

Living Lakes Partnership Helping Lakes in Need

Mono Lake Success Story Spreads Around the World

by Greg Reis

Five years ago, a group of Germans came to Mono Lake with grand ideas for an international partnership of lakes sharing solutions and helping each other. Inspired by the Mono Lake story, they wanted the Mono Lake Committee to be one of the founding members. The Committee agreed to join, though somewhat hesitant about what the group could actually accomplish.

Since then, much has been accomplished. The Global Nature Fund (GNF), the German environmental group that organized the partnership, has managed to get enough funding from corporate sponsors to expand the partnership to 24 lakes. All the members gather together at one of the lakes each year for a conference. In 1999 the Mono Lake Committee hosted the conference at Mono Lake. In 2000, the partnership had an exhibit at the World Exposition in Hanover, Germany.

Aside from the conference, the Work Camp (see below), and the grant the Committee receives to maintain the

Living Lakes Website, it might seem like we don't get a lot of direct benefits out of the partnership. However, it is through our contributions that we receive. Spreading the story of the Committee's successes not only helps others strategize ways to protect their lakes, but it also increases awareness of Mono Lake and the solutions that worked well here.

Laguna Chapala, Mexico's largest lake, is one of the newest partners of Living Lakes. Chapala is drying up due to excessive water diversions—with much of the water going to cities such as Guadalajara and Mexico City. Last year some of the people working to save Chapala visited Mono Lake and were very excited by what they learned about the ways the Mono Lake Committee helped promote water conservation to wean LA off of excessive diversions.

The Committee also shares information with other lake organizations in need, not just Living Lakes Partners. We have

given presentations, advice, and publicity to the Owens Lake Committee and the Walker Lake Working Group—working on the severely impaired watersheds to the south and north of Mono Lake.

Unfortunately, not all lakes can meet the criteria for becoming a Living Lakes partner, but the partnership wishes to help as many lakes as possible. It recently implemented an "Associate Membership" for those groups that don't meet the criteria for full partner status but wish to come to conferences and benefit from the networking and publicity associated with the partnership. This is something that groups working on Walker Lake, Owens Lake, and other lakes in need might want to pursue. An application form can be downloaded from the Living Lakes Website at <http://www.livinglakes.org/kritassoc.pdf>.

The Mono Lake Committee is proud of its involvement in the Living Lakes partnership, and hopes to help strengthen protection for lakes all over the world. ❖

Mono Lake Gets Help from Living Lakes Work Camp

During the first three weeks in September, the Mono Lake Committee hosted a Living Lakes Work Conservation Camp, one of four that was organized by the Global Nature Fund. Mono Lake and the Mono Basin certainly benefited from the Work Camp's volunteered help. Completed projects included trail maintenance of the Lee Vining Creek Trail; removal of two truck loads of trash and barbed wire from the upper part of Lee Vining Creek; the removal of invasive Tamarisk (salt cedar) from the Lee Vining Creek delta, Rush Creek, Lee Vining Tufa and along the southern shoreline of Mono Lake; the removal

of 24 large bags of Russian Thistle from the South Tufa trail and assisting the U.S. Forest Service with raking out illegal off-road vehicle tracks at the Mono Craters Vista and along the road that goes around the east side of Mono Lake. The Mono Lake Work Camp paid for their own flight costs and most of the expenses accrued during their visit to the Mono Basin that were not paid for by DaimlerChrysler, the work camp sponsor. As a charter member, the Mono Lake Committee is pleased with the Living Lakes Work Camp's accomplishments and is looking forward to continued involvement with the Living Lakes Partnership.



German Living Lakes Work Camp volunteers from left to right Corinna Fischer, Elke Sommer, Philipp Kammerer, Mareike Poit, and Fabian Becher.