



From the Mailbag

News from Members and Friends

by Erika Obedzinski

“I would say that there exist a thousand unbreakable links between
each of us and everything else,
and that our dignity and our chances are one.
The farthest star and the mud at our feet are a family.”

—Mary Oliver, from *Winter Hours*

Quietly, in winter, big white and gray clouds are making their way over the crest of the mountains to the east side of the Sierra Nevada. They move over Mono Lake, bringing moisture, movement, reflections. Watching this, it's easy to wonder, how much snow will the clouds bring? How much snow pack? Will it rain? How will the creeks flow this spring and summer? How much *water* will there be? That water is essential to life is a fact perhaps more magnified here at the edge of the desert, though it is true all over the world, everywhere.

Last September, this concept took on new meaning for me as I attended the 8th Annual Living Lakes Conference in Norwich, England. Living Lakes is an international network of grassroots groups protecting bodies of water all over the world, of which Mono Lake was a founding member. Each year Living Lakes sponsors one Mono Lake Committee staff member to attend the annual conference. Delegates from 29 countries participated in the conference, and throughout the week of lectures, workshops, discussions and smaller conversations, it became quite clear that wherever we are on earth, we are facing the same challenges. Among many other issues, increased population and development is leading to lack of enough water, or too little clean, drinkable water—and for animals, too few waterways healthy enough to live in or survive on. Disputes abound over this precious resource.

The conference helped to put things into perspective: At Lake Baikal in Russia, a pipeline for transporting oil is proposed to be built next to the lake. A handful of dedicated individuals there are working hard to divert this threat. Perhaps the situation at Lake Baikal is in some ways similar to where Mono Lake was 25 years ago, but it made me wish there were 15,000 advocates there to be a voice for Lake Baikal and its ecosystem, like we have here in support of Mono Lake.

In China at Lake Poyang, 1 million people are being moved from their homes alongside the lakeshore to homes on higher ground in an effort to restore the lake's ecology, which has been damaged by overuse. The government is paying people for the expense of moving, but what the livelihood will be for these 1 million people in their new upland home is uncertain.

The conference was like looking into the past and perhaps the future as well. What I enjoyed most and what was most inspiring was meeting so many lively, committed people from all over the world, dedicated to protecting a body of water and willing to work hard for that purpose. The Living Lakes network offers a way for us to share information and experiences, and reminds us that all of us on earth share the challenge of finding creative solutions for wise water use in the years to come. To learn more about Living Lakes, visit www.livinglakes.org. ❖

In Memory

Gifts were made in memory of **Katherine Beatie** by **Shirley J. Byrne** of Rancho Palos Verdes and **Ray and Anne Destabelle** of Rolling Hills Estates. **Helen Green** of Berkeley made a contribution in memory of her husband **Paul Green**. A gift in memory of **Paul Green** was also made by his longtime friend **Chris Swarth**. **Mary Elliott James** of Cambria gave a gift in memory of **Bryce Tingle**. **Martha Johnson** of San Jose made a donation in memory of **Tom Jordan**. **Jane and Courtenay Owens** of San Mateo gave a gift in memory of **Dr. Daniel Tolmach**. **The Owens'** also gave a gift in memory of **George Remelman**. **Helen L. Robinson** of Mountain View made a contribution in memory of her husband **Russell Robinson**. **Ms. Nancy Southern** gave a gift in memory of her husband **Mr. Charles Bommer** of Deer Harbor, WA.

Secure Mono Lake's Future

Consider remembering the Mono Lake Committee in your will or living trust, or name the Committee as a beneficiary of your IRA, qualified retirement plan, or life insurance policy. Your thoughtful gift will help us protect and restore Mono Lake, educate youth and young adults about water and the environment, and move the state toward a strong ethic of conservation and water use efficiency. For more information contact Frances Spivy-Weber (frances@monolake.org) at (310) 316-0042.

Erika Obedzinski is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. The trip to England for the Living Lakes Conference was her first ever experience off of the North American continent.