

# Rush Creek Return Ditch Rehabilitation Underway

*The Promise of Peak Flows in 2002*

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The rehabilitation of the Rush Creek return ditch—the source of water for lower Rush Creek—proceeded extremely well this year, with phase one wrapping up in October. An enthusiastic work crew of up to 38 paid careful attention to both engineering and environmental needs on the 1.5 mile-long project.

The goal of the project is to eliminate seepage and strengthen the ditch wall to allow the transport of more water. Water in the return ditch is the source of Rush Creek flows below Grant Dam and in recent years ditch limitations have resulted in a failure to deliver Water Board-ordered springtime creek flows.

The work crew, led by supervisor Carlos Gomez, worked 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, for three months. While broadening and compacting the ditch wall, the crew successfully minimized water quality and dust disturbance. Disturbed topsoil was stored separately and returned to the banks of the ditch wall, which have been revegetated with native plant seeds from the Mono Basin. Two previously impacted areas were used for equipment and material storage



*Committee and DWP staff out at the Rush Creek return ditch. Peak flows are expected to raise the water level five feet above the level in this photograph—necessitating the rehabilitation project.*

and, in the end, they too will be fully revegetated.

On a tour of the return ditch with DWP biologist Dave Martin, equipment operator Jeff James, truck driver John Smith, and mechanic Gary Whinnery, the crew's attention to detail was readily apparent. "I've been coming here 20 years and want to see these resources protected as much as anyone else. We've taken special care to protect the environment including the fish, existing vegetation, and wildlife

habitat, and hope to be the crew that finishes the job next summer," said Gomez.

Work will continue in 2002, but the ditch is expected to carry new higher flows in the spring both as a test and to deliver the long missing peak flows that Rush Creek restoration needs. ❖

*Geoffrey McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director of Operations. He is enjoying his new role as a father and is wondering why other people need so much sleep.*

PHOTO BY ARYA DEGENHARDT

## Recognition for the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve

*The Mono Lake Committee presented Janet Carle and Brad Sturdivant of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve with a framed resolution during Restoration Days. The resolution, which was passed by the Committee Board of Directors, commended the State Reserve staff for their continued outstanding service to the Mono Basin, especially their education efforts and hard work in the field.*



PHOTO BY ARYA DEGENHARDT