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Pac Bell will pay \$1.5 million to have lead-tainted telephone cables removed from Lake Tahoe.

By Jonathan Edwards On November 25, 2021

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According to the Associated Press, AT&T's Pac Bell will pay up to \$1.5 million in a deal to remove eight miles of telephone lines from Lake Tahoe.

Despite the projected cost of cable removal ranging from \$275,000 to \$550,000, Pac Bell agreed to put the \$1.5 million in an account to protect it from overruns. In a case brought by the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance in January, U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeremy Peterson signed the deal on November 4 in Sacramento.

According to the Associated Press, the telephone wires at the lake's bottom contain almost 65 tons of hazardous lead in them, poisoning the water. During the 1980s, they were replaced by fiber optic cables and dumped in the lake, breaking state water quality regulations. According to the lawsuit, Pac Bell was aware that the cables would eventually leak.

The cables are classified solid waste under the US Resource Conservation and Recovery Act because they contain more than three pounds of lead per foot, according to the lawsuit. According to the lawsuit, lead can cause cancer and reproductive damage.

The lawsuit claims that "all of the cables are broken and leaking lead into Lake Tahoe."

“The parties agree that defendant makes no acknowledgment of responsibility or of any other matter of law... whatsoever regarding the allegations claimed by plaintiff,” the subsidiary agreement with the alliance adds.

The wires were discovered by divers from Below the Blue, a non-profit organization, while clearing foreign rubbish from the 1,644-foot-deep lake.

“As professional divers, we’re all too aware with the amount of dumping that occurs in Lake Tahoe,” said Monique Rydel Fortner, “but even we were surprised when we came across these cables and realized how old they appeared and how far they ran across the Lake.”

See the list below for more Associated Press reporting.

One cable runs from Baldwin Beach on the southwestern shore of the lake to Rubicon Bay on the western shore. The other runs past Emerald Bay’s mouth.

The corporation must get all necessary permits, and if permitting requirements exceed \$1.5 million, the parties must come together to review and, if they cannot agree, return to litigation, it added.

The corporation was accused of breaking the law, according to the lawsuit. This is a condensed version of the information.

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