

2021 Decision Record Memo

February 2022

Each year Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program Managers meet with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Water Board) and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) Executives to review TMDL Program operations and discuss emerging issues, program priorities and future direction.

At this Program Review Meeting, TMDL Program Managers (1) present key findings and program adjustment recommendations described by the *Findings & Recommendations Memo*; (2) review priority actions and objectives for the upcoming year outlined in the *TMDL Annual Strategy*; and (3) discuss other relevant information and stakeholder input gathered during the calendar year. The *Decision Record Memo* documents outcomes and executive decisions resulting from the Program Review Meeting.

Summary

A virtual *Program Review Meeting* was held on November 17, 2021 with Lahontan Water Board Assistant Executive Officer, Ben Letton; NDEP Deputy Administrator, Jennifer Carr; and TMDL Program Managers Mary Fiore-Wagner (Lahontan Water Board) and Jason Kuchnicki (NDEP). During the meeting, TMDL Program Managers summarized 2021 calendar year activities and reviewed drafts of the *2021 Findings & Recommendations Memo* and *2022 TMDL Annual Strategy*. Drafts of these documents were distributed to stakeholders for a three-week review period on December 22, 2021. TMDL Program Managers shared stakeholder feedback received in response to the draft documents with executives via email.

This *2021 Decision Record Memo* documents two primary decisions by TMDL executives:

- 1) Acceptance of all recommendations put forward in the *2021 Findings and Recommendations Memo* with minor content revision from the draft.
- 2) The TMDL Executives supported and adopted the *2022 TMDL Annual Strategy*.

Decisions

Item 1: 2021 Findings and Recommendations Memo

Context: Adopting well-supported adjustment recommendations based on new information is key to the TMDL Program's adaptive management process. The annual *Findings & Recommendations Memo* describes actionable recommendations to adjust the TMDL Program, including management strategies and guiding policies. TMDL Program Managers circulate the draft memo to interested stakeholders, then present recommendations and associated feedback to TMDL Executives for discussion and approval at the annual *Program Review Meeting*.

Decision: TMDL Executives approved the *2021 Findings & Recommendation Memo* with minor content revisions from the draft. All proposed recommendations were supported. New recommendations from 2021 are summarized below.

Recommendation 2021-1: Major changes to permits and agreements are not warranted.

TMDL Executives agreed that major changes to other permit and agreement elements, such as the stormwater monitoring program, Lake Clarity Crediting Program (LCCP) policies or methods, and reporting requirements are not recommended. Upcoming and planned Tahoe Advisory Science Council (Science Council) investigations may inform program adaptive management for the next permit/agreement renewal in 2026/2027.

Recommendation 2021-2: Investigate smoke and ash impacts on Lake Tahoe clarity resulting from the 2021 wildfires.

TMDL Executives agreed that the unprecedented duration and extent of the 2021 wildfires presented a unique opportunity to better understand the extent to which smoke and ash influence short and long-term water quality dynamics in Lake Tahoe, and that the *Wildfire Smoke Impacts to Lake Tahoe's Water Quality* project will help provide a mechanistic understanding of the influence of smoke and ash that can be included in future annual clarity evaluations.

Recommendation 2021-3: Monitor water quality to understand wildfire and suppression repair, recovery, and restoration activities' impacts on Lake Tahoe clarity resulting from the Caldor Fire.

TMDL Executives agreed the *Alignment of Lake Tahoe Interagency Monitoring Program to Monitor Impacts of the Caldor Firework* project is essential to understanding the extent and duration for which these disturbances result in increased pollutant loads delivered to Lake Tahoe.

Recommendation 2021-4: Investigate fuels treatment effectiveness to determine the extent to which Lake Tahoe vegetation management practices reduced Caldor Fire impacts.

TMDL Executives agreed that an in-field evaluation is needed to confirm that Lake Tahoe basin fuels treatments were effective in achieving their intended objectives. And that findings from the *Caldor Fire Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Surveys* project will help guide future vegetation management work in the basin and adjacent regions and help justify the expenditure of public monies on these efforts.

Recommendation 2021-5: Ensure non-urban implementing partners track and report disturbed area resulting from the Caldor Fire in their 2021 reporting of TMDL Performance Measures.

TMDL Executives agreed with the expectation that non-urban implementers will quantify and report the resulting acres of disturbed areas created as well as efforts to mitigate potential impacts on water quality.

Recommendation 2021-6: Continue efforts to control fine sediment and nutrient inputs to the lake.

TMDL Executives acknowledged the findings from the *Data Synthesis and Analysis* project support continuing efforts to control fine sediment and nutrient inputs to the lake and that TMDL Agencies should continue to engage with the Science Council on ongoing efforts to better understand the relative importance of other factors controlling lake clarity.

Item 2: 2022 Annual Strategy

Context: The *TMDL Annual Strategy* is a short document prepared by TMDL Program Managers that informs the prioritization of day-to-day activities and TMDL Program messaging for the year. It includes a long-term goal, 5-year milestone objectives, annual objectives and current themes. The *TMDL Annual Strategy* is reviewed and finalized by TMDL Executives at the annual *Program Review Meeting* and is subsequently published on the Lake Clarity Tracker.

Decision: TMDL Executives approved the *2022 TMDL Annual Strategy* with no content revisions from the draft that was circulated to stakeholders for feedback.