

Group seeks 'imperiled' status for Southern Nevada waterways

By Stephanie Tavares

The Center for Biological Diversity has petitioned the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to name the Las Vegas Wash, Las Vegas Bay and Lake Mead "imperiled waterways."

The environmental group said it filed the petition in an attempt to limit the amount of toxins and potentially harmful chemicals released into the wash, and subsequently the lake, via area waste water treatment plants.

The organization cites numerous environmental, water quality and wildlife studies completed in the past decade that show traceable or dangerously high levels of certain chemicals known or suspected to cause reproductive or other ailments in wildlife. Some of the chemicals could also harm humans, the petition states.

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is the state agency authorized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to enforce and implement the requirements of the Clean Water Act.

The chemicals that the Center for Biological Diversity listed as being present in the wash, bay, lake or all three that could



A national conservation group is asking the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to limit toxins and chemicals in Lake Mead and other Southern Nevada waterways.

harm endangered wildlife or humans include several pesticides banned decades ago but which persist in the ecosystem, caffeine, byproducts of pharmaceuticals and nicotine, selenium, and byproducts of industrial paint, perfumes and household cleaners.

Although chemicals in the water might be at levels that are harmful to fish and birds, the Southern Nevada Water Authority says residents shouldn't lose sleep over their tap water that is drawn from the lake.

"We keep a very close eye on these things," said SNWA spokesman

JC Davis."The short answer is no, we're not worried. That's not because we don't care about source water quality, but from a drinking water perspective we have some of the most advanced treatment processes in the world. We use ozone disinfectant in addition to filtration. One of the nice side effects is that ozone is extremely effective at destroying these types of compounds."

The Center for Biological Diversity is an Arizona-based national conservation group that aims to preserve critical habitat for endangered and threatened species.