


# URGENT MEMORANDUM

Date: March 17, 2000

To: Mono Lake Committee Member

From: Geoff McQuilkin  
Executive Director, Operations 

Subject: Mono County Board of Supervisors Resolution Threatens Mono Lake —  
Your Immediate Response Requested

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Mono Lake's protection is being threatened. And it's extremely important that we respond quickly and forcefully. Here is a brief summary of the three key points you need to know and the *two actions* we need you to take today:

1. *The Tufa State Reserve (TSR) helps protect Mono Lake.* The Tufa State Reserve staff protect natural resources, patrol the lakeshore, enforce laws, assure public safety, and lead education programs. The Tufa Reserve — part of the California State Park system — includes all the lakebed exposed due to water diversions, except where it is owned by the Federal government.
2. *Disputes have arisen between a few private property owners and the Tufa Reserve.* Historic uses of Tufa Reserve lands are allowed where compatible, and the reserve has made allowances for the continuation of historic hunting, skeet shooting, snowmobiling, and the Paiute Indian tradition of gathering kutsavi (alkali fly pupae) as a food source. But some property owners along the lake's west shore have been frustrated by slow progress in their attempts to gain permits for other uses of state lands. Unable to reach a satisfactory outcome through legal channels, an attorney for the property owners sought a more expedient result through legislative channels: he drafted a resolution and brought it to the Mono County Board of Supervisors.
3. *The Mono County Board of Supervisors chose to solve the property owners' complaints by calling for the elimination of the Tufa State Reserve!* In late February, without adequate public hearing, the Mono County Board of Supervisors rubber-stamped the resolution prepared by the landowners' attorney. That resolution asks the State legislature to amend the Tufa State Reserve Act. This is alarming on three levels:
  - Opening up the TSR Act to *any* amendment opens it up to *all kinds* of amendments — a risk for Mono Lake that is unacceptable *and* unnecessary: the proposed amendment goes far beyond what is needed to arrive at a practical solution for private property owners.
  - The resolution calls for the boundary of protection to be moved to 6392 feet, which is *absurd*. When the lake rises to the management level of 6392, there would be *no* land left in the Tufa Reserve — a hidden but effective way of calling for the elimination of the reserve itself!
  - The process used by the property owners' attorney and the Board of Supervisors to pass the resolution was less than forthright. First, nothing on the publicly distributed meeting agenda suggested that a resolution on the existence of the Tufa State Reserve would be put to a vote. The agenda merely stated that a property owner was going to be heard on his specific concern. Had proper notice been given, a fair hearing could have been held. Second, *the specific language of the resolution was not disclosed to the public until after the period of public comment and immediately prior to a final board vote.* That's unacceptable!

(over, please)

### **THE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSE: TWO IMMEDIATE ACTIONS REQUESTED**

- *Please sign and return to me the enclosed Letter of Concern.* Feel free to add your own comments as you sign this letter. But it's important that you return it to me *within the next ten days*, if possible. At the next opportunity, I will present letters from you and others (many thousands, I hope) to the Board of Supervisors. If all members respond we can send them a powerful message.
- *Please send a special gift today.* We need your special gift to immediately expand the Committee's presence and influence in Mono County. In January, we decided the need to be proactive was so critical that we hired two new policy and outreach staff members instead of one. Now we know we made the right decision — but we still have to make it all work within our annual budget!

Frankly, we understand the dilemma the property owners face. And just as we created solutions for protecting Mono Lake while meeting the real water needs of Los Angeles, we know we can reach creative solutions here, too. With our new staff on board, we will be more involved with stakeholders here to reach good practical solutions that support the local economy *without* threatening Mono Lake.

The Mono Lake Committee *vigorously opposes* the resolution passed by the Mono County Board of Supervisors calling for the amendment of the Tufa State Reserve Act. Casually poking holes in hard-won legislation is not the solution. Especially *this* legislation — the Tufa State Reserve Act provides very specific and critical protection for Mono Lake.

We'll be working at the county and state levels to be sure the Tufa Reserve is not eliminated. Please add your voice — and your support — today. Thank you.