

North Mono Basin Settlement Process

Technical Review Team Steps In To Help

by Lisa Cutting

A newly created technical review team is assisting the ongoing collaborative settlement talks about water in the North Mono Basin. The talks are often hindered by disputes over information, and the technical team is doing great work finding answers.

In order to reach consensus on certain technical issues—such as available seasonal run-off amounts and hydrological gains and losses—the settlement parties agreed to form a subset group, the technical review team. This team consists of experts: hydrologists, biologists, and resource managers. The team was initially tasked with helping the US Forest Service review its draft Watershed Analysis report of the North Mono Basin. Since then, the team has continued to meet, further honing information. Using each party's settlement proposal, the team has identified common ground, sticking points, and additional studies needed.

The technical review team has recently taken the initiative to propose different water budget scenarios for the parties to consider. Real progress can be credited to this group's involvement. With the policy folks taking a break from meetings, the technical experts can more easily pitch creative solutions. And the parties can begin to evaluate proposals for real merit rather than political positioning.

The last issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter* reported on the North Mono Basin settlement process and the challenges the settlement parties face balancing competing needs for use of Mill Creek water. Interests include restoring and maintaining natural systems, generating hydropower, irrigating meadows for grazing, restoring waterfowl ponds, and fish rearing. In that article, the complexity of the issue was graphically depicted by a map that laid out the plumbing of the North Basin—the reservoir and powerhouse, creeks, aqueducts, ditches, raceways, and pipelines that carry Mill Creek water. (See www.monolake.org/newsletter for the complete article.)

Each party—Mono County, Southern California Edison, US Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, CalTrout/American Rivers, People for Mono Basin Preservation, and Mono Lake Committee—represents diverse interests and goals. The Mono Lake Committee believes that implementing water transport efficiencies and seeking creative solutions can go a long way in satisfying most of the parties' needs. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She's begun training her water-loving golden retriever puppy proper fly-fishing etiquette.

The Mono Basin Photopoint Project: Getting Involved is as Easy as Point, Shoot, and Click

With summer's arrival in the Mono Basin and just about everyone toting a camera, it seems like a good time for an update on the Mono Basin Photopoint Project.

The Photopoint Project began at Restoration Days 2000. It is a multi-year photography project that will artistically document the process of restoration and the effects on the changing landscape. It will visually supplement the scientific data currently being collected and will be a powerful tool for communicating to others both the importance of restoration and the successes so far here at Mono Lake.

Although it may sound complicated, the project itself is simple. Participants chose a specific site in the Mono Basin that is recovering, and photograph it each year. These photos are then collected and organized by the Committee and posted at www.monolake.org/photopoint for everyone to see.

To date, five participants have photographed their sites

and another 15 have signed up to participate. While participants have been busy photographing, we've been busy too with several project enhancements.

- Webmaster Greg Reis has upgraded www.monolake.org/photopoint to include a map of the sites and participant biographies.
- Restoration expert Heidi Hopkins has recently completed an overhaul of the restoration section of the Web at www.monolake.org/restoration.
- Outreach Coordinator Craig Roecker presented the project to the Mono County Arts Council to spread the word on the project throughout the county.

There is still time to become involved and several restoration sites need to be photographed. For more information, please contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.