

Policy Notes

State and federal legislation affect State water programs

California water and energy issues are linked

Municipalities pay 50% of their energy costs to move water. It takes 3,000 to 3,300 kilowatt hours of energy to move an acre foot of water from Northern California to Southern California. Of the state's total energy bill, 7% is just for moving water through the state and federal water projects in the Bay-Delta and the Central Valley.

So, as the State Legislature debates a wide range of energy bills, the Mono Lake Committee, working with other water conservation organizations, is urging policy makers to include water in the mix of energy conservation actions.

In addition, there are energy projects that can benefit water quality. Senator Nell Soto (MLC Board Member Tom Soto's mother) has introduced a bill, SB29x, to help fund an Organic Center in Southern California's Inland Empire, which will clean up dairy waste that threatens groundwater quality, while providing a local source of power.

Reclamation and water quality bills are being developed by California members of Congress

Congressman George Miller has introduced HR 685, authorizing the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of Interior to provide funding for new water recycling projects throughout California. Senator Boxer is expected to introduce similar legislation. Congressman Phil Mills is developing a bill on groundwater quality to address issues of arsenic, chromium and other health-related risks. Both the reclamation and groundwater quality bills may expand to include other parts of the United States that share a need for federal support for reclamation and groundwater quality projects.

Mono Lake benefits directly and indirectly when the State's available water is "stretched" through conservation and when groundwater and surface water is kept clean. The Committee will provide information about high priority water bills as they move through the State Legisla-

ture and Congress online at www.monolake.org. If you have questions, please email Frances Spivy-Weber at frances@monolake.org.

The Bay-Delta program seeks funding from Sacramento and Washington

At press time, Senator Jim Costa's bill, SB23, which seeks to provide the Bay-Delta Program (CalFed) with state funds for 2001, has moved through the Senate Appropriations Committee and is awaiting action in the Assembly. Senator Dianne Feinstein is preparing a federal authorization bill for the Bay-Delta program and related issues. Congressman Ken Calvert from Southern California is developing ideas for legislation that will support the Bay-Delta program and the Santa Ana Watershed Project in San Bernardino and Orange Counties. Meanwhile, the Bay-Delta program is in a very "go slow" mode until funding for 2001 is more assured. 🐢

Volunteers needed for May 19th tamarisk removal

Tamarisk is one of those plants that, even if you haven't heard of it, you've probably seen it—maybe even in the Mono Basin.

Also referred to as salt cedar, it is a woody, deciduous tree or shrub with numerous, small, 5-petaled, pink flowers and feathery bright green leaves. It may sound harmless enough, but this Eurasian exotic plant, introduced in the early 1800s as an ornamental used for erosion control, has become a nightmare for riparian restoration efforts across the West.

Since its introduction, tamarisk has quickly spread into natural wetlands and riparian areas where it tends to

form dense thickets along streams—displacing native trees.

Tamarisk can out-compete native plants for water—a single, large tamarisk can transpire up to 300 gallons of water per day—severely limiting available water for native plants.

Tamarisk seeds fast and furiously—up to 500,000 tiny seeds are produced per plant. Seeds are wind-dispersed and can germinate in less than 24 hours. It also spreads by root, trunk, and branch sprouts.

Tamarisk can survive in salty soils because it eliminates excess salt from the tips of its leaves and increases the

salinity of the soil when leaves are shed, further reducing the ability of native plants to compete as well.

Unfortunately the Mono Basin has not escaped the wrath of the tamarisk. Help us work to eliminate this invasive species on Rush Creek by coming out on two workdays:

• **Saturday May 19, 2001**—to celebrate National River Cleanup Week (May 12–19).

• **Sunday September 2, 2001**—to celebrate Restoration Days!

For more information contact Heidi Hopkins (heidi@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.