

# California Environmental Quality Act Scoping Meeting

Basin Plan Amendment to Revise Site-Specific Objectives for  
Total Nitrogen and Nitrate in Hot Creek, Mono Co.

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026



California Water Boards | Lahontan Region

# Meeting Agenda

<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
Waterboards Overview	Describe the role of the Waterboards
Meeting Purpose	Describe meeting purpose
Project Description	Project background and potential Basin Plan Amendment
Project Timeline	Discuss major milestones for this project
Participant Input	Opportunity for participants to provide input on CEQA analysis and ask questions
Closing Remarks	Closing words and next steps



# 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)
- Answer questions regarding the proposed project and the Basin Plan Amendment process
- Provide opportunity for public comments and input on the scope of the environmental analysis, as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

# Project Purpose and Need

**Project Purpose:** To revise site-specific objectives for nitrogen in Hot Creek (Mono County) via a Basin Plan Amendment

**Project Need:** In the 2022 and 2025 Triennial Review of the Lahontan Basin Plan, the Board prioritized creation of an updated total nitrogen water quality objective (WQO) for Hot Creek



# 6 Background on Water Quality Objectives

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act defines “**water quality objectives**” as the allowable “limits or levels of water quality constituents or characteristics that are established for the reasonable protection of **beneficial uses** of water or the prevention of nuisance within a specific area.”

Water quality objectives are generally established at levels that “protect the most vulnerable (sensitive) beneficial uses” of a waterbody.

“As additional information is obtained on the quality of the Region’s waters and/or the beneficial uses of those waters, certain water quality objectives and/or beneficial uses may be updated based on the new information.”

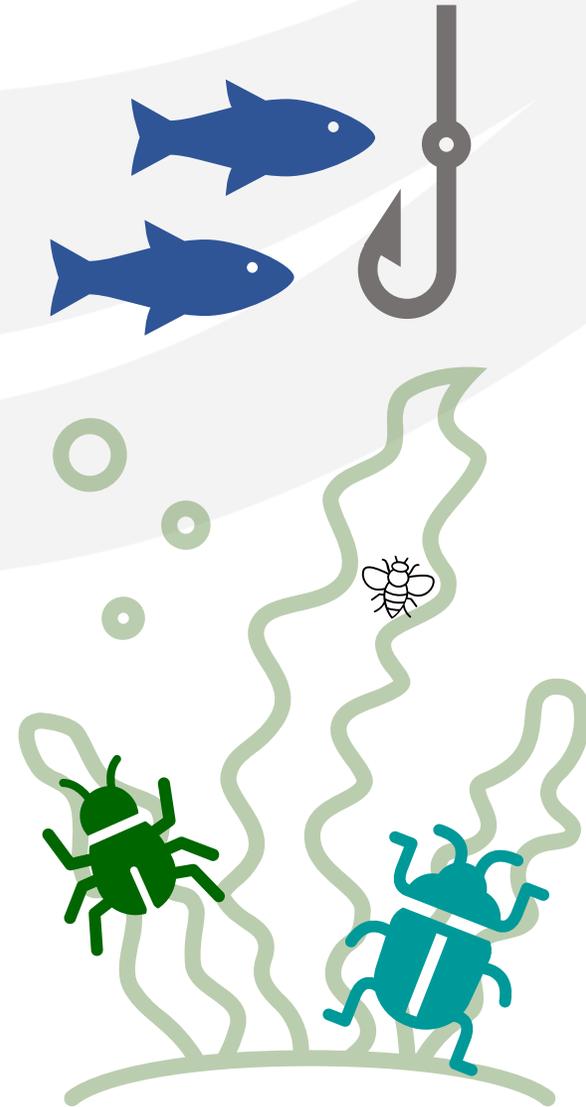
# Hot Creek's Water Quality Objectives

Hot Creek's most sensitive beneficial uses:

- COLD (Cold Freshwater Habitat)
- RARE (Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species)
- MIGR (Migration of Aquatic Organisms)
- SPWN (Spawning, Reproduction, and Development)

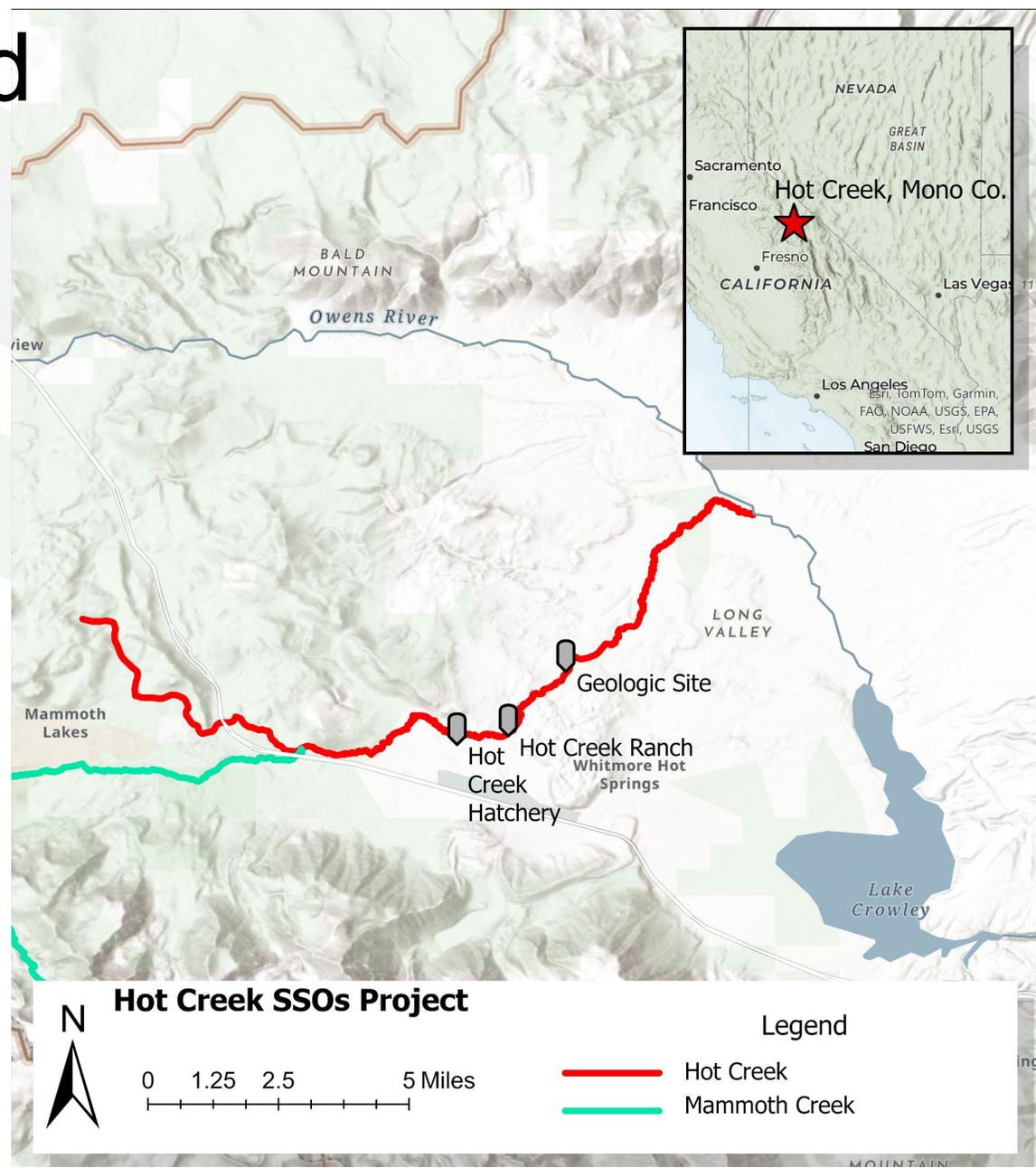
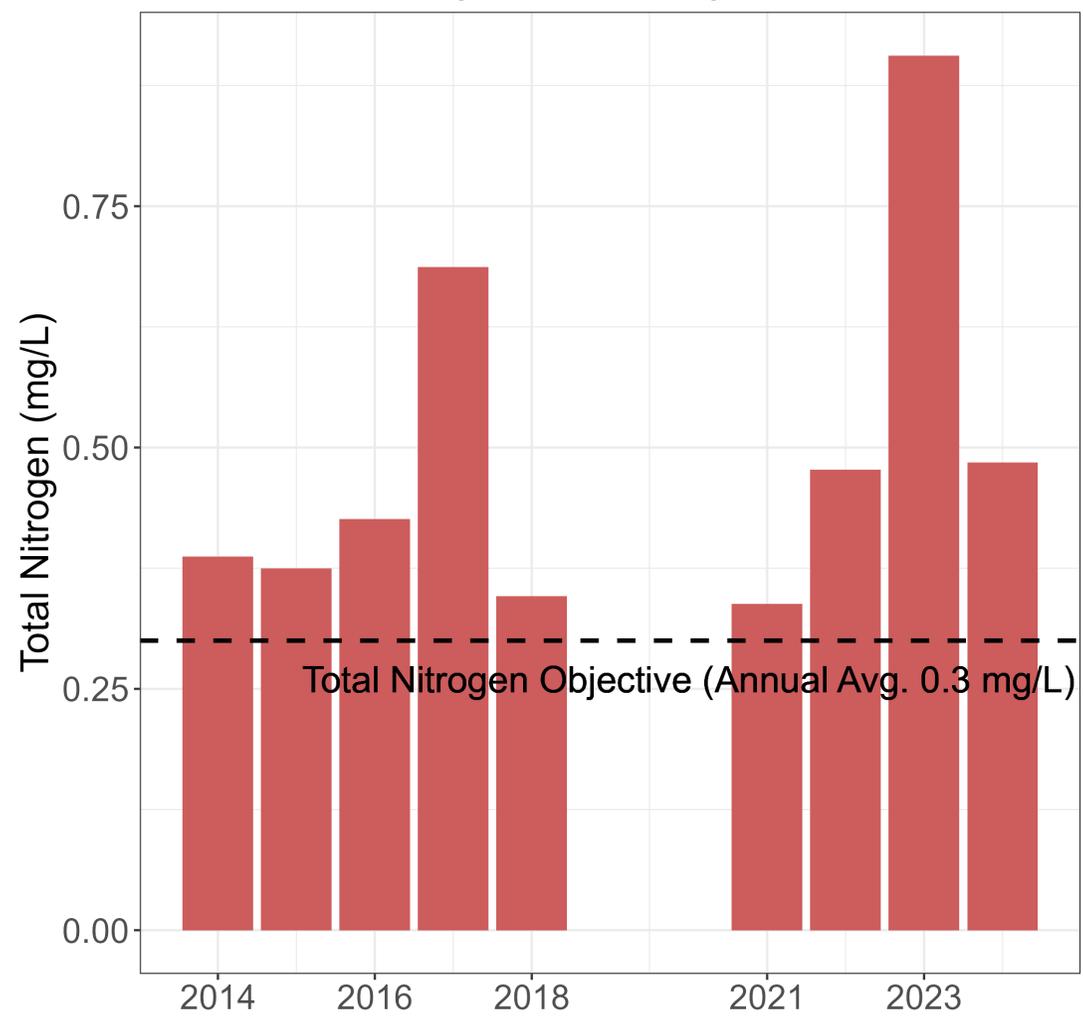
New WQOs need to protect these beneficial uses. Data being assessed includes:

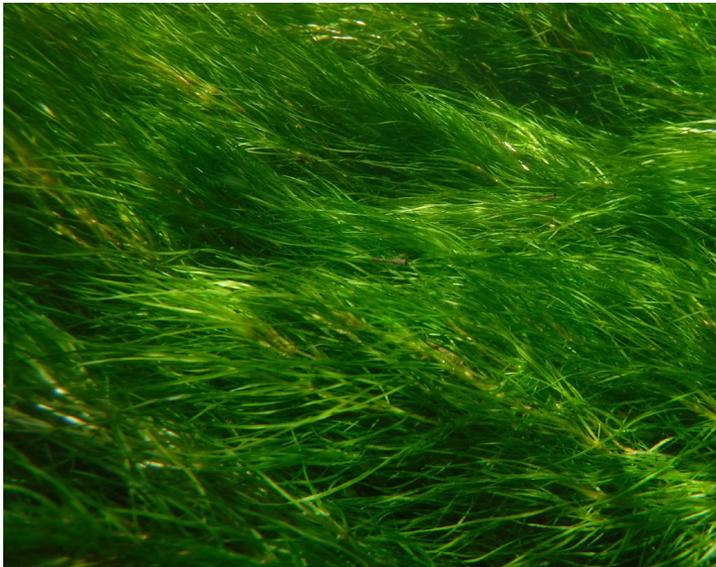
- Fisheries health
- Benthic macroinvertebrate community health
- Aquatic vegetation
- Water quality



# Project Area and Background

### Annual Average Total Nitrogen in Hot Creek

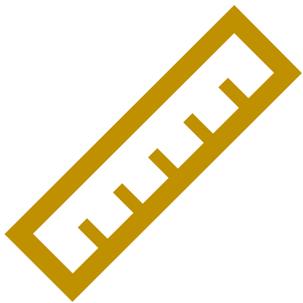




# Hot Creek, Mono County

# Data Gathering and Analysis

- Nutrients (i.e., N and P)
- Dissolved Oxygen
- pH
- Temperature
- Vegetation Cover
- Physical Habitat
- Fish Population
- Benthic Macroinvertebrate  
Community Health (i.e., bugs)



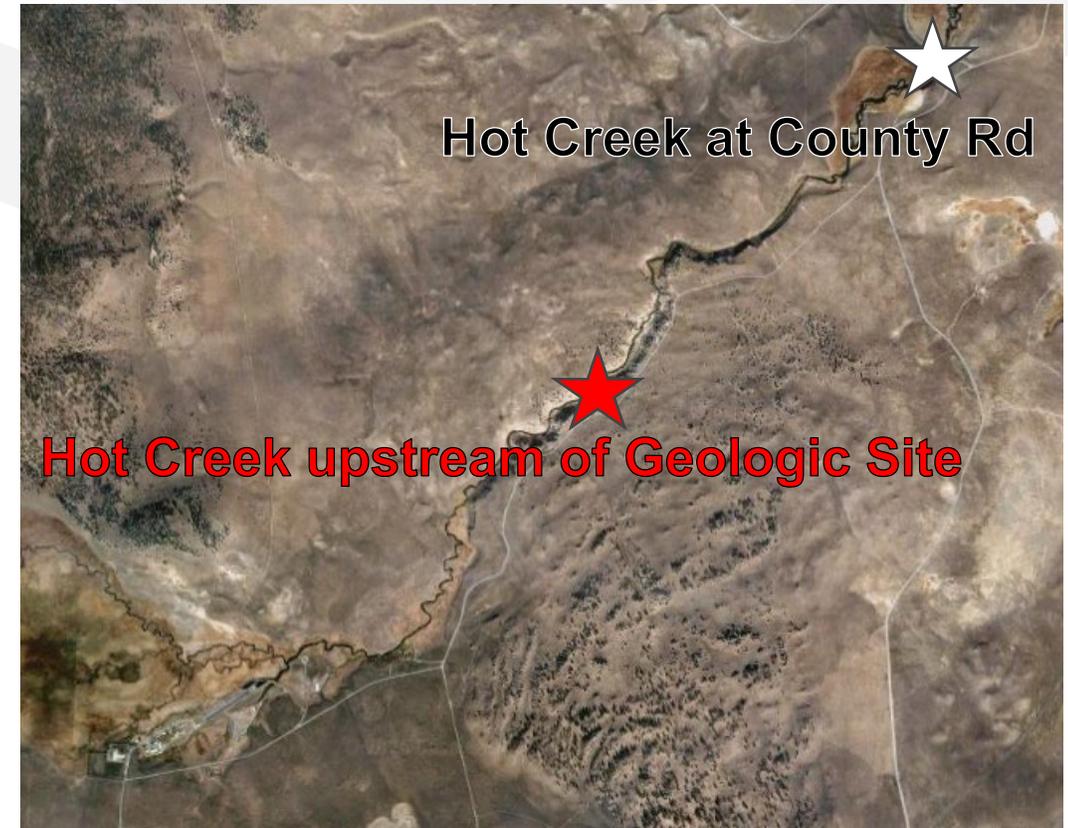
# Potential Basin Plan Amendment

Changes to site-specific nitrogen objectives:

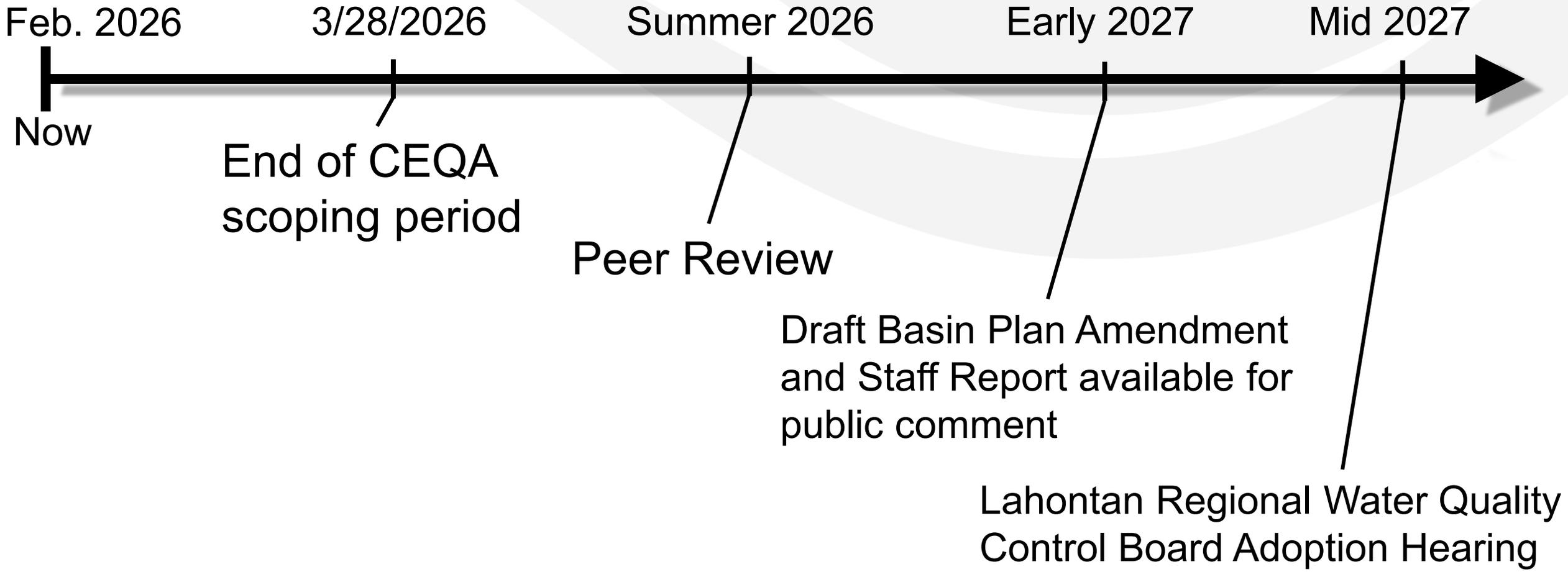
Change to location at which objectives apply:

Location	Objective Type	NO3-N	Total N
Hot Creek at County Rd	Annual Average	<del>0.2</del>	<del>0.3</del>
	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	<del>0.4</del>	<del>1.5</del>

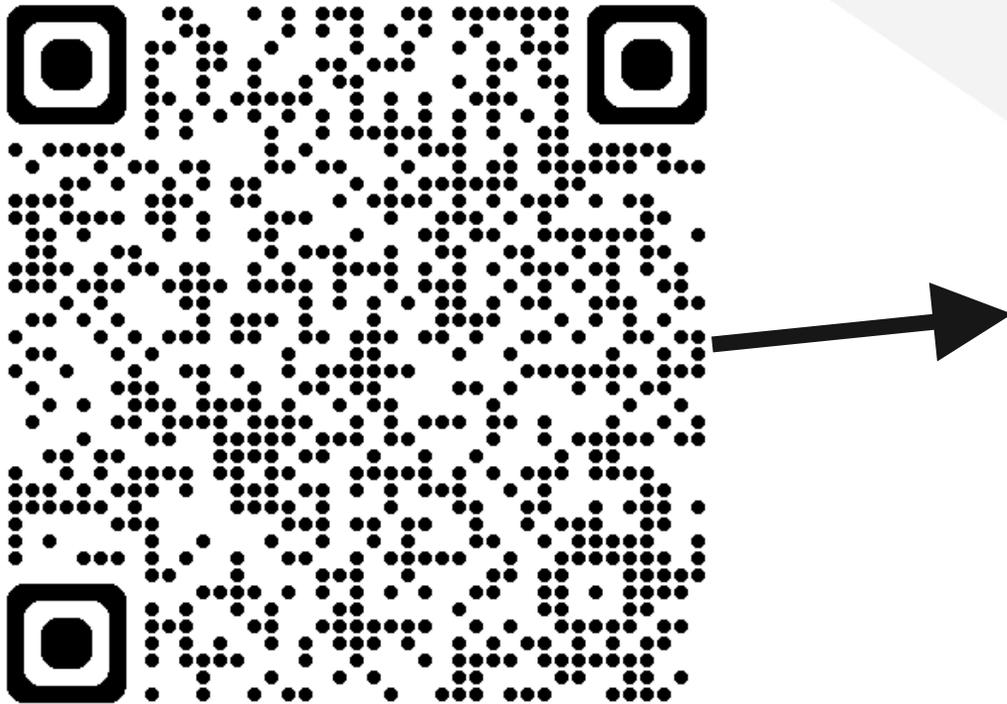
Location	Objective Type	NO3-N	Total N
Hot Creek upstream of Geologic Site	Annual Average	0.2-0.3	0.6-0.7
	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	0.4	1.0-1.5



# Project Timeline



# Project Website



The screenshot shows the website header with the California Water Boards logo and navigation links: About Us, Contact Us, Subscribe, Settings. Below the header are icons for Regional Board, Programs, News Room, Board Decisions, Public Notices, Water Boards, and Search. A breadcrumb trail reads: Home | Water Issues | Programs | Basin Plan.

## Hot Creek Nitrogen Site-Specific Objectives Update

### Background

Hot Creek is located east of Hwy 395 near Mammoth Lakes and is tributary to the Owens River. Hot Creek begins just downstream of Hwy 395 and flow is dominated by Mammoth Creek from Substation Road until the confluence with outflow from the Hot Creek Hatchery. For the purpose of this project, Hot Creek begins where the hatchery outflow joins the main stem of Hot Creek. The water supply to Hot Creek Hatchery originates from several geothermally influenced springs. Nitrogen concentrations in the springs that supply the Hatchery, in the Hatchery effluent, and in the receiving water downstream of the Hatchery regularly exceed the total nitrogen (TN) water quality objectives for Hot Creek and, at times, exceed the nitrate objective.

**Project Contacts:**

- Project Lead: Eli Balderas  
[Eli.Balderas@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Eli.Balderas@waterboards.ca.gov)  
 (530) 542-5597
- Lahontan TMDL/Basin Planning Program Manager: Daniel Sussman  
[Daniel.Sussman@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Daniel.Sussman@waterboards.ca.gov)

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water\\_issues/programs/basin\\_plan/hot-creek-ssos.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/hot-creek-ssos.html)

# CEQA Environmental Analysis

- Water Board's planning program is a "certified exempt" regulatory program under CEQA
- **Substitute Environmental Documentation (SED)**
  - Uses environmental checklist to identify potential impacts
  - Must consider impacts to resource areas such as air quality, water quality, biological resources, agricultural resources, recreation, etc.

***We seek all comments on the scope  
of our environmental analysis***

# CEQA Environmental Analysis (cont...)

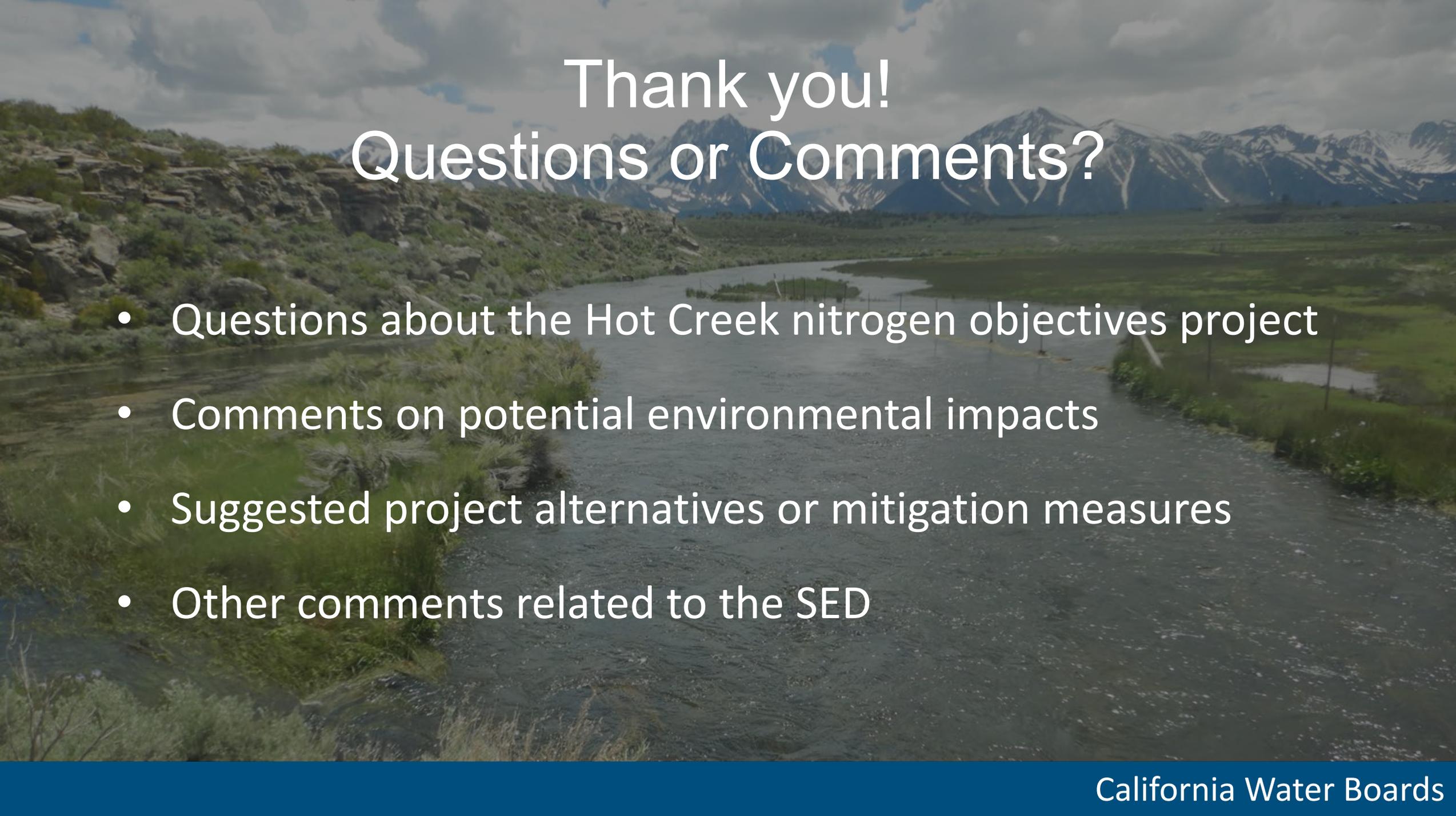
Potential impacts are assessed on:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality Utilities and Service Systems
- Biological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources

# Input Requested

- CEQA Scoping Public Comment Deadline – **March 28th, 2026**
- Comments must be project-related
- Comments may:
  - ✓ Identify any potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the project or with implementation measures to meet the WQO
  - ✓ Identify reasonable project alternatives
  - ✓ Identify mitigation measures that should be considered
  - ✓ Identify other aspects related to scope and content of the SED

***All comments may be made public***



# Thank you! Questions or Comments?

- Questions about the Hot Creek nitrogen objectives project
- Comments on potential environmental impacts
- Suggested project alternatives or mitigation measures
- Other comments related to the SED

# CEQA Scoping Public Comment Deadline – **March 28th, 2026**

## **Written comments can be sent via email to:**

Eli.Balderas@waterboards.ca.gov

Subject line: "Comment Letter – Hot Creek SSOs"

## **Or mail hardcopy comments to:**

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Attention: Eli Balderas

2501 Lake Tahoe Boulevard

South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

## **Receive Project Updates via Email Subscription to:**

“Basin Planning: Region 6 - Hot Creek Site Specific Objectives”

## **Sign up at:**

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