

# **Plumas County Environmental Health 2017 Annual Report**



View Southwest Overlooking American Valley

## **OVERVIEW**

Environmental Health is pleased to provide this report of activities for the calendar year 2017. This is the first time that staffing and workload have allowed completing a report since 2014. I hope to make it a regular document.

Environmental Health can best be described as those aspects of human health and disease that are influenced by conditions in the environment. Chemical, physical and biological conditions are all important variables in determining human health. Promoting an environment that enhances human health and well-being is the foundation of environmental health.

Environmental Health's mission is to preserve the environment and enhance public health through outreach, education, planning and sensible application of environmental health principles, laws and statutes. Our primary role is to implement programs and enforce regulations that protect human health and the environment.

## **STAFFING**

To accomplish this mission, Environmental Health strives to hire the best people and train them well.

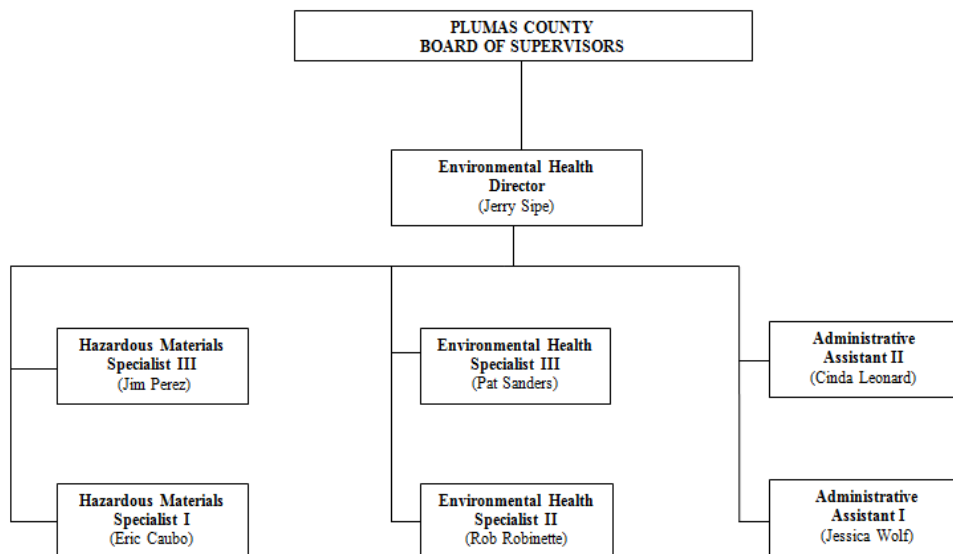
After a decade of stable staffing with essentially no turnover, half of Environmental Health staff have been with the department for less than two years. While one of the

clerical staff brought county experience from the Engineering Department, both are new to Environmental Health and the range of services we provide. This has created both a challenge and opportunity. The primary challenge has been to maintain a high level of customer service throughout this transition. With fresh eyes, we've also had the opportunity to re-evaluate our processes and determine if there are better, more efficient ways to complete our work.

After an unsuccessful recruitment to fill an Environmental Health Specialist vacancy due to retirement, the Board approved a salary increase for all of our field staff positions. This increase allowed us to favorably recruit for staff in a competitive job market. Thanks in large part to this increase, we have a new Hazardous Materials Specialist I who was hired last fall.

Currently at full staffing, Environmental Health once again has a full-time director (Office of Emergency Services duties have transitioned to the Sheriff's Department), two clerical, and four field staff. Field staff are Hazardous Materials Specialists and Registered Environmental Health Specialists, who have background, education, training and state certification in their field of practice.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH Organization Chart FY 17-18**



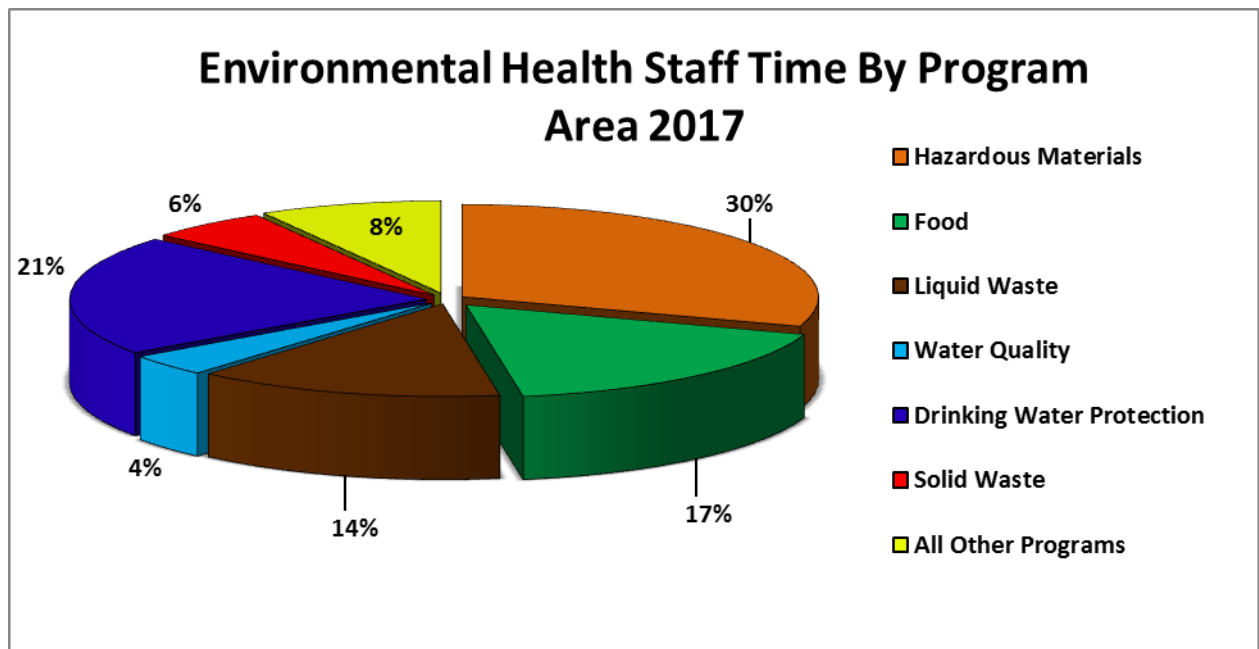
Environmental Health's office is in the Health and Human Services Center in Quincy. This office is generally staffed Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm. Field staff can also be seen after business hours, often inspecting weekend community events or responding to hazardous materials incidents. The former branch office in the Chester Civic Center is no longer open to the public but this site is used occasionally by field staff for appointments or completing paperwork between field inspections.

## PROGRAMS

In Plumas County, Environmental Health services are generally grouped into one of ten core program areas. The amount of time spent in each program area depends on a variety of risk factors, state mandates, and the service needs of the community. In Plumas County these ten environmental health programs include:

- Hazardous Materials Management
- Drinking Water Protection
- Food Safety
- Liquid Waste Management
- Solid Waste Management
- Water Quality Protection
- Land Use and Development
- Rabies and Vector Control
- Recreational Health
- Housing and Institution Safety

In 2017, staff time was allocated as shown in the following chart and some notable programs and activities are summarized below.



## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

The hazardous materials management program helps ensure the safe and proper handling of hazardous materials. Environmental Health staff permit and inspect hazardous materials at fixed facilities and provide technical assistance, planning and support for hazardous materials releases. In 2017, approximately thirty percent of Environmental Health staff time was dedicated to hazardous materials management, including training the new Hazardous Materials Specialist.

Environmental Health is the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for Plumas County. We maintain state certification through the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). CalEPA evaluates Environmental Health's program to ensure it complies with state program standards and performance. The five main elements of the program include the following:



Simple Fuels Biodiesel Facility, Chilcoat

### Hazardous Materials Business Plan Program (HMBP)

- Assuring that businesses electronically report hazardous material handling, use and storage (volumes greater 55 liquid gallons, 500 solid pounds, or 200 cubic feet of gases) and develop release response plans.
- Coordinating with local fire departments and other emergency responders on preparedness and response to chemical emergencies.

### Above Ground Storage Tank (AST) Program

- Tracking, permitting and inspecting AST facilities, operations and equipment.
- Reviewing and verifying Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plans (SPCC) are in place.



Aboveground Tank, Gansner Field, Quincy



Underground Tanks, Fuel Star Gas Station, Quincy

## Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program

- Tracking, permitting, and inspecting UST facilities and equipment.
- Ensuring underground tanks are properly operated, monitored and maintained to avoid risks of spills, leaks, or releases.
- Inspecting the construction, repair, upgrade and removal of underground tanks.
- Verifying that closed and removed tanks have not leaked and do not pose a risk to the environment.

## California Accidental Release Program (Cal ARP)

- Tracking, permitting and inspecting facilities that handle certain quantities of acutely hazardous material (such as chlorine gas or anhydrous ammonia).
- Reviewing Risk Management Plans (RMP) that reduce the risk of accidental releases.



Anhydrous Ammonia Tanks at Sierra Pacific Industries, Quincy

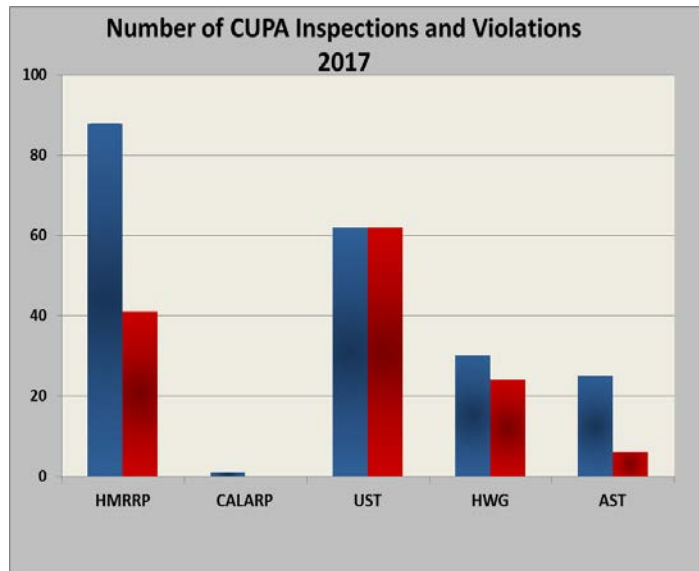


Hazardous Waste Accumulation, USFS Mt Hough Ranger Station

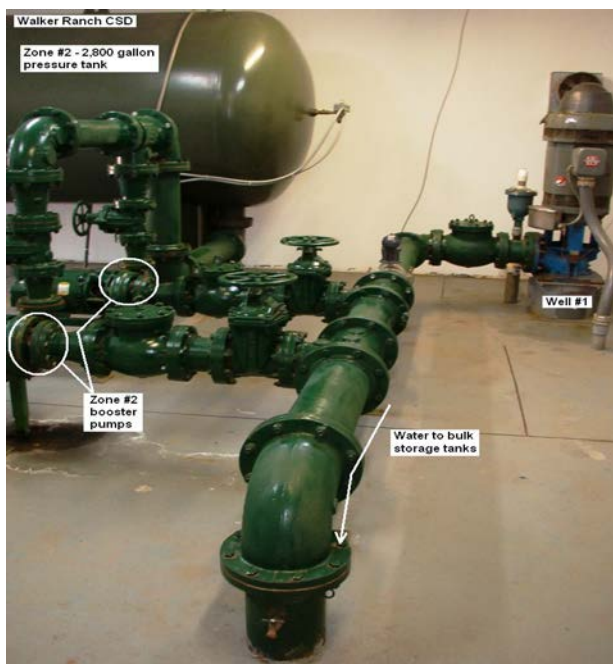
## Hazardous Waste Generator Program

- Tracking, permitting, and inspecting facilities that generate hazardous wastes such as waste oil, solvents, and used chemicals.
- Ensuring the proper storage, management, handling and disposal of these wastes.

Since Cal EPA implemented the California Electronic Data Reporting System for this program in 2014 (aka CERS), Environmental Health tracks the number of inspections and violations cited each year in this program. The attached chart shows a high percentage of our inspections result in violations, especially for underground storage tanks and hazardous waste generators. These are extremely complex hazmat programs and maintaining full compliance can be challenging, especially for ‘mom and pop’ businesses like we have in Plumas County. Through continuing outreach and education, we hope to reduce the number of violations observed in future years. It is also worth noting that Environmental Health provides the full range of CUPA services to Sierra County under contract.



## DRINKING WATER PROTECTION



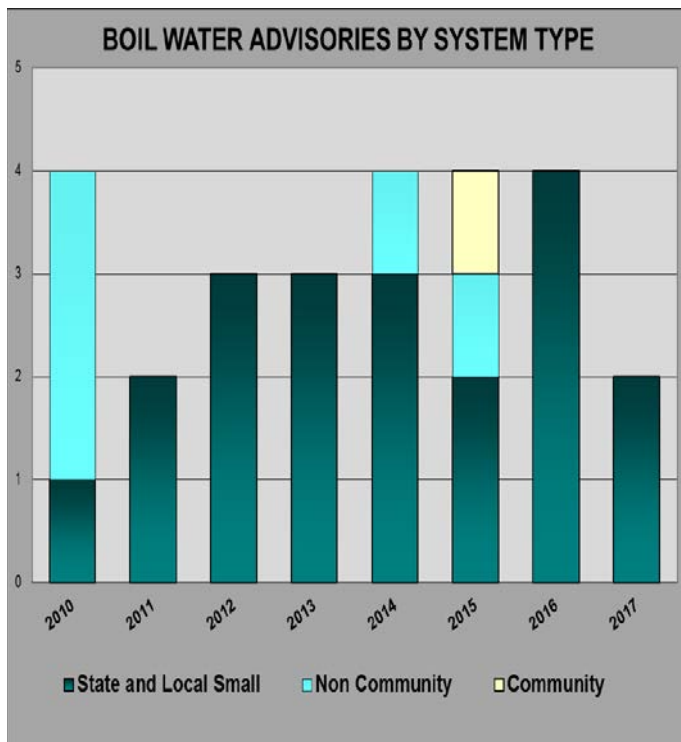
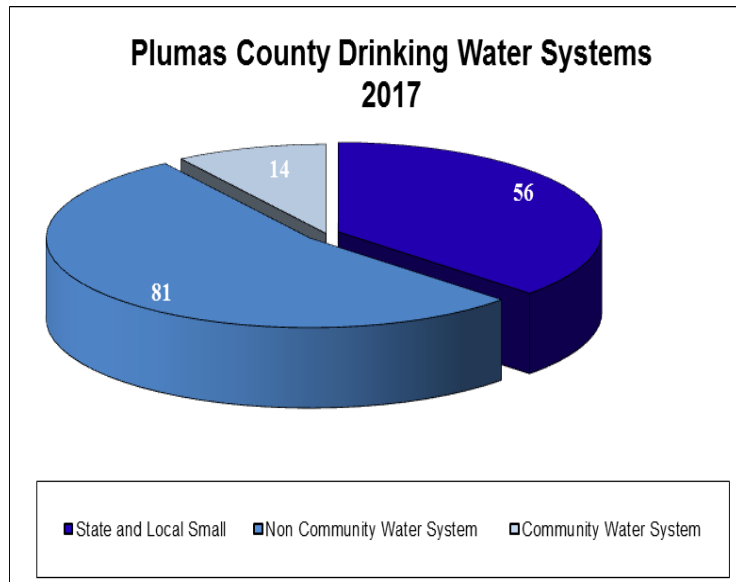
Drinking Water Plumbing for Walker Ranch CSD

Ensuring safe and potable drinking water supplies is a vital function of Environmental Health. During 2017, over 20 percent of EH staff time was spent in this program. Environmental Health maintains state certification as the Local Primacy Agency (LPA) for drinking water systems. Annual program evaluations by State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) ensure this program meets state and federal oversight requirements. EH staff serve as a local resource for water system operators, helping ensure that our drinking water remains the highest quality possible.

Environmental Health is responsible to oversee the operation and maintenance of non-community water systems such as resorts and campgrounds, local water systems serving less than 15 connections, and community systems with up to 200

connections. Combined, these systems serve drinking water to over twenty-two thousand residents and visitors to Plumas County each year. Oversight of the largest community systems is performed by SWRCB as required by law.

Environmental Health monitors the water quality of 151 systems located throughout the county. To ensure the water provided by these systems is safe to drink, we review and track nearly two thousand (2,000) bacteriological reports each year. In addition, we also track numerous chemical data for each system.



If there is an immediate risk to human health, the system operator is required to issue a Boil Water Advisory. The number of Boil Water Advisories issued is a good indicator of overall drinking water quality, and is a key part of public health protection. Data on the number of Boil Water Advisories posted for the past few years is shown on the graph. In 2017, after reviewing almost 2000 bacteriologic data points, only two Boil Water Advisories were issued. This confirms the high quality of our drinking water and also is a reflection of good water system management by water purveyors.

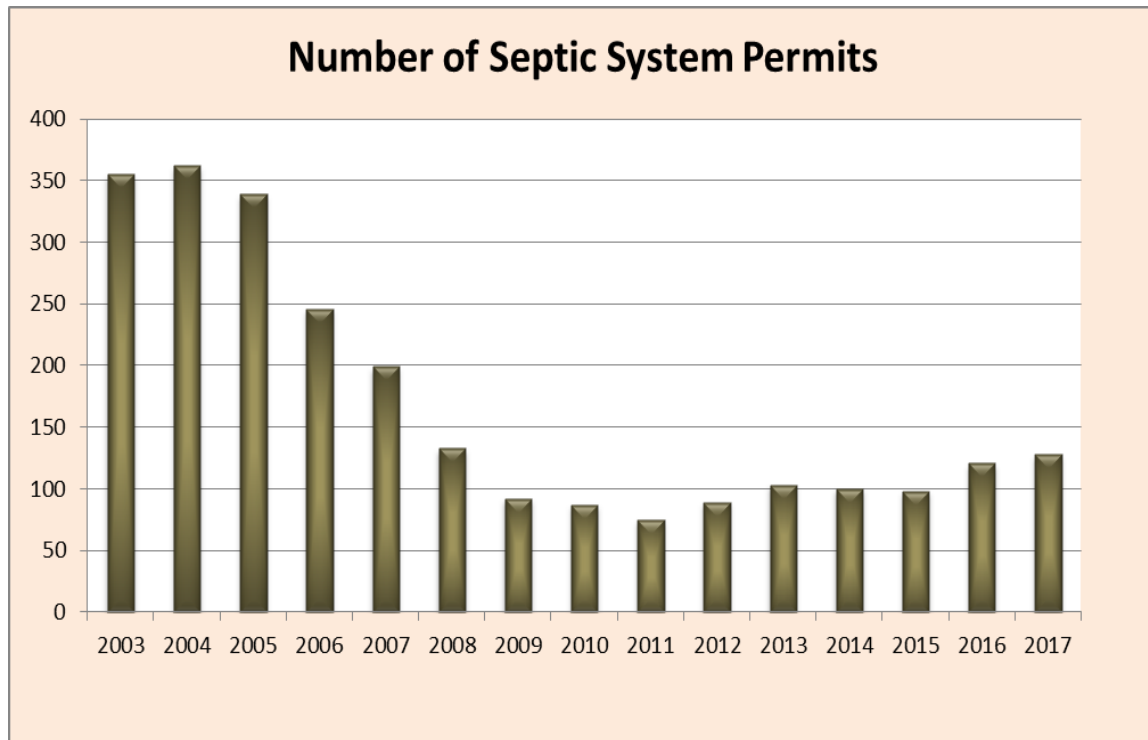
## LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT



Our liquid waste program ensures that wastes are properly handled, treated and disposed to protect public health and the environment. This includes preventing exposure to contaminated wastewater as well as preventing contamination of surface and groundwater. We review and approve the location, design, construction, installation and repair of all on-site sewage disposal systems through a permit and inspection program.

Wastewater Treatment System at Fork Campground near Caribou

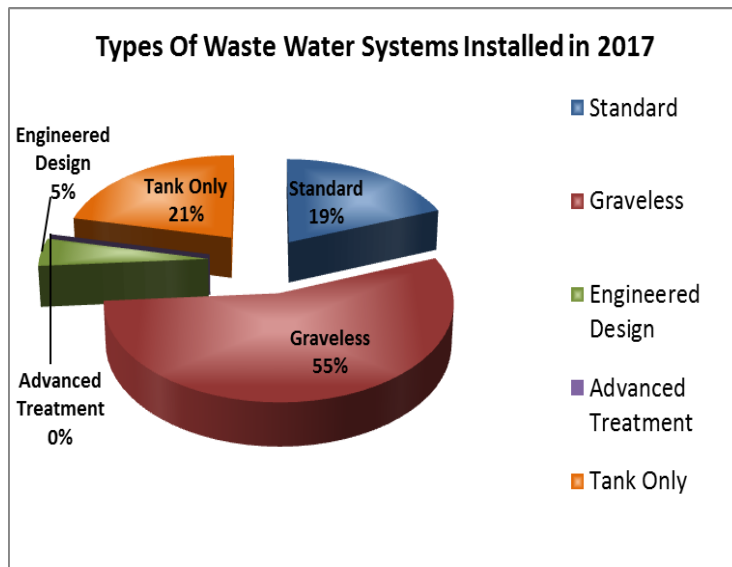
The following chart tracks the number of onsite wastewater treatment system permits Environmental Health has issued since 2002. The economic downturn is clearly reflected in these annual numbers, bottoming out in 2011 with only 75 permits processed. The numbers have rebounded somewhat with 128 permits issued in 2017.



In 2016, the State Water Board approved Plumas County's Local Agency Management Plan (LAMP) for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems. The LAMP

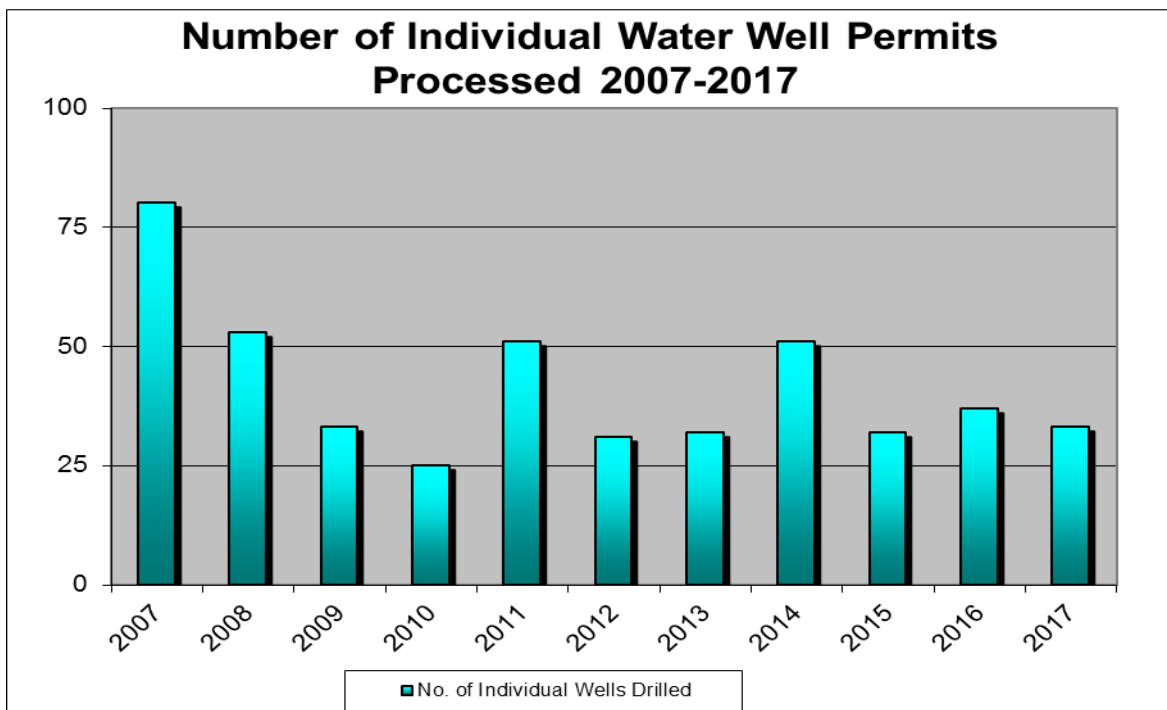
satisfies the old AB 885 requirements for onsite system construction, design, maintenance, and ground water quality monitoring and analysis.

In 2017, EH began recording data on the type of onsite wastewater systems that are installed in Plumas County. A comprehensive report to the State Water Board will be required at the end of 2018.

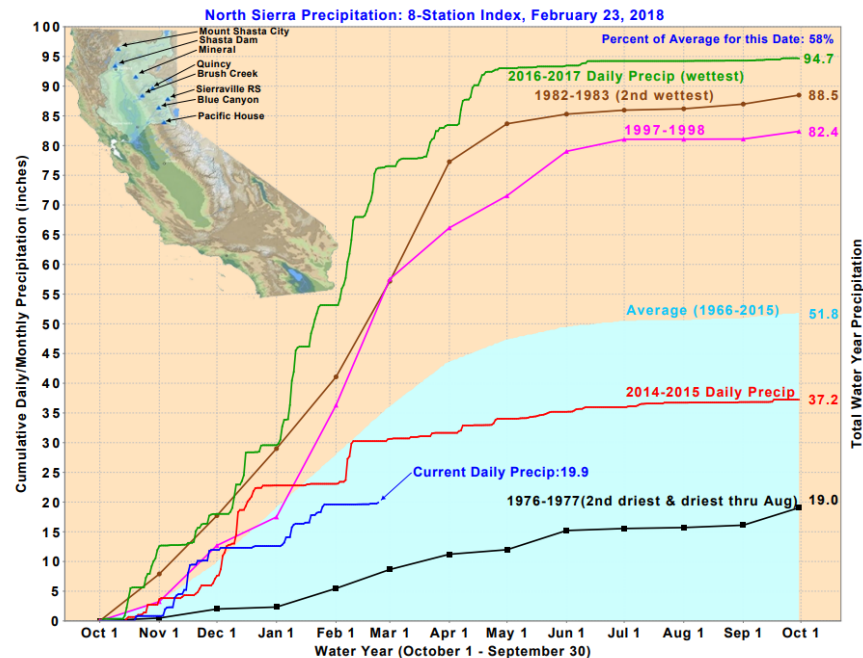


## WATER QUALITY ASSURANCE

Protecting the quality of Plumas County's lakes, streams and groundwater supplies is a core function of Environmental Health. An important part of this program is the well permit process since improperly located or constructed wells can compromise groundwater quality. The annual number of permits issued is shown below.



In 2014, Environmental Health began closely tracking the number of drought-impacted wells. A handful of older, shallow domestic wells had water quality and water shortage problems, but these were typically widespread and not isolated to a specific area of the county. Also in 2014, some new ag wells were drilled in response to reduced surface water allocations. That year, 11 of the 51 new wells drilled were for agricultural uses such as field irrigation or stock watering. Following the record wet winter of 2016-17, the number of new wells installed decreased to 33 which is consistent with the numbers seen over the past several years. With the apparent return of the drought, it will be important to continue tracking these numbers and trends.



## FOOD SAFETY

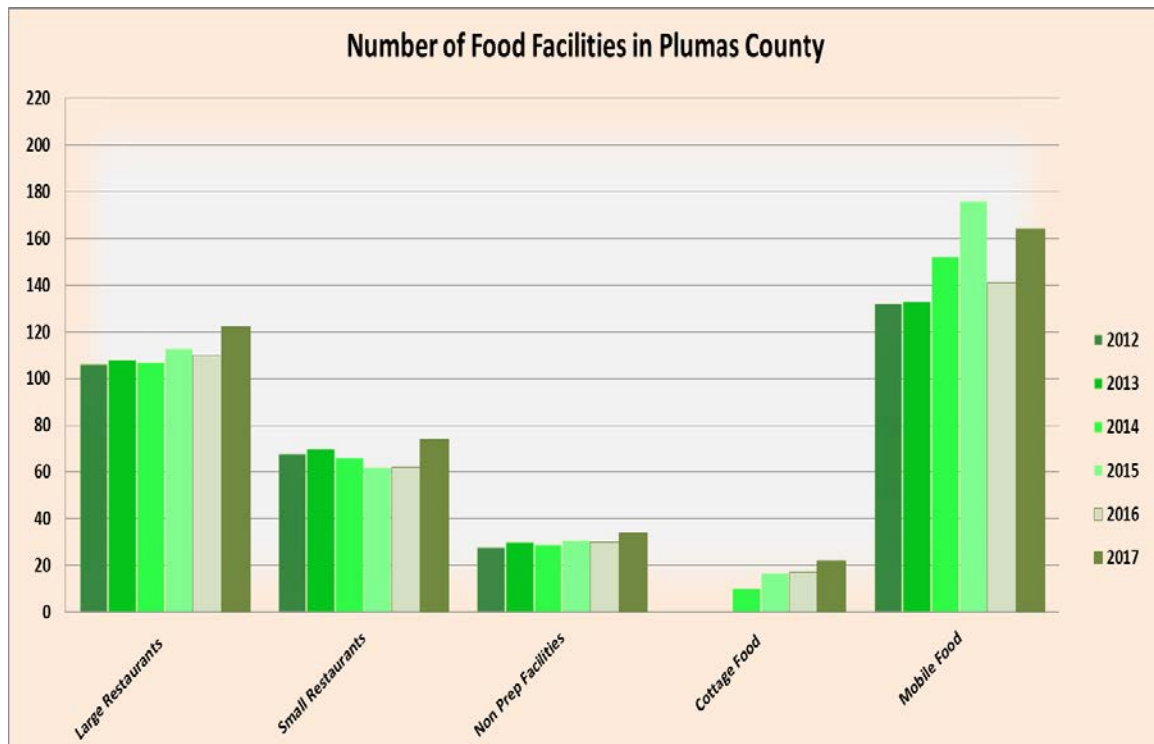
Our food safety program helps protect the public from food-borne illness. Food safety is achieved through education, outreach, and inspection of retail food facilities countywide. Facilities are evaluated for compliance with the California Retail Food Code. Registered Environmental Health Specialists are authorized to inspect, record and correct violations of safe food handling practices, and even close the facility if necessary to protect public health.



A big part of our food safety program includes public education and outreach. As part of that effort, all fixed food facility inspection reports are available to the public through Environmental Health's Food Facility Inspection page on the county's website at [www.plumascounty.us](http://www.plumascounty.us). On-line access to these inspection reports continues to be very popular.

In Plumas County, the inventory of retail food facilities includes large restaurants (with a seating capacity of more than 25 or food preparation area in excess of 500 square feet), small restaurants, non-prep facilities such as convenience markets,

cottage foods (limited foods prepared in home kitchens), and mobile or temporary facilities serving community events and the county fair. The inventory of facilities operating in Plumas County since 2012 is shown below. The number of fixed facilities shows a steady increase over the past 6 years. The number of mobile facilities reflects the number of vendors participating in various fairs, festivals and community events.



## SOLID WASTE

Designated as the Local Enforcement Agency or LEA by CalRecycle, Environmental Health is responsible for ensuring the proper, safe, and sanitary handling of the county's solid waste. We inspect and permit county landfills, transfer sites, and investigate old or abandoned sites for hazards. Environmental Health staff also investigates complaints about litter, debris, and illegal dumping.

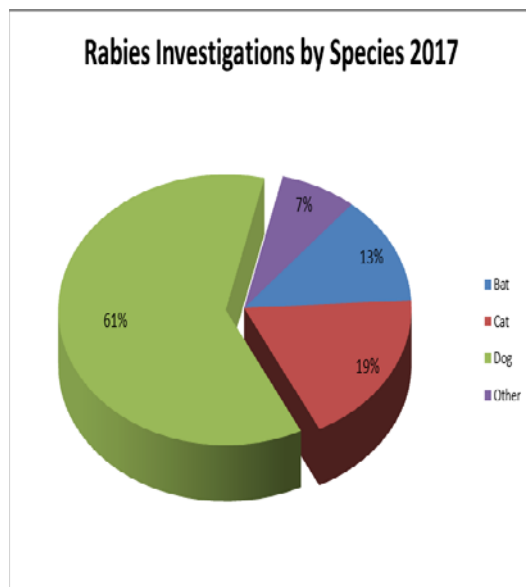
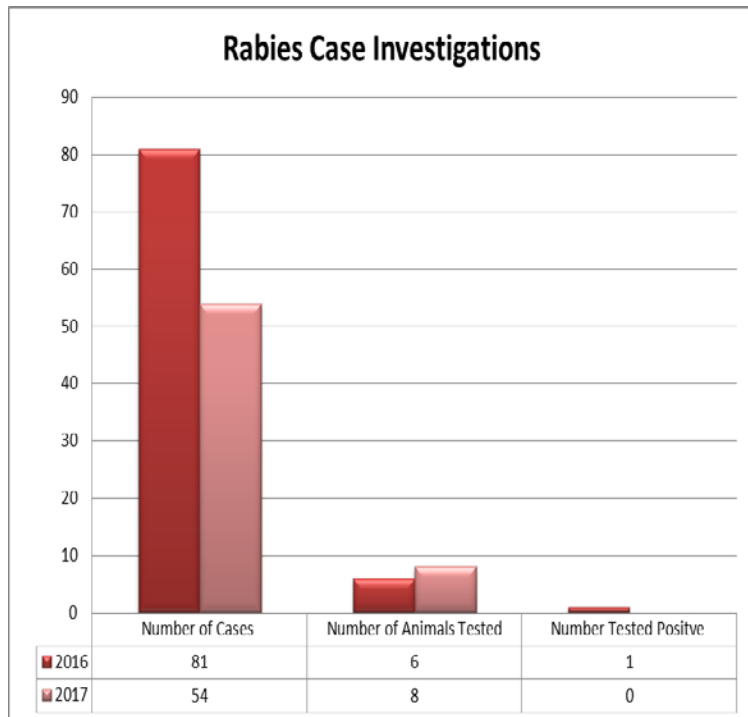


East Quincy Transfer Station

In 2017, Environmental Health staff completed 38 inspections of county transfer sites, 20 inspections of landfills, and 29 inspections of closed facilities. Results of these inspections are available on line at the facilities link on the CalRecycle website at <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/SWFacilities/Directory/> In 2017 we also successfully completed CalRecycle's program audit which confirms the local inspection and enforcement program complies with state standards.

## RABIES AND VECTOR CONTROL

Our rabies and vector control program protects the public from exposure to vector-borne diseases such as Hantavirus, plague and West Nile Virus, but the majority of our time in this program is spent on rabies case investigation. We closely coordinate with state, federal and local partners while performing exposure investigations, environmental surveillance, consultation and other activities.



In 2017, Environmental Health tracked and investigated 54 animal contact cases for potential rabies exposure. Preventing rabies through the timely investigation, testing and risk assessment is a critical function for Environmental Health. Although no animals tested positive for rabies in 2017, one bat tested positive in 2016. The rabies virus is considered active and present in wild animal populations such as bats, skunks and raccoons. Quickly identifying this deadly disease through case investigation and working with Public Health Nursing on proper patient care is an essential role for Environmental Health.

## RECREATIONAL HEALTH

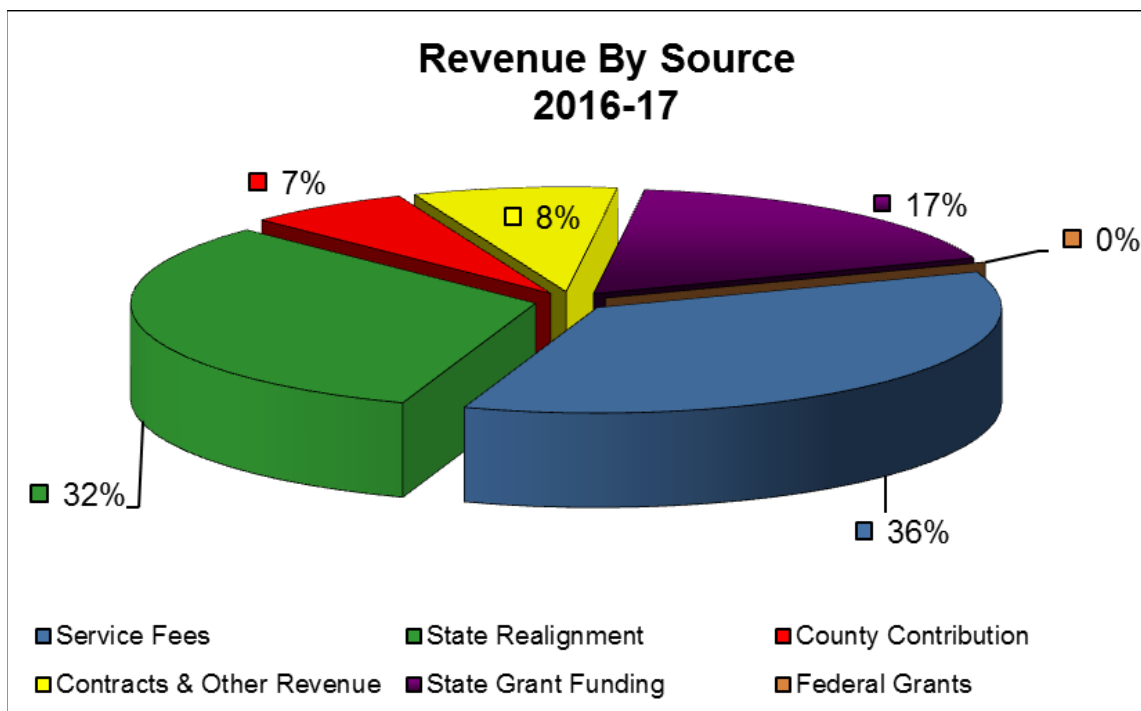
Our recreational health program helps protect bather safety and prevent disease by ensuring the safe and sanitary operation of public swimming places. Environmental Health provides routine permitting and inspections for the 29 existing pools countywide. We also spend time working with prospective pool owners to ensure the proposed construction and operation of proposed pools meets the minimum standards of the new and changing California pool code.



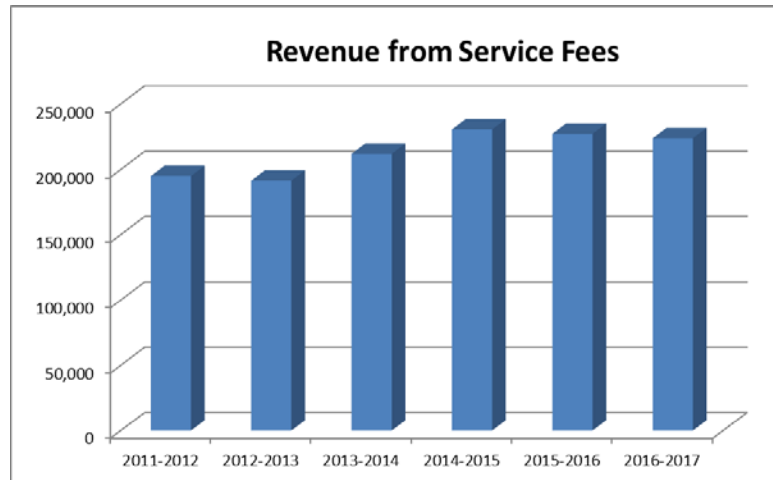
Greenhorn Ranch Swimming Pool

## BUDGET AND REVENUE

Environmental Health revenue sources include Fees for Service, State Realignment, State Program Grants (most notably CUPA, Solid Waste and Drinking Water Protection), and Contracts for Services (Sierra County CUPA and LEA services). The 2017 funding sources are summarized below.



Service fees and Realignment have long been the primary funding sources for Environmental Health, making up over half the annual revenue. In April 2017, the Board of Supervisors approved the first fee increase for EH services since 2013. Revenue from fees for the past six years is charted on the attached



graph. With over half of fiscal year in the books, Environmental Health is predicting service fees could increase \$15,000 over the total collected in fiscal year 2016-17.

## LOOKING FORWARD

As can be seen from the range of programs that we administer, Environmental Health staff have backgrounds, skills and abilities that uniquely contribute to resolving a variety of situations. While not serving as the lead program agency, in 2018 EH anticipates playing important supporting roles in illegal cannabis regulation and sustainable groundwater management to name just a few. In addition to continuing our routine work, Environmental Health is also gearing up for a few important projects in 2018.

The first project is maintaining compliance with the statewide onsite wastewater treatment system policy (OWTS Policy), passed into law as AB 885 several years ago. While the requirements on homeowners were significantly reduced, including the elimination of ongoing individual well testing, groundwater monitoring and reporting are now the responsibility of the county. Last year, the Board of Supervisors approved the Local Agency Management Plan or LAMP, and revised County Code to ensure our local program satisfies these requirements. Beginning this year, Environmental Health must report various onsite wastewater oversight activities and groundwater monitoring data to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Compliance with this new law is important so that Plumas County can retain local control of the onsite wastewater program and not subject property owners to the one-size-fits-all statewide requirements. Fortunately, Plumas County does not have any water bodies that are impacted by poorly functioning wastewater systems. However, we do have an abundance of surface and groundwater, and we must continue working to protect these critical resources.

Another important project is our work to develop sustainable funding for public drinking water oversight. Plumas County received a grant from the Department of Public Health to offset the high costs of state-mandated drinking water

management. Specifically, this funding helped us keep oversight fees for small and disadvantaged communities reasonable for the number of system users. With this regulatory program transferring from the Department of Public Health to State Water Resources, this funding may not be renewed. Environmental Health is working with the Rural Counties of California (RCRC) and other stakeholders to restore this funding, and help ensure our local communities are able to spend their limited resources on maintaining safe drinking water and not on administrative tasks such as data management.

Finally, staff succession planning is critical for Environmental Health. As noted above, half the current staff have been with EH for less than two years. Compare this with the remaining three staff, who have more than 50 years of combined experience! Taking advantage of this knowledge base through skills development and cross training will be an ongoing priority. Another important part of the succession plan is the flexible staffing proposal approved by the Board last summer. It allows EH to flexibly staff either Environmental Health Specialists or Hazardous Materials Specialist as needed. This flexibility allows us to reach more potential candidates, fill positions with individuals that have more diverse backgrounds, and also find candidates that are a good fit for not only for the work but the community as well.



Sunset over Beckwourth Peak, Sierra Valley

Thanks to our dedicated staff, we had a successful and productive 2017. We are committed to continuing the high quality service to the residents and guests of Plumas County in 2018.

Jerry Sipe, Director  
Plumas County Environmental Health