this project to uphold the conservation values of the Ullman Ranch Easement they hold and manage. Water Board staff are optimistic this project will support the 2023 Waiver's water quality goals.

Eagle Lake: In 2019, staff sent Water Code Section 13267 letters to Eagle Lake shorefront grazing operations, requiring the submission of grazing management plans to reduce livestock waste discharges to surface waters, with annual updates due by May 15 in subsequent years. In 2025, lakefront operators submitted annual updates to their grazing management plans, which staff deemed adequate at reducing discharge of livestock waste to surface waters. In late August, staff conducted a site inspection at the Lassen National Forest's South Eagle Lake allotment, located along the southwest shore of Eagle Lake. In past years, this area received the most complaints about cattle coming into contact

Photo 4.3: Livestock hoof prints not present along shoreline of South Eagle Lake Allotment

with the lake. However, similar to the last few years, the Water Board received no complaints this season.

Beginning in late July, only eight cows grazed this approximately 44,000-acre allotment, resulting in minimal evidence of cattle presence or related impacts. Based on the areas inspected, staff found the allotment to be overall responsibly managed, noting adequate stubble height along the shoreline, supplements appropriately placed to draw cattle far away from the lake, and fences and gates in good condition. However, due to damage from rodents, this allotment's sole upland water source was out of commission during both the 2023 and 2025 inspections, leaving lake water as the only available drinking source for cattle. Discussions during this year's inspection focused on repairing the off-lake water source and evaluating whether a single drinking water source is sufficient for such a large allotment spanning five to six miles of shore. No cattle grazed the Forest Service's North Eagle Lake Allotment this year. These updates and more are provided annually in the Eagle Lake newsletter.

Vision Plans: The following updates pertain only to grazing-related efforts within each Vision Plan. Broader Vision Plan efforts will be provided in the Executive Officer's Report specific to the Vision Plans, anticipated in March 2026.

Bishop Creek Vision Plan: In 2025, primary efforts focused on finalizing Ranch Water Quality Plan (RWQP) and mitigating bacteria sources from residential backyards. On March 19, 2025, staff met virtually with the Bishop Paiute Tribe, NRCS, and University of California's Cooperative Extension to discuss how private hobby ranches and pet waste are contributing to elevated *E. coli* levels in the watershed. The meeting focused on identifying priority areas and key issues such as stream access and manure management, while also exploring practical solutions, outreach strategies, and potential funding sources. A major outcome was the development of a brochure to help private residents and Bishop Paiute Tribe members learn simple ways to prevent bacteria runoff from their backyards to the nearby surface waters. Printing and distribution of the brochure will occur in 2026.

Regarding RWQP efforts, five Tier 1 ranches and seven Tier 2 ranches have been identified as part of the project. Overall, ranchers are making progress, and most are on track with the project timeline. Three Tier 1 ranchers have finalized their RWQPs, however two have been largely unresponsive and disengaged since 2023. Only one Tier 2 rancher has not finalized their RWQP since receiving a draft for review in late 2024, despite several follow-up attempts in 2025. For the third year, the Annual BMP Reports, due Jan 31, were requested to summarize on-ranch actions taken to reduce bacteria delivery to Bishop Creek. These reports also help verify the success of the cooperative Vision Plan approach. Five ranchers submitted their 2024 Annual BMP Reports by the requested due date, and two additional reports were submitted by mid-April, bringing the total to seven out of twelve for 2024. For 2025, five ranchers submitted their reports by the due date.

West Fork Carson River Vision Plan**:** In 2025, an additional ranch was identified for inclusion in the project, bringing the total number of ranches under the Vision Plan to

three. All three are located directly along the West Fork Carson River. Two ranches have finalized RWQPs, while the third has been awaiting landowner input since October 2025. To track implementation progress, the first round of Annual BMP Reports was requested by January 31, and one of the two ranches completed the reporting process by the due date.

Statewide Efforts

Statewide Grazing Guidance Document: No progress has been made on the statewide 'Managing Water Quality on Grazed Lands' guidance document since 2023. When State Board's capacity allows, the document will undergo another round of edits before being circulated for public review.

Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC): In addition to attending RMAC meetings in 2025, staff also provided several reviews and feedback on the RMAC's 'Local-Regional Grazing Guidance' draft, mandated by Senate Bill No. 675 (SB-675). This bill aims to expand prescribed grazing for fire prevention and forest health and directed the RMAC to develop guidance for grazing plans that use prescribed grazing as a vegetation management tool.

On August 19, staff attended an RMAC-hosted Prescribed Grazing & SB-675 webinar, which covered SB-675 requirements, funding opportunities, and discussions to increase the pace and scale of prescribed grazing projects.

Since June 2025, State Board staff have participated in RMAC meetings related to SB-675. Organized into regional work groups, State Board helped narrow down priorities depending on land types. State Board staff provided input on recommendations and obstacles through two survey submissions focused on the expansion of applying prescribed grazing throughout the state.

Staying Current: In November, staff attended a field tour at the Blodgett Forest Research Station to learn more about prescribed herbivory for vegetation control post wildfire. According to Ricky Satomi, Forestry and Natural Resources Advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension, prescribed herbivory has potential as a site preparation and fuel reduction tool, but it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Success depends on precise timing, careful herd management, supplemental feeding, integration with other treatments like herbicides, and repeat application. Herbicide treatments generally provided more consistent results, suggesting that prescribed grazing works best when integrated with other vegetation management strategies.

5. **Regional Freshwater and Estuarine Harmful Algal Bloom Annual Program Update —** *Sabrina Rice*

This annual update report provides updates on the Lahontan Water Board's (Lahontan Region) Freshwater and Estuarine Harmful Algal Bloom (FHAB) program. The report summarizes current and historical data, legislative impacts, and regional program details to highlight the progress and challenges in managing FHABs throughout the Lahontan Region.

What is a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)

Cyanobacteria are small microbes or bacteria that have existed for billions of years, live in nearly every habitat on land and in the water, and are essential components of freshwater ecosystems. Some environmental conditions cause cyanobacteria to grow rapidly or bloom. When these bacteria produce dangerous toxins, they are commonly referred to as a harmful algal bloom (HAB). Not all algae blooms produce toxins, but those that do can cause a multitude of health issues and even death to people, wildlife and pets. There are two types of HABs known as planktonic (HABs floating in the water column) or benthic (HABs that grow attached to the bottom). In the Lahontan region, HABs are most common during the warm weather months between late May through October but can occur all year.

Regional Harmful Algal Bloom Program

Water Board staff have partnered with various agencies to implement the tasks outlined in Assembly Bill 834 that created the FHAB program. In the Lahontan Region, the priority of the program is to respond to publicly reported HABs across the region, which is termed incident response. When a HAB report is submitted via the online system, staff respond to the report as soon as possible by reaching out to the reporting party, and if necessary, asking landowners or waterbody operators to post the appropriate level of signage and conduct sampling of the area of concern. Sampling is a key part of the program because it is not known if harmful toxins are present just by looking at a HAB, laboratory analysis is required. Since the Lahontan region is geographically large, training and supplies are provided to partner entities that perform sampling on our behalf (see Table 5.2 for HAB partners). HAB incident response and investigations are summarized in Table 5.1.

Incident response also involves investigating reports of any human or animal illness suspected of being HAB-related. The team that performs these investigations is called the Interagency HAB-Related Illness Workgroup (Illness Workgroup) and is made up of individuals from the California Department of Public Health, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Water Board. Our region's role in these investigations is to collect water samples as quickly as possible to try and characterize the water as close in time to the reported illness. The Illness Workgroup utilizes the available environmental and health-related information to make a determination on cases. More information pertaining to illness investigations can be found on the HAB – Related Illness Tracking Website.

The next regional priority is to conduct routine field assessments. Currently, Water Board staff perform routine monitoring in the form of Pre-Holiday Assessments. These are three or four monitoring events, depending on funding availability, occurring just prior to popular holiday weekends such as Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day when many seek guidance on safe recreation. Typically, around 30 waterbodies throughout our region are sampled per assessment.

Public outreach is another important aspect of regional efforts. To help keep the public informed of sampling results, all of our monitoring advisory data is posted on our HAB Reports Map. Every year staff participate in various outreach events that range in age group from kindergarten to adults trying to spread awareness around HABs or even to gain new monitoring partnerships across the region. Staff also work with the Water Board Communications Office, community groups such as the League to Save Lake Tahoe, and County Environmental Health staff to release news articles or social media posts to spread awareness and information of HABs that have reached a danger advisory level in the region.

Lastly, our region participates in special studies aimed at answering management or research questions related to HABs. The goals of our regional HAB special studies have varied year by year based on different project goals and funding availability. A few examples of past projects include trying to determine the effectiveness of the laminar flow aeration systems in the Tahoe Keys Lagoons on the presence of HABs and investigating the incidence of HABs at Red Lake to identify any correlation between HAB occurrence and measured water quality parameters. We did not perform any special studies in 2025 due to funding limitations.

2025 Regional Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring Summary

This year, the HAB monitoring season spanned from April to October. Throughout this period, 131 samples were collected from 42 different water bodies to detect the presence of HABs. The number of water bodies and samples collected varies annually due to the unpredictable nature of public reports of HABs. In 2025, seven illness investigations were conducted: three fish kill events at Diaz Lake, East Walker River, and Biscar Reservoir; one dog illness and one dog death in Lake Tahoe; and two human illnesses at Crowley and Cottonwood Lakes. All cases except one fish kill event in the East Walker River were determined not HAB-related because a different cause of illness was identified or there was insufficient information to draw a conclusion.

Reporting of fish and wildlife cases can be challenging due to various factors, such as the large geographic areas they cover, fish being transported downstream, sinking or being scavenged, or massive quantities, making die-off estimations approximate. Consequently, fish kill events are often reported to the HAB-Related Illness Tracking website with estimated numbers or without quantifying the fish affected. The incidence of fish deaths can range from a single fish to hundreds of thousands. In Table 5.2, each fish kill event is reported as a single occurrence, not an accounting of the number of fish affected.

Photo 5.1: Image of danger level HAB at Bridgeport Reservoir in September of 2025.

In the past two years, the East Walker River, which provides numerous fishing and public recreation opportunities in our region, has seen significant die-offs of fish and crawfish, with approximately 48,100 deaths, primarily in 2024. The 2024 die-off was among the largest on record, and the ecosystem is still recovering. The 2025 event was very small comparatively. These incidents were deemed HAB-related by the Illness Workgroup. The events affected protected wildlife areas and included the sensitive species of rainbow trout, but impacted brown trout the most, with an estimated 20,000 deaths. Bridgeport Reservoir flows directly into the East Walker River and has experienced extensive HABs, severely reducing dissolved oxygen levels. In a monitoring event in 2024 dissolved oxygen was recorded at 0.25 mg/l above the dam in Bridgeport Reservoir and 0.27 mg/l below the dam in the East Walker River and extending to the Nevada border. Typically, rivers range from 5-11 mg/L of dissolved oxygen, whereas levels below 2 mg/L are considered hypoxic and often lethal to wildlife.

Table 5.1: Incidence of HABs and illness cases have been reported since the inception of our regional program in 2018 the data table only includes information related to the last 5-years of our monitoring program.

Topic	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of samples	182	302	171	202	131
Waterbodies at a caution advisory	17	15	11	12	15
Waterbodies at a warning advisory	1	1	0	1	0
Waterbodies at a danger advisory	3	6	3	3	3
Human HAB Illness reported	1	2	2	11	2
Human Illness Confirmed HAB Related	0	0	1	4	0
Animal HAB Illnesses reported	3 dog illnesses	3 dog illness	4 fish kills 1 dog death	3 fish kills 4 dog death or illness 1 wild burro	3 fish kills 1 dog illness 1 dog death
Animal Illnesses confirmed HAB Related	1 dog illness	1 dog illness	0 fish kills 1 dog death	3 fish kills 1 dog death 0 burro	1 fish kill 0 dog illness 0 dog death

Partnerships

Table 5.2 highlights the diverse partners with whom the Lahontan Water Board collaborated with during the 2025 field season. Given the vastness of our region, we depend on numerous partners to assist with timely monitoring efforts. Staff work to gain and collaborate with new partners every year. In 2025 staff also reached out to all the Tribes in our region, resulting in a new partnership with the Bishop Piute Tribe. A statewide effort to introduce the FHAB program to all California Tribes is planned to occur in 2026.

Table 5.2: Representation of partners who assisted the regional HAB program in 2025 and where they monitored.

Partner	County	Waterbody
Truckee River Watershed Council	Sierra, Nevada	Stampede Reservoir, Prosser Creek Reservoir, Boca Reservoir
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Alpine	Heenan Reservoir, Red Lake
South Tahoe Public Utility District	Alpine	Indian Creek Reservoir
Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association	El Dorado	Tahoe Keys
Tahoe Paradise Park	El Dorado	Lake Baron
Walker River Irrigation District	Mono	Bridgeport Reservoir
Mono County Environmental Health	Mono	Bridgeport Reservoir, Crowley Lake
June Lake Loop Volunteers	Mono	June Lake, Gull Lake, Silver Lake, Grant Lake
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)	Mono, Inyo	Crowley Lake, Pleasant Valley Reservoir, Tinemaha Reservoir
Bishop Piute Tribe	Inyo County	Cosa West Pond, Bishop Creek
Inyo County Environmental Health Department	Inyo	Diaz Lake, Mill Pond, Pleasant Valley Reservoir, Cottonwood Lake
Los Angeles County Parks	Los Angeles	Apollo Lake Park
Department of Water Resources	Los Angeles, San Bernardino	Quail Lake, Silverwood Lake
San Bernardino County Parks Department	San Bernardino	Lake Gregory, Mojave Narrows – Horseshoe and Pelican
Spring Valley Lake Association	San Bernardino	Spring Valley Lake

Funding

The regional FHAB program has relied on three main funding sources: State Board FHAB Funds, Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) funds, and Discretionary Contract Funds. Due to the State budget deficit, SWAMP funding was cut (see February 2025 EO Report), and it remains uncertain whether this funding will be reinstated in the future. To bridge the funding gaps caused by the lack of SWAMP funding, the State FHAB funds covered regional incident response, and this support is expected to extend through the 2026 monitoring season. Special studies within our region did not occur in 2025 due to the reduced funding availability and will not occur in 2026 unless new funding is received.

Over the last three years, our regional HAB program has relied heavily on Discretionary Contract Funds to complete the Pre-holiday Assessment Monitoring. However, Discretionary Contract funding has also been cut due to State budget deficits, so the continuation of this monitoring at its current scale in Fiscal Year 26/27 is uncertain. State Board FHAB funds will be needed to continue the Pre-holiday Assessment Monitoring and incident response as described above. A portion of the State Board FHAB funding has already been allocated to contracts to advance HAB science, including satellite remote sensing data use, benthic monitoring and assessment approaches, partner monitoring training, and expanding the understanding of cyanotoxin bioaccumulation. The remaining funds are shared among the 9 regional boards throughout California. Planning for the upcoming season is occurring now, and State Board staff have recently confirmed that we will receive funding to monitor 12 waterbodies for three Pre-holiday Assessment events. While this is good, it is a significant reduction of the current regional program. We hope to receive additional funding as we approach the next fiscal year.

6. **Understanding the Sackett Decision and Its Impact on Waters of the State —** *Tiffany Steinert and Bryan Talmadge*

The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Sackett v. EPA on May 25, 2023, represents a major shift in federal water regulation under the Clean Water Act. By rejecting the long-standing "significant nexus" test, the Court adopted a narrower interpretation of "waters of the United States," limiting federal jurisdiction to wetlands that maintain a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, and oceans. This change excludes many wetlands and ephemeral streams that were previously protected, particularly those common in arid regions like California.

For California, the Sackett decision significantly reduces federal oversight and places greater responsibility on state programs governed by the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. The State Water Resources Control Board and its nine Regional Boards now bear the primary burden of regulating and enforcing protections for non-federal waters. This shift requires updates to permitting processes, enforcement strategies, and policy frameworks to ensure water quality and ecological integrity are maintained.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Water Board) has been particularly impacted due to its jurisdiction over large areas with ephemeral streams and isolated wetlands. Projects that previously required federal permits under Section 404 of

the Clean Water Act now fall under the Lahontan Water Board's authority through Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs). For example, recent applications for routine maintenance of flood control facilities in San Bernardino County (Mojave Hydrologic Unit) explicitly referenced Sackett in determining non-federal jurisdiction, requiring the Lahontan Water Board to process WDR permits for activities that would have previously involved the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

To address these changes, the Lahontan Water Board staff (Staff) has increased reliance on state permitting processes and is coordinating with the State Water Board to develop supplemental WDRs and internal guidance for stream and wetland delineation. Strategic planning documents highlight the need for staff training and enforcement strategies to fill gaps left by reduced federal jurisdiction. These efforts include building capacity to assume tasks formerly conducted by federal agencies and updating Basin Plan implementation chapters to strengthen erosion and stormwater controls, which are critical in the Lahontan region.

The challenges ahead include increased workload for permitting and enforcement, resource constraints, and potential legal disputes over state authority. Environmental risks are heightened as isolated wetlands and intermittent streams become more vulnerable to development pressures. Staff is responding by prioritizing watershed restoration programs, interagency coordination, and stakeholder engagement to maintain water quality protections despite the evolving regulatory landscape. In addition, Staff are providing a significant amount of public assistance to explain the differences between Waters of the State and Waters of the United States, ensuring that municipalities, developers, and the public understand the new regulatory framework and its implications for permitting and compliance as jurisdictional boundaries between Waters of the State and Waters of the United States are not the same.

The statewide approach to address these challenges includes calibration of staff delineation skills, supported by a series of meetings called WADR (Wetland Aquatic Resource Delineation) that focus on improving consistency and accuracy in delineating Waters of the State across all regions. In addition, Staff are being trained on advanced wetland delineation techniques, and a train-the-trainer model is being implemented to ensure in-house expertise is retained. This strategy reduces reliance on periodic State Board trainings and enables Staff to maintain high standards of delineation independently.

The Sackett decision marks a pivotal moment in water regulation. While federal protections have narrowed, California—and specifically the Lahontan Water Board—remains committed to safeguarding its waters through robust state programs and proactive policy development. Collaboration among agencies, stakeholders, and water professionals will be essential to ensure that the region continues to protect its valuable water resources.