

The 2002 Defender of the Trust Award

March Event Honors Phillip Isenberg and Richard Lehman

by Shelly Backlar

On Wednesday, March 6, 2002, the Mono Lake Committee recognized Phillip Isenberg and Richard Lehman with its annual Defender of the Trust Award for their extraordinary personal efforts to protect Mono Lake.

As U.S. Congressman in the 80s and early 90s, Rick Lehman pushed legislation to create the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the first Federal designation that identified Mono Lake as



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a special place for millions of people to visit. He also made sure that federal air pollution laws covered dust storms at Mono Lake.

As a California Assemblyman in the 80s and 90s, Phil Isenberg co-authored the Environmental Water Act of 1989 (AB 444), offering \$60 million in funding to help Los Angeles develop new water supplies to replace Mono Basin diversions.

These two pivotal events turned the momentum in favor of Mono Lake's preservation. Through the Scenic Area, millions of people learned about the importance of Mono Lake to the nation and the world. And by providing funding for the development of replacement water supplies, the State initiated a problem-solving approach that not only ensured Los Angeles would have reliable, adequate water supplies, but also assured that Mono Lake's protection would not harm the San Francisco Bay-Delta or any other place.

These strides also helped shape the Committee's Outdoor Experiences program, a program that continues to have an impact on both Mono Lake's and California's water future by connecting urban groups that promote water conservation with an environmental



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education program at Mono Lake. Youth participating in Outdoor Experiences strengthen their understanding of the source of their water while forming a tremendous connection to the place their conservation programs are helping to protect.

In addition to paying tribute to Isenberg and Lehman, the March 6th event provided an excellent opportunity for guests to learn more about the Outdoor Experiences program. ❖

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