

year's celebration.

Truckee fish kill approved

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The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board has issued an order that permits the state to apply the poison rotenone to the Upper Truckee River and six lakes to clear the waters for an endangered fish species.

The board voted 6-1 to allow the Department of Fish and Game to proceed with its plan to use electroshock and rotenone to remove all of the brook trout in the Upper Truckee and six higher lakes, board member John Lovelady said Saturday.

But the department must monitor downstream drinking-water supplies, and if contamination is discovered, must provide those people affected with fresh water, he said.

The department wants to remove the brook trout to reintroduce a population of Lahontan cutthroat trout, a threatened species that is native to California. The project is tentatively scheduled for September.

Lahontan trout once numbered in the millions in the high Sierra. During the last century, their number dwindled to fewer than 10,000 as more aggressive, non-native fish like brook trout took over areas where they flourished.

The board's decision's Friday significantly modified a draft cease-and-desist order it proposed two weeks ago to stop the state from applying rotenone.

"When I first started hearing about this plan, I didn't feel I could endorse it, because I didn't have all the facts," said Lovelady. "But Fish and Game brought several experts to our meeting who gave a very impressive presentation that convinced me not only that the plan is safe, but it's essential."

State biologist Eric Gerstung said recently that the chemicals to be used won't harm the waterways or the animals and people that use them. Rotenone is organic and has been used for decades in fish kills, he said, and potassium permanganate is used to neutralize the rotenone so it won't spread outside the project area.

In addition, rotenone dissipates a short time after it is introduced, and is a very immobile chemical, said R.S. Gill, an environmental specialist with the board.

Some Tahoe residents don't like the idea of rotenone in the waters. Brook trout are fighters, some say, while Lahontan cutthroat are pussycats, easy to catch and not very good fighters.