

MONO LAKE ALERT !!

February 23, 2000

Dear Mono Lake Friend,

In a recent action that received poor public notification, the Mono County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution directed to our legislators that, if implemented, would eliminate the land base of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve and therefore eliminate the Reserve itself. **It is urgent that you contact your district supervisor as well as Chairwoman Joann Ronci as soon as possible about this critical matter!**

The Board's resolution was an attempt to resolve a long-festering dispute between several of the private property owners along Mono Lake and the State Lands Commission over ownership and use of land that lies below the private properties between the prediversion lake level (6417 feet elevation) and the future lake level (6392 feet elevation). This "relicted land" is considered to be state property. Some landowners question this ownership. In addition, several have been frustrated in their attempts to reinstate historic uses of this land, something that the Tufa State Reserve legislation appears to allow. The dispute between the landowners and the state is extremely complex, but the point is this: it can be solved and is being solved by (admittedly slow) administrative processes.

On Tuesday, February 15, the Mono County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution that itemized the struggles the private landowners have had in resolving the matter. But the Board's action went too far!! The resolution language urges our legislators to "introduce legislation to amend the Tufa State Reserve Act to clarify the historic uses section and to move the boundary of the relicted lands from 6417 feet to 6392 feet..." The proposed action threatens every aspect of the legislation that established the Tufa State Reserve and would eliminate the land base of the reserve **all around Mono Lake** – thereby eliminating the reserve itself.

The Tufa State Reserve has done more to provide hands-on protection of the resources and a consistent, personal, interpretive presence than any other entity at Mono Lake. State Reserve staff provide roughly three quarters of the resource protection and law enforcement at Mono Lake (two of the Reserve rangers are peace officers). They patrol dirt roads to assist lost and stuck travelers, monitor boating traffic and watch for accidents, maintain the trails at South Tufa, Navy Beach, Old Marina, and County Park, and protect public safety. The Tufa State Reserve has provided tours, star talks, stream walks, discovery camps, and campfire programs to nearly 3.5 million visitors since its creation in 1982. The Reserve, which is part of the California State Park system, provides environmental education programs for nearly 1,000 students each year. In short, the Reserve provides the resource protection, management, and interpretation that make a tourism-based economy at Mono Lake feasible and appropriate.

A huge problem with this resolution is that it was done with grossly inadequate public notice. The session before the board was clearly orchestrated to keep the public at large uninformed of the proposed resolution. **It is doubtful that Mono County would have approved the resolution exactly as proposed had the supervisors been better informed about the full impacts of their action.** For more information about this issue, contact Heidi at the Mono Lake Committee (heidi@monolake.org, 647-6595).

Please let your supervisor and Chairwoman Joann Ronci know that you support the presence of the Tufa State Reserve and existing protections at Mono Lake. Further, if Mono County intends to do away with the land base of the Tufa State Reserve, then the matter should be given fair public hearing!

(contact information on reverse side)

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