

# Los Angeles Upgrades Lee Vining Creek Diversion Dam

by Kimberly Rollins

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) is upgrading its water diversion facility and the Lee Vining Creek Diversion Pond, off Highway 120 West, will occasionally be lowered several feet from early August through early November as a result, according to Mark Hanna, Mono Basin Restoration Manager for DWP.

The diversion facility, including the pond, was built around 1940. According to the 1994 State Water Board Order, DWP is to maintain a flow of 54 cubic feet per second (cfs) in Lee Vining Creek below the dam during normal summer months: one cfs equals about 7.4 gallons.

The diversion structure is designed to maintain the pond, which allows a set amount of water into the Lee Vining conduit of the LA Aqueduct. Whatever is left goes down Lee Vining Creek.

The pond also collects sediment, which occasionally has to be dredged.

Two things are going to change with the new diversion plan: a gate will be installed in the dam that can be lowered



*The Lee Vining diversion facility and pond, partially drained, August 2004.*

to drain the pond during high flows, when most sediment would be trapped for sediment bypass. Lee Vining Creek is currently deprived of sand and gravel below the dam and this project will allow the sediment to flow downstream as it naturally would.

The project is also going to change the priority of the set flow from the conduit

to the creek. Instead of setting the flow on the conduit and making the creek fluctuate, DWP will set the flow on the creek and the conduit flow will fluctuate.

Geoff McQuilkin, Co-Executive Director of the Committee, said that the improvements are important for the stream and the aqueduct. "In the past, DWP has been at risk of violating the water board's minimum flow requirements when the weather and creek flows change suddenly. That has been due to the design of the facility, and the new upgrades will solve the problem."

Currently, someone must manually check the flows to the creek each day during peak flows. DWP will now be able to set the flow and operate it from a remote location.

"The first temporary lowering of the pool will be mid-August through September," said Hanna. "After this main episode, the pool may be periodically lowered until project completion."

Hanna said there could be "slight disruptions" to flows on Lee Vining Creek, but the "disruptions should have minimal impact." ❖



*The pond on Lee Vining Creek as seen from the diversion facility, August 2004.*