

# Policy notes

by Heidi Hopkins

## **Conway Ranch purchased jointly by Mono County, BLM**

Last fall, Mono County and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) celebrated their joint purchase of the north Mono Basin's historic Conway Ranch. The acquisition concludes a multi-year effort by numerous parties to permanently protect this ranch's historic open space.

The acquisition was facilitated by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), which in 1998 acquired the property, ending a controversial 440-unit commercial and residential development plan approved for the site along U.S. Highway 395. Earlier this year, TPL conveyed 811 acres to Mono County and 220 acres to the BLM for permanent public ownership. The complex transaction involved a land exchange with the BLM, and the use of federal grants earmarked for preservation of highway viewsheds and wildlife habitat.

The ranch controls senior water rights to Mill Creek, historically Mono Lake's third largest tributary. The acquisition will ensure public control of the water rights and their use for local wetlands and streams, as well as for fish-rearing in support of Mono County's tourist economy. The Committee has strongly

supported the protection of Conway's open space and is pleased that the acquisition now opens the historic ranch meadows and lands (once off limits) for the enjoyment of all members of the public.

## **Fall restoration meeting hosted by DWP**

In November 2000, DWP hosted a post-season restoration meeting. This was the fourth such meeting of interested parties that DWP has voluntarily hosted since the State Water Board issued its restoration decision in the fall of 1998. In attendance were the scientists who are monitoring restoration progress, state Fish & Game representatives, members of People for Mono Basin Preservation (by phone), the Mono Lake Committee, and a staff member from the State Water Board.

While their season's data is not yet fully compiled and analyzed, the scientists were able to generally describe their summer's activities and overall trends they're seeing. With the relatively low flows on the streams in 2000, there was nothing dramatic to report. But it is the painstaking collection of data each year—whether dry, normal, or wet—that ultimately will round out the picture of how adequately the Mono Basin is being restored.

## **Community committee organized to propose new relicted lands resolution for county**

The Mono County Board of Supervisors met in December to consider the possibility of rescinding the February resolution R00-12—which included language that serves to undermine the land base of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve. A full house attended the workshop where the board decided that because certain landowners were close to an agreement, but had not yet concluded their land use negotiations with the State, that the resolution should not yet be rescinded. The board set a new date in February to look at this issue again and to consider adopting a new resolution that would replace R00-12. At the request of one affected landowner, the board formed an ad-hoc citizen committee that includes local landowners and the Mono Lake Committee to try and shape a new resolution that works for everyone. It's the Committee's hope that this coalition can arrive at language that both protects the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve and acknowledges the legitimate historic land use opportunities on relicted lands. 🐾

## **[www.monobasinresearch.org](http://www.monobasinresearch.org)**

**W**e've been putting a lot of work into the Mono Basin Clearinghouse at [www.monobasinresearch.com](http://www.monobasinresearch.com) so if you haven't checked this site recently then it's time for a visit! The following resources have been added to the site:

- Reports from Point Reyes Bird Observatory's Eastern Sierra Riparian Songbird Conservation Project
- State Water Resources Control Board hearing transcripts from the 1993–94

evidentiary hearings and the 1997 hearings on the restoration plans

- A political chronology of the protection of Mono Lake, and topic profiles of meromixis, alkali dust sources, waterfowl habitat, and creeks
- Point Reyes Bird Observatory California Gull research reports
- Mono Lake Microbial Observatory update including a description of their May 17, 2000 vertical water profile

- A 1895 map of California
- An initial list of GIS data sets from the Inyo National Forest
- New links on topics ranging from US Government Webpages to a macroinvertebrate identification key

The site is continuing to grow so if you know of current research or updates for the reports already posted email Greg Reis ([additions@monobasinresearch.org](mailto:additions@monobasinresearch.org)) at (760) 647-6595.