

Policy updates

by Lisa Cutting and Emily Prud'homme

Mono Inn real estate signs sprout again

The Mono Inn at Mono Lake and an adjacent ten acres remains on the real estate market this summer with a reduced asking price of just under \$5 million. Other than the reduction in price, not much has changed since the property first went up for sale.

As reported earlier this year (see *Winter 2007 Newsletter*), the Committee is concerned that potential buyers may not fully understand the development rules that apply to the property because of its location within the boundaries of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The Mono Basin Scenic Area Comprehensive Management Plan states that private property owners within the Scenic Area cannot build

more than double the square footage of the buildings that existed in 1984—the date when Congress created the Scenic Area. The current conceptual plans that accompany the Mono Inn property propose development at least three times above what is allowable under the management plan.

While the conceptual plans include many desirable “green” building features (solar power, water recycling, sustainable building materials, and natural vegetation), the Committee is watching for potential disregard of the management plan and the protections that it guarantees. Development within the Scenic Area must meet all applicable regulations, which in this case include both the Mono County General Plan and the Mono Basin Scenic Area Management Plan.

Funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

In early April, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) hosted three Program & Grants Guidelines Workshops in the Eastern Sierra to help clarify the program priorities the SNC will be funding. Mono Lake Committee staff were in attendance at the Bishop meeting on April 4. Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Conservancy, led the discussion and explained how the money will be allocated. Public questions and input were encouraged, and may influence the final guidelines, which will be released this summer. Also in attendance was Mono County Supervisor Byng Hunt, who will take Linda Arcularius' place on the Board representing the SNC's East Subregion

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Illegal OHV use on Mono's shore

On a weekend in late April, ironically close to Earth Day, Lee Vining resident and Friends of the Inyo Executive Director Paul McFarland found himself chasing down three motorized dirt bikes that were illegally riding on the Lee Vining Creek trail below town. To make matters worse, the off-highway vehicle enthusiasts continued on towards the shore of Mono Lake at Old Marina, laying down deep treads of damage on the fragile shoreline and even venturing into the shallow lakeshore waters before continuing up to the US Forest Service Visitor Center.

Paul was able to take some photos, documenting the egregious violation so that when California State Park Rangers arrived, he was able to conduct a citizen's arrest.

Mono Lake has many levels of protection including the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve (which is part of the California State Park system) and the

National Forest Scenic Area. Off-highway vehicles are not allowed in any of these areas and in fact many roads adjacent to sensitive riparian areas have actually been closed by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power as part of the State Water Board restoration order.

As government agency budgets continue to shrink and staff field presence is increasingly a rarity, nonprofit organizations become even more important. Friends of the Inyo is local conservation organization dedicated to protecting the Eastern Sierra's public lands and wildlife. Paul demonstrated first-hand what that means—being out on the land and then caring and knowing what to do when things go wrong.

Despite the audacious behavior that Paul witnessed, the violators were brought to justice. As he said later, “The moral of the story, as many have already come to learn is simply: don't mess with the Mono Basin. She's got friends.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL MCFARLAND

Dirt bike tracks near Old Marina.

Paul started out as an Intern Naturalist with the Mono Lake Committee in 2000, and is now Executive Director of Friends of the Inyo. Learn how you can protect wild peace and quiet at www.friendsoftheinyo.org.

Thank you, Paul, for your action on behalf of Mono Lake.