South Lake Tahoe Monitoring Project

Project Update ~ Winter '08/'09

SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

The South Lake Tahoe Monitoring Project, a volunteer water quality monitoring effort coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Alliance, tests pollution levels in creeks and rivers. 2008 was the first field season for the group of trained citizen-monitors.

Monitoring Project Overview

Volunteers check for polluted water in local creeks and rivers by collecting data which evaluates the health of water bodies in the Upper Truckee Watershed (a "watershed" is any area of land that drains into a river, lake or stream). Using meters, chemical tests, and streamside habitat surveys, monitors gather information on the ecological health of the river or creek. This helps us understand what pollutants and other upstream watershed disturbances may be affecting water quality downstream.

Why Monitor Water Pollution in South Lake Tahoe Rivers?

Lake Tahoe is a national treasure and its crystal blue waters are just the beginning. The Upper Truckee Watershed is also home to vibrant meadows, clean mountain streams, and precious wildlife. The Upper Truckee River is also the biggest input into Lake Tahoe, where a drop of water resides for an average of 700 years! Monitoring water quality helps track trends in water pollution and stream conditions over time. In addition, local agencies need our help to carry out the enormous and important task of data collection.

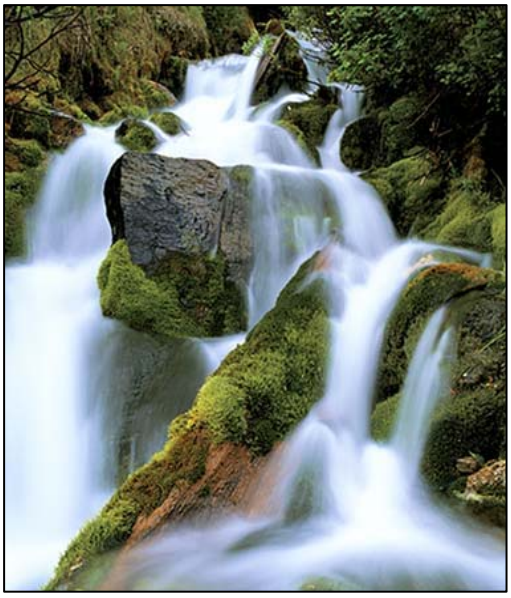
2008 Project Highlights:

- Trained 35 monitors
- Citizens volunteered over 500 hours
- Collected data at 15 rivers or creeks in South Lake Tahoe
- Partnered with the 8th Annual Snapshot Day, a basin-wide water quality monitoring event each May.
- Published the first Annual South Lake Tahoe Monitoring Project Report which includes baseline water quality data collected by the Monitoring Project, USGS flow information, and facts about historic and ongoing watershed activities related to water quality.

What Aspects of Water Quality Does the Project Monitor?

- Water Temperature
- Dissolved Oxygen
- pH
- Conductivity /Salinity
- Turbidity levels
- Nutrient analysis
- Bacteria
- Suspended Sediment
- Streamside Habitat Assessment
- Photo Monitoring

2008 Data Highlights:



The South Lake Tahoe Monitoring Project is still in the early stages of data collection. It will take several more years of data before any direct conclusions about water quality can be made based on this data. However, the project is tracking how:

- Precipitation, temperature, water pollution, and runoff patterns relate to water quality.
- Water quality parameters compare to legal standards set by the Lahontan Region Water Quality Control Board.
- Land uses may be affecting water quality in rivers and creeks in South Lake Tahoe.

Citizens are trained in monitoring techniques established by the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), the citizen monitoring division of the State Water Board.

The trained volunteers monitor 4 times a year. Monitoring sites are established through a collaborative effort with local water resource managers. The project area contains past and current land uses that have been shown to negatively impact water quality as well as beneficial restoration projects, which are helping improve stream conditions.

The Monitoring Project is a fun, hands-on way to collect reliable water quality data and assist efforts to protect and restore South Lake Tahoe creeks and rivers.

For the full 2008 Annual Report, please go to www.sierranevadaalliance.org/publications and click on "Reports, Toolkits & Guides."

For more information and how to get involved, please contact:

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