



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
1275 Meadow Crest Drive,
South Lake Tahoe CA 96150

Contact: Shelly Thomsen
sthomsen@stpud.us
530-543-6268

Recycled Water Spill into Grass Lake Creek

South Lake Tahoe, CA (May 9, 2019) – On Thursday, May 9, 2019, recycled water from a South Tahoe Public Utility District Luther Pass storage tank leaked into Grass Lake Creek off Grass Lake Road in Christmas Valley. The District immediately responded and worked through the morning to stop the spill.

Recycled water is highly treated wastewater that is often used as a replacement for potable water for irrigation and industrial needs. It is clear, odorless and can contain higher levels of nutrients, like nitrogen and phosphorous, than drinking water.

The Lake Tahoe Basin is unique in that all recycled water is required by law to be exported out of the Basin. As such, South Tahoe Public Utility District pumps an average of 3.9 million gallons per day of recycled water to Alpine County, where it is used by ranchers and the District for irrigation. This is accomplished by running pumps during off-peak energy hours to lower electric bills, and storing recycled water in tanks during peak energy hours.

The storage tank in question had been filled to capacity over-night for a structural inspection the next day. “This morning when we returned to do the inspection, the tank level had fallen by 10 inches and there was water coming out of the tank’s overflow pipe,” said Julie Ryan, Engineering Manager at the District. The District posted warning signs along the creek, collected water samples and capped the over-flow pipe. “We received field results from the lab with non-detect levels for ammonia and are awaiting results for coliform bacteria before removing the warning signs from the creek. The tank is being drained and taken out of service until we can determine what caused the leak” says Ryan.

###