

*Continued from page 3*

deepen people's understanding of the Mono Basin, enhance the quality of the many educational programs conducted in the area, and lead to new and innovative scientific work. The clearinghouse is Internet-based for maximum accessibility and effectiveness.

Work to build the Clearinghouse continues daily, with the addition of new topic areas and content. So far, here are the highlights—currently available and ready for online review!

### **Historical Interviews**

The first substantial information available in the Mono Basin Clearinghouse was historical interviews with Mono Basin residents. In these interviews the residents discuss what life was like here before water diversions and other human activities changed the landscape. Recollections of traditional Paiute ways, wildlife, irrigation, grazing, and terrain fill the interviews. For example, according to the interviews, deer and no-see-ums were rare in the early 1900s, ducks and fish were abundant, and a "bloodworm" was common in the mud of Mono Lake's bottom. These interviews were conducted in 1991 for use in establishing historical conditions in the Water Board proceedings, which

resulted in restrictions on water diversions and more water for Mono Lake and its tributaries.

### **Mono Basin Environmental Impact Report**

The Mono Basin EIR, a comprehensive study of the Mono Basin conducted by Jones & Stokes Associates in 1993 for the Water Board proceedings, is also available online through the Clearinghouse. Jones & Stokes provided the files to us in Adobe PDF format that they recovered and converted from WordPerfect files on floppy disks. Including volume 1 and 2 and the appendices, the Draft EIR is 6 inches thick. Volume 1 and 2 of the Final EIR span another two inches. In total, the Mono Basin EIR is over 1500 pages long. Most of these files were recovered and are available in the Clearinghouse, with the exception of figures.

### **Current Research**

Currently profiled in the Clearinghouse is the Mono Lake Microbial Observatory, a project focused on learning more about microbes in Mono Lake. A list of other current research occurring in the Mono Basin is also available.

Since the Website launch at the end of

May, the Clearinghouse has had over 1,500 visitors from more than 13 countries viewing over 3000 pages. The historical interviews are the most popular section of the Website. It has prominent listings in 7 search engines for search terms ranging from "sage grouse" to "diatomaceous earth." Already we have a list of 17 people to whom we send periodic e-mail updates of new additions to the Website; if you would like to be added to the list please send an e-mail to [updates@monobasinresearch.org](mailto:updates@monobasinresearch.org).

## ***Two Mono Basin meadows go without irrigation***

This past summer the LA Department of Water and Power (DWP) closed all of its sheep grazing allotments in the Mono Basin. As a result, two familiar Mono Basin meadows did not receive summertime irrigation (shepherds historically managed the irrigation). The upper meadows of Cain Ranch adjacent to South Parker Creek were dry (DWP ceased irrigating the lower meadows of Cain Ranch

in 1996). In addition, Thompson Ranch, adjacent to County Park, was similarly dry.

The Department's action mirrored that taken earlier this year by the US Forest Service, which closed its sheep allotments upslope from DWP land (see Summer 2000 Newsletter). Driving the actions is the fact that domestic sheep can carry and transmit a pneumonia that is fatal to bighorn sheep.

With endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn populations dwindling, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed stringent protection requirements and a "no take" policy with substantial penalties. DWP indicated its decision was based on liability concerns, should escaped sheep infect the bighorn population.