

# Los Angeles' exciting new leadership

by Frances Spivy-Weber

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa took office on July 1, 2005, and soon after, citizens who are concerned about a host of environmental issues saw highly qualified, bright appointees going into positions of power and influence. The Mayor did not simply appoint "yes" people. His message: the City of Los Angeles can be the greenest city in the nation *and* be prosperous for its citizens.

Here is a sampling of the City's new leadership involved in water issues:

**Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP):** Mary Nichols, Director of the UCLA Institute of the Environment and former State Resources Secretary during the Davis administration, heads the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, the volunteer commission that oversees budgets and policies for DWP. She is flanked by four extremely strong leaders, who bring important experience and talents to the Commission:

David Nahai, attorney and three-term member of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board; Nick Patsouras, businessman, serving as the fiscal hawk over DWP's expenditures; Edith Ramirez, attorney and leader in East and Northeast Los Angeles; and Forescee Hogan-Rowles, specializing in community development.

**Mayor's Office:** Nancy Sutley is the Deputy Mayor for Air and Water and one of four new City of Los Angeles appointees to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. She was on the State Water Resources Control Board until last spring and she has also worked for the California Environmental Protection Agency and the US Environmental Protection Agency. She is ably helped by Kecia Washington and Romel Pascual, Associate Directors for Energy and Environment, respectively, each with a long history in environmental protection and environmental justice.

**Los Angeles Board of Public Works:** Paula Daniels is one of five full-time Commissioners on a Board that is instrumental in setting policies and approving budgets for recycled water and Clean Water Act watershed protections. Daniels also serves on the San Francisco Bay-Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta Program) Authority and on Heal the Bay's Board of Directors.

**City of Los Angeles City Council:** Eric Garcetti, a strong voice for the environment, is the newly elected President of the Council. He reorganized Council committees, putting DWP into the Energy and Environment Committee. The Committee Chair is Jan Perry, who is very interested in outdoor opportunities for inner-city youth. Garcetti is Vice Chair, joined by Wendy Greuel, an advocate for environmental protection and Tom La Bonge and Alex Padilla, who also have good environmental voting records. ❖

## Mono Lake Committee connects Eastern Sierra with Los Angeles' leaders

The Mono Lake Committee is unique among Eastern Sierra environmental organizations in having staff in Southern California. Frances Spivy-Weber, Co-Executive Director, lives in Los Angeles County and promotes water-saving policies that enable Los Angeles to leave plenty of water for streams and wetlands in the Eastern Sierra *and* still have plenty for the city's people and its economy.

With the new DWP Board of Commissioners put in place last fall, Fran organized a workshop on Eastern Sierra environmental issues. On January 31<sup>st</sup> in Los Angeles, Eastern Sierra leaders made presentations on permanent protection of DWP land in the Eastern Sierra, restoration in the Mono Basin and on the Owens River, and outdoor education opportunities

for Los Angeles youth in Inyo and Mono Counties. The Commissioners asked excellent questions and there was genuine conversation on each topic. At the end of the day, everyone who attended used the same word to describe the future: hope.

These are the panels and people who presented:

**Land planning and development protection on DWP land:** Byng Hunt, Supervisor, Mono County Board of Supervisors; Andrea Lawrence, Founder and President of the Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains and Rivers (ALIMAR), and member of the Mono Lake Committee Board of Directors; Julie Bear, Executive Director, Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

**Restoration on DWP land in Mono County:** Geoff McQuilkin, Co-Executive Director, and Lisa Cutting, Eastern

Sierra Policy Director, Mono Lake Committee.

**Outdoor education opportunities for Los Angeles youth:** Susan Szewczak, Ph.D., Executive Director, Eastern Sierra Institute for Collaborative Education; Santiago Escruceria, Assistant Education Director, Mono Lake Committee, and director of the Outdoor Experiences Program; Charles Thomas, Executive Director, Outward Bound Adventures; Ronald Ozuna, science teacher at Roosevelt High School; and David Myers, Executive Director, Wildlands Conservancy.

**Lower Owens River restoration:** Carla Sheidlinger, President, Owens Valley Committee and Mike Prather, Outreach Coordinator, Owens Valley Committee.