

January 9, 2010  
Laural Ames  
California Watershed Network

Gaylon Lee

Forest Activities Program Manager

Division of Water Quality

State Water Resources Control Board

1001 I Street

PO Box 2231

Sacramento, Ca 96158

Submitted via email to [Forestplan\\_comments@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Forestplan_comments@waterboards.ca.gov)  
<[mailto:Forestplan\\_comments@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Forestplan_comments@waterboards.ca.gov)>

Re: Evidence of impacts of Forest Service activities on water quality and on non-motorized users, comments on WQMP process, and request that State Water Board prepare an EIR

Dear Mr. Lee,

The California Watershed Network has been involved in watershed restoration activities, policy, and funding for restoration statewide for the past 9 years. We have worked with the State Board on developing funding guidelines and reviewed project proposals for the Board's grants programs. In our work in the various areas of the state, we have seen various impacts on the water quality in watersheds, and have noted the impacts from the multiple uses of the national forests. We have collected details and pictures of such impacts and will be presenting them to the Board throughout this process.

The California Watershed Network has a distinct interest in clean water produced by restored watersheds, and believes that the State Board can better regulate the United States Forest Service in its activities that directly impact the state's waters that are a critical product of the public's national forests.

The purpose of this letter is to provide documentation regarding Forest Service approved projects that impact non-motorized users in the Sierra, specifically the water quality impacts of commercial livestock uses on public health and the individual health of hikers, backpackers, bikers, fishermen, campers, picknickers, and those botanizing, photographing, walking, playing in the water, and otherwise enjoying the national forests and the waters of the State that flow therein.

We attach and incorporate by reference two studies published in 2006 and 2008 (by Derlet and others), measuring the pollution of Sierra waters by pathogens due to horse and cattle stocking, as well as a newspaper clip summarizing those studies and including a quote from the USFS spokesman

as to the USFS intent that the subject was "something we are definitely going to follow up on." To date, there is no evidence that these problems were or are being "followed up on." Also attached and incorporated by reference is a third study (by Kolodziej and Seldak) which documents contamination of waters in the Sierra by steroid hormones due to livestock grazing. We also provide a half-dozen recent photos of uncontrolled runoff from commercial livestock pack stations located on National Forest System lands in California. All together, this is just a small fraction of the readily available information that documents the ongoing significant adverse effects of USFS activities on water quality in California.

It is obvious that the failure of the USFS to design and implement effective BMPs results in contamination that poses the potential to cause significant adverse impacts to water quality and public health. Efforts to further streamline the current USFS Water Quality Management Plan, at a time that it clearly is not functioning to protect the State's water quality will result in a failure to correct current conditions, and a failure to assure a future of improved water quality from the State's headwaters.

In order to address the glaring deficiencies in the current regulatory framework, changes to the Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) and/or the Management Agency Agreement (MAA) must include, at minimum: 1) substantially increased and more focused monitoring to demonstrate compliance with State water quality standards; 2) better and more transparent reporting requirements; 3) more detailed specifications of BMPs and a defined process for the USFS to submit project-specific BMPs to Regional Water Boards for their review; and 4) clear implementation standards and enforceable requirements for corrective action when problems are identified.

The approval of an upgraded WQMP, Management Agency Agreement, and/or programmatic waiver(s)/permit(s) for USFS nonpoint discharges also will require a full EIR analysis to fully evaluate the environmental consequences, to inform decision-makers of the potential for significant effects, to mitigate significant effects to the extent feasible, and to provide assurance to the public that the best possible water quality protections are adopted. The very next step in this process should be an announcement by the State Water Board of its intent to prepare an EIR. Any less would preclude your ability to undertake an honest stakeholder process.

Please confirm your receipt of these materials, and please include a copy of this letter (including all references and photo attachments) in the record for this project.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I am happy to discuss these comments with you. I can be reached at 530-541-5752, or [laurel@watershednetwork.org](mailto:laurel@watershednetwork.org) <<mailto:laurel@watershednetwork.org>>

Very truly yours,

Laurel W. Ames

Board Member, CWN

Photos (5)

References (3)

Derlet, R.W., and J.R. Carlson. 2006. Coliform Bacteria in Sierra Wilderness Lakes and Streams: What is the Impact of Backpackers, Pack Animals, and Cattle? /Wilderness and Environmental Medicine/ 17:15-20. (6 pages).

Derlet, R.W., and others. 2008. Risk Factors for Coliform Bacteria in Backcountry Lakes and Streams in the Sierra Nevada Mountains: A 5-Year Study. /Wilderness and Environmental Medicine/ 19:82-90. (9 pages).

Kolodziej, E.P., and D.L. Seldak. 2007. Rangeland Grazing as a Source of Steroid Hormones to Surface Waters. /Environmental Science & Technology/, 41(1):3514-3520. (7 pages).