



United States Department of the Interior

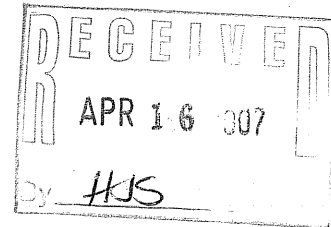


FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

IN REPLY REFER TO:
PAS 3335-5060-7144

April 10, 2007

Harold Singer, Executive Officer
Lahontan Regional Quality Control Board
2501 Lake Tahoe Boulevard
South Lake Tahoe, California 96150



Dear Mr. Singer:

This letter is in response to your request for comments, dated April 3, 2007, and received in our office on April 9, 2007 on enforcement orders for County Sanitation District 14 of Los Angeles. The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board (Water Board) Prosecution Team, the County Sanitation District 14 of Los Angeles – Lancaster (District 14), and the County Sanitation District 20 of Los Angeles County – Palmdale are proposing revisions of three enforcement orders that are part of a settlement that was presented for the Regional Board's consideration at its March 14, 2007 meeting in Lancaster.

Of concern to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are Piute Ponds located on Edwards Air Force Base (EAFB) in Kern and Los Angeles counties. Piute Ponds are of special concern because they are an example of a hydrologic area in the Mojave Desert is a very limited resource, and therefore, vary valuable resource. Piute Ponds provide important aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitat for many wildlife species including breeding, sheltering, and stop-over sites for migratory birds. It also may provide habitat for State and Federal threatened and endangered species. Piute Ponds is the largest aquatic habitat in the Mojave Desert in California.

Our understanding is that District 14 has discharged waste water onto EAFB since the early 1960s, enhancing and maintaining the Piute Ponds. District 14's inability to meet the Water Board's orders may result in a fine. We recommend that the Water Board consider that District 14 implement projects that enhance and expand the natural resources or Piute Ponds in lieu of part or all of the fine. For example, we suggest that District 14 could offset part of their fine by perpetually providing sufficient water quality and quantity to Piute Ponds to maintain it as a viable ecosystem, expand current wetland and aquatic habitats at Piute Ponds to increase the biodiversity and habitat availability of the entire Piute Ponds ecosystem, and conduct habitat maintenance activities to maintain this biodiversity and habitat availability.

We currently are unaware of any long-term commitments to provide water to Piute Ponds. However, we are aware of an agreement developed by EAFB with the California Department of

Fish and Game and Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts to provide treated wastewater to Piute Ponds and areas used by migratory birds.

We recommend that a meeting among the various agencies affected by this issue occur to discuss the options of habitat enhancement, habitat management, and long-term water quality and quantity issues at Piute Ponds. We suggest a meeting on May 22 in Lancaster.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this matter.

If you have any questions, please contact Robert McMorran at (805) 644-1766, extension 232.

Sincerely,



Acting Carl T. Benz
Assistant Field Supervisor

cc: Robert Wood, Edwards Air Force Base
Steve Parmenter, California Department of Fish and Game, Bishop
Julie Vance, California Department of Fish and Game, Fresno
Scott Harris, California Department of Fish and Game, Glendale
Rebecca Jones, California Department of Fish and Game, Palmdale