

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

Upper Truckee R.
El Dorado Co.
95314 3-99 500 SPO

MEMORANDUM:

To: Mr. R. Montgomery, Regional Manager, Reg. II.
State Dept. of Fish and Game

Date: May 14, 1959

Subject: Lake Tahoe

From: J. T. Leggett, Executive Officer
LAHONTAN REGION NO. 6
407 W. Line Street, Bishop
Phone: 6161

Recently it was announced that a large dredging firm is proposing to do a considerable amount of work in the South Tahoe area, preparing for a rather extensive development in that area. From information I have been able to gather, the project will last about two years.

I would assume that this dredging operation will create considerable problems of siltation and turbidity in the tributary streams to Lake Tahoe, as well as to restricted areas of Lake Tahoe. I am sure this will be a problem the Department of Fish and Game, as well as this Board, will be concerned with. In work of this nature I am not certain as to just what would be the best way to approach it. I would imagine, however, that some precautions should be taken by the company to prevent excessive damage to fish and aquatic life.

Would it be possible for your staff to make a brief study of the area and determine just what the company proposes to do to prevent this problem from occurring? In the meantime I will work on this end to determine what the company plans to do. Perhaps at some later date we can get together to discuss this in more detail and even perhaps discuss it with the contracting company. I am merely pointing this out for your consideration and comments.

Since it is rather early we should have ample time to decide on what necessary precautions must be taken.

J. T. Leggett
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July 14, 1959

he had constructed and at the present time, the fine material flowing from the outlet pipe is confined to the marsh area and does not enter either the Upper Truckee River or the lake.

The mud stirred up at the intake of the dredge is still running into the Upper Truckee River and Lake Tahoe. Don Kelley and Warden Leamon inspected this area on July 2 and at that time enough silt was being stirred up at the intake to cause a great increase in the turbidity of the river and the lake itself for a mile or more east of the river's mouth. The silt in suspension apparently does not go out into the deep water of Lake Tahoe, but rather stays in a band 100 yards or so wide that is either right against the shore or away from it a short distance. Apparently, wind action on the lake affects the currents that carry this mud. On July 2, the water at the El Dorado County beach was so turbid that the bottom was not visible three feet below the surface.

The greatest effect this operation will have upon the fishery of Lake Tahoe will be caused by the destruction of the large Truckee swamps. We believe that this area is an important nursery ground for Lake Tahoe trout. If the project is successful this nursery ground will be turned into a series of deep channels with levees between them upon which people can live.

Aside from the destruction of the swamp, any appreciable increase in the turbidity of Tahoe for more than a short time will destroy the plant beds that provide shelter for fish food and for young fish. The fact that such increases in turbidity have been damaging to lakes is documented in the scientific literature. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine just how much silt is permissible before damage is done. One thing is certain, long before the increase in turbidity along the south shore damages fish life, the esthetic benefits of Tahoe's clear water along that shore will be destroyed. While we believe this should be prevented, we also believe that the resort owners and the County of El Dorado are in a far stronger position to prevent it than is the Department of Fish and Game. The project as planned may last 4 or 5 years. It seems imperative that some steps be taken to prevent the continual high turbidities. We can, if you request, recommend standards to protect the fish. These standards will probably not be high enough to protect the esthetic value of the clear water along the shore.

We found Mr. Turner to be very cooperative and suggest that it may be profitable for all interested parties to meet in an attempt to reach agreement on this problem. We believe the county of El Dorado and the local resort owners should be represented at that meeting. Should you want detailed information on the operation itself, we suggest you contact Mr. Turner who is on the job at the dredge.

Very truly yours,

Robert D. Montgomery
Regional Manager
Region II

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