

Volume 16, Number I

MONO ELAKE NEWSLETTER

State Water Board: What the EIR says!

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This Issue's Cover



s storm clouds sweep over the Sierra Nevada and into the Mono Basin, a California gull contemplates another summer at Mono Lake. Publications Editor Bob Schlichting took this cover photograph along the shore at Old Marina.

Storms and wind and dust and birds and lake levels are much on our minds as we examine the just-released draft of the State Water Board's Environmental Impact Report on the Mono Basin. A good deal of this issue is dedicated to the findings of the EIR, the most detailed, comprehensive scientific document ever assembled on Mono's ecosystem. If its data is accepted by the Water Board after a series of lengthy hearings this Fall, it could result in a decision ushering in a new era of protection for this unique, endangered ecosystem.

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The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to saving Mono Lake from excessive diversion of water from its tributary streams. We seek a solution that will meet the real water needs of Los Angeles and leave our children a living, healthy and beautiful lake.

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A RUSHING MIGHTY WIND

by Gary Nelson Mono Lake Foundation Canoe Tour Guide

he wind struck my truck like the first wave of a flash flood. Washing against the driver's side, the gust shoved my heavy pickup almost two feet towards the shoulder. Taking this as a not-too-subtle warning, I pulled off of Highway 395 and onto a narrow turnout overlooking Mono Lake.

The wind seemed to mock me as I tried to open my door against its surging force. Going with the flow, I crawled over the shifter and out the lee side door. The blast of air, which had roared over the Sierra crest only a few moments before, blew past me like a runaway freight train, leaving swirling eddies in its wake.

As I stood near the edge of the roadbed, the gust struck nearby Mono Lake. Its waters shrank back from this sudden fury. The wind hollowed out a depression in the waters like the heel of an invisible hand trying mightily to shove the lake eastward into Nevada. Displaced water, mounding up downwind of the depression, was sliced by the gale into four-foot waves which moved purposefully across the water.

Immediately, the tops of the waves were sheared off and atomized into a salty spray which caught the sunlight, crowning each wave with its own rainbow. Wave after wave, these irised ranks marched towards the center of the lake, which had quickly become a realm of wind and water that no human could dare enter.

I recalled Mark Twain's description of a boating trip on Mono Lake. "When ad pulled a mile, laboriously, we were evidently in serious peril, for the storm had greatly augmented; the billows ran very high and were capped with foaming crests... and the wind blew with great fury."

Even though I was looking at the lake from the edge of the road, I could easily identify with Twain's plight. Five years of canoeing on Mono Lake has given me a healthy respect for wind.

However, as my eyes wandered eastward, I saw a phenomenon that Mr. Twain never had occasion to describe. A plume of white dust rose from the desiccated lakebed beyond Mono's eastern shore. It was quickly joined by others. The plumes flowed together into a massive, billowing wall of dust which raged toward Nevada. The dust gained altitude and was captured by winds aloft, forming a huge horizontal column that was carried into the remote vastness of the basin and range.

Although the wind proved perilous during Twain's Mono Lake excursion, the danger was over for the author once he reached dry land. Today it is the dry land encircling Mono Lake that poses a danger to anyone unfortunate enough to be downwind.

When Mark Twain saw Mono Lake in 1862, its waters were over 40 feet higher than they are now. But once DWP began diverting water from Mono's streams, the lake began to slowly shrink. More and more lake bottom, encrusted with dried alkali, sulfates, and such toxic substances as selenium and arsenic, was exposed to the sun and wind. Blowing dust became a lung-damaging air quality problem in the Mono Basin.

Since prevailing winds nearly always come from the west, Mono's dust storms are usually blown eastward, out of California. I wondered whether public outcry would be greater if prevailing winds were easterly, carrying Mono's dust more frequently into J. Vining, June Lake, Mammoth Lakes, and Yosemite National Park.

As I watched the dust clouds blow away, I imagined these former lakebed deposits scudding across the next range of mountains into Nevada, where gnarled sagebrush gesticulated furiously in the poisoned wind.

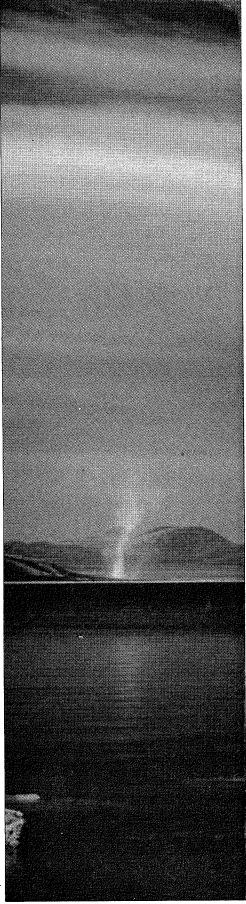


Photo by Jim Millet



Three years in the making, weighing in at 12 pounds, the 1,800 page Draft Environmental Impact Report on the Mono Basin has been released. Copies are available at many libraries in Mono County and throughout the state. Copies can also be ordered for \$70 from Jones and Stokes Associates, the consulting firm that prepared the report.

Draft EIR signals Mono Lake needs to rise

by Bob Schlichting, Publications Editor

Los Angeles should relinquish almost half the water it normally diverts from Mono Lake to restore the ancient, saline lake in the Eastern Sierra, the State Water Board has recommended.

-- Nancy Vogel, Staff Writer, Sacramento Bee story, May 30, 1993

he long awaited draft
Environmental Impact Report
on the Mono Basin has arrived
from the State Water Resources
Control Board. The document
assesses seven alternative lake levels and
singles out the one allowing Mono Lake to
rise to 6383.5 feet above sea level -- almost
nine feet above its current elevation.

The EIR identifies the 6383.5 lake level as the "Environmentally Superior Alternative Relative to the Point Of Reference." The year 1989 -- when the board began its relicensing process -- was chosen as the point from which to compare the environmental impact of each option.

But the Mono Lake Committee has long objected to such an arbitrary point of reference. Arguing that, by 1989, historic conditions in the Mono Basin had deteriorated dramatically after nearly half a century of water exports, the Committee advocated using pre-diversion conditions as the point of reference.

Acknowledging the argument, the EIR also defined an "Environmentally

Superior Alternative Relative to Prediversion Conditions." It calls for a lake elevation of 6390 feet, about 15 feet above the present lake level.

The alternatives considered by the lengthy report vary from one allowing no diversions from Mono's creeks to one that would continue DWP's historic policy of taking all the water its aqueduct can carry away. The chart on page 5 gives a quick overview of the seven options.

Since DWP has been diverting water from Mono's tributaries in 1941, the level of Mono Lake has dropped over 40 feet. The streams themselves were slowly transformed from healthy trout fisheries into barren desert washes, only occasionally watered when DWP could not take all the available runoff.

Following a series of lawsuits by the National Audubon Society and the Mono Lake Committee, courts ruled that DWP's water diverting licenses must be amended to comply with existing state Fish and Game codes. These require enough water to pass down a stream to maintain its fisheries in good condition. Another court order called for the restoration of the conditions that existed in Mono's creeks before diversions began. So, while DWP's historic policy of no restrictions is explored in the EIR, these court-ordered stream requirements preclude it from becoming the final alternative.

In addition to stream flows, the Water Board must also consider what the State Supreme Court called the public trust values -- 'the human and environmental uses' -- of the entire ecosystem. With this in mind, the boar will evaluate the effects that Mono La different levels will have on wildlife, vegetation, brine shrimp, and alkali flies. The scenic and recreational uses of the lake, its visual impacts and its cultural resources must also be taken into account, along with such human health risks as air pollution caused by toxic dust blowing from the exposed lakeshore.

Taking all those conditions into account, the draft EIR identifies as "Superior" two lake levels. But implementation of either one of those choices is far from a fait accompli. Now that the report has been released, the public has until August 30 to submit written comment supporting or challenging its proposals. Then, beginning in October, the Water Board will hold 20 to 30 days of intensive legal hearings in which attorneys will argue th information and conclusions of the EIR. The final decision may be a compromise much different from the EIR's preliminary findings.

Courts have given the state agence until September, 1994 to make its ultimate decision.

AT A GLANCE: THE DRAFT EIR

Here is a quick overview of the seven alternatives being considered by the State Water Board. Note that all but the last option allow DWP diversions once minimum flows to Mono's streams and their fisheries are met.

THE WATER BOARD'S DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT looks at seven alternative lake levels. Here are some of the effects of each option:	When Lake Was Last At This Level:	Time NeededTo ReachThis LevelWith Constant Diversions:	Lake Level Range:	Average Amount Of Water Diverted to LA yearly: (acre-feet)	Effect on Brine Shrimp Produc- tivity and Health	Air Quality: Dust- Producing Alkali Lakebed Exposed	Air Quality: Number of violations expected per year
NO RESTRICTION ALTERNATIVE: Conditions if DWP could continue to divert as much water from the Mono Basin as it wanted. Since this option does not allow for permanent stream flows, it is not really a viable choice.	never	100 years	6335- 6365'	historically 85,000 af	significantly adverse	no data	More than 15
6372 FOOT ALTERNATIVE: The lowest level Mono Lake has reached in historic time.	1981	now	6370- 6379'	64,000 af	significantly adverse	7,297 acres	About 13–14
6377 FOOT ALTERNATIVE: The temporary minimum level required by the courts to protect Mono's ecosystem. It is in effect until the Water Board makes its final decision.	1989	now	6373- 6383'	52,000 af	significantly adverse	5,208 acres	Fewer than 13
6383.5 FOOT ALTERNATIVE: Midpoint of the range 6390-6377 recom- mended by the U.S. Forest Service in their Scenic Area Management Plan	1973	5-10 years	6378- 6389'	44,000 at	significantly adverse	2,443 acres	Fewer than 10
6390 FOOT ALTERNATIVE: The upper point of the Forest Service's Scenic Area Management Plan. With no diversions, this option could be reached in about 15 years. Gradually, with diversions, it could take 30 years to reach equilibrium. Then DWP could take additional water.	1965	30 years After	6383 6395'	30,000 af	tessthan significantly adverse	635 acres	About
6410 FOOT ALTERNATIVE: The intermediate point halfway between 6390' and no diversions at all. With diversions continuing as listed, equilibrium would be reached in 80 years.	1951	80 years After equilibrium	6401- 6415'	11,000 af	lessthan significantly adverse		Fewer than 1
NO-DIVERSIONALTERNATIVE: The return to natural conditions before diversions began. DWP could take no water, and the lake's level would be solely determined by weather conditions.	1940	100 years	6425- 6430'	0 af	less than significantly adverse	0	Fewer than 1



The EIR identifies this as the "Environmentally Superior Alternative Relative to the Point of Reference" — the year 1989, when the courts authorized the Water Board's study.



The EIR identifies this as the "Environmentally Superior Alternative Relative to Prediversion Conditions"—the way the Mono Basin was before 1941.

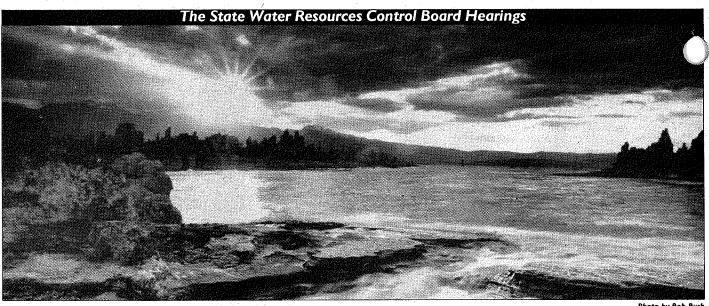


Photo by Bob Bush

Your letter can make the difference in the battle for Mono Lake!

by Bob Schlichting, Publications Editor

he opening salvo has been fired in the upcoming year-long battle before the State Water Board. Their draft EIR has been released to the public. Now we need your help in the fight to save Mono Lake.

Since the Mono Lake Committee staff received the lengthy document in early June, we have been wading through all the EIR's 1,800 pages. It is by far the most detailed and comprehensive scientific document ever compiled on the Mono Basin's unique ecosystem. (See the story and chart on pages 4 and 5.)

From our preliminary review, we are impressed with the amount of compelling and significant new scientific information that points to 6390 feet as a minimum elevation for Mono Lake. (See the boxed story on page 7.)

6390 feet is the upper range of the lake levels outlined by the U.S. Forest Service in its Comprehensive Management Plan for the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. Officially adopted in 1991, this federal plan calls for a lake level range of 6377 to 6390 to protect 'the ecological, geological, cultural and scenic values of Mono Lake.'

6390 is also four feet higher than the

elevation the Mono Lake Committee has advocated in the past. Our Six-Point Plan called for a management level of 6386 feet. DWP rejected that level as much too high, but new data suggests that it may be much too low.

From now until August 30th, the Water Board is allowing the public to comment on the draft EIR. The Mono Lake Committee is trying to encourage as much support as possible for the alternative of 6390 feet or above.

And what has been DWP's response to the EIR? Henry Venegas, the engineer in charge of the LA aqueduct, announced in a June 1st press release, that "Even at an elevation below the court-ordered level of 6377 feet, the Mono Lake ecosystem has prospered . . . there are other alternatives to raising the lake level that provide environmental benefits and satisfy the court conditions.'

So apparently the battle lines have been drawn. DWP seems ready to fight for the lowest possible alternative lake level -- 6372 feet. It will hire experts who will claim that Mono Lake is doing fine iust as it is. Of course, this is the same argument they made before El Dorado Superior Court Judge Terrence Finney in

1990. Judge Finney rejected it when he upheld the temporary prohibition agai diversions, calling Mono Lake "a national environmental, ecological and scenic treasure that should not be experimented with for even a few brief vears."

Despite that defeat, DWP is prepared to outspend the Mono Lake Committee and its allies once again in an attempt to hold on to as much Mono Lake water as possible.

Protecting Mono puts no hardship on LA

E ven as DWP prepares to dig in its heels for a protracted battle before the State Water Board, the Los Angeles Daily News reported on Sunday, June 20th, that LA water users continue to conserve, even though California's sixyear drought is officially over. "Water use in Los Angeles is averaging 20 percent below pre-drought levels," reported staff writer Tony Knight in his front page story.

DWP attributes a good part of the savings to water conservation equipment such as low-flow showerheads, low-flush simpl water could The c raise eleva

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The State Water Resources Control Board Hearings

ets, and drip irrigation systems that Angelenos installed in recent years.

For more than a decade, the Mono Lake Committee maintained that a simple 10 percent reduction in the city's water use, if credited to Mono Lake, could permanently protect the ecosystem. The current 20 percent reduction would raise the lake well beyond the 6390 elevation without creating any hardship for LA water users.

In addition, new, alternative water supplies are available that could more than replace Mono Basin diversions, without putting additional demands on such threat-

ened sources as the San Francisco Bay-Delta. The state of California passed AB 444 in 1989, establishing a \$60 million fund to help build water reclamation plants for Los Angeles. To receive the oney, DWP had to ply with the Mono Lake Committee and agree to permanently protect Mono's ecosystem. DWP has so far refused, and as a result the fund has shrunk to \$48 million.

HR 429 was passed by the federal government in 1992. This legislation also authorizes funds for "a project to develop 120,000 acre-feet per year of reclaimed water in Southern California [which] is expected to offset water diversions from the environmentally sensitive Mono Lake Basin."

Currently two ncilities -- the East valley and the West Basin projects -- are in the design stage.

But so far, DWP has refused to use any funds that are tied to a permanent settlement of the Mono Lake problem. Ignoring millions of dollars in offered investment capital and the reclaimed water it would produce, DWP maintains its only alternative is to purchase the most expensive water from outside suppliers. "Our rate payers would have to subsidize a higher lake level which many scientific studies have indicated is not necessary to preserve Mono Lake," claimed DWP engineer Venegas in the Department's June 1 press release.

The State Water Board's draft EIR

suggests differently. Volume 2 points out the "Mitigation Measures" available to DWP to replace Mono diversions "for the 6,383.5-Ft. Alternative and all higher lake level alternatives."

"LADWP and the MLC should jointly apply for the remaining \$48 million in Assembly Bill 444 funds that are available for developing Mono Lake replacement supplies," the report states on page 3L-27. It also notes that HR 429 authorizes funding for reclaimed water facilities and for water transfers from agricultural users. After acknowledging other measures such as conservation, the report concludes, on page

3L-30, "If LADWP fully participates in those mitigation programs, it is likely that the water supply impacts associated with the 6,410-Ft Alternative could be reduced to a less-than-significant level."

The draft EIR indicates that it is feasible to protect Mono Lake, without any significant impact on DWP's customers. What we need now are concerned citizens who will write to the Water Board, urging them to accept the 6410 alternative or above.

Page 8 outlines the important reasons why advocate such a move. With your help, we can achieve what the Mono Lake Committee has always sought: a solution that will meet the real water needs of Los Angeles and leave our children a living, healthy and beautiful lake.

New information from the EIR

he most detailed and comprehensive scientific document ever compiled on the Mono Basin ecosystem, the Water Board's draft EIR has compelling new information that supports a lake elevation of 6410 and above.

Ducks

The EIR concludes that the loss of freshwater habitats around the lake and in the creeks, as well as the increasing salinity of the lake, caused the decline of fall duck populations from approximately a million to only 11,000 to 15,000 birds.

Air Quality

The EIR finds that the 6390 foot lake level alternative is necessary to prevent dust storms that violate the federal Clean Air Act. Another study by the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District concluded that a lake level of 6393 was necessary to bring the Mono Basin into compliance with the federal law.

Aquatic Productivity

The EIR confirms that the number of brine shrimp has declined significantly since DWP began diversions. The report also finds that raising the lake to 6390 would "cause beneficial increases in brine shrimp biomass, lakewide production, and mean and lakewide cyst production of 45%, 49%, 82%, and 118%, respectively."

Phalaropes

Results of lab experiments indicate that red-necked phalaropes feed almost exclusively on alkali fly larvae and pupae and would starve on a diet of brine shrimp. According to a report developed for the EIR, "data strongly suggest that feeding rates of red-necked phalaropes at Mono Lake cannot be maximized at current prey densities."

What you need to do

The State Water Board is allowing public comment on its Environmental Impact Report until August 30. Please write to them as soon as possible! In your letter, ask the Water Board to support, at a minimum, the 6390 lake level alternative identified in the EIR. These are the three points you need to make:

1. Tell the board to select the 6390 foot lake level or higher.

This management level will minimize future harm to Mono Lake's public trust resources while still allowing DWP to divert water. A level of 6390 or higher would:

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- Minimize lung-damaging dust storms that violate state and federal air quality standards.
- Restore extensive streamside wetlands as well as Mono Lake itself as habitat for historically abundant waterfowl populations.
- Increase significantly the productivity of brine shrimp, a candidate for "Threatened" listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act.
- Increase the productivity of the alkalifly, a primary food source for nesting and migratory bird populations.
- Result in optimum flows for Mono's tributary streams, supporting the fisheries as recommended by the California Department of Fish and Game.
- Restore a greater overall aesthetic experience at Mono Lake, covering the landbridge, putting more of the alkali-coated lake bottom underwater, filling inbays and surrounding tufa with water as it increases the size of the lake.
- Restore the integrity of Negit Island as a nesting sanctuary for 85 percent of the state's California Gull population.

2. Urge the Board to recommend Mono Lake as an Outstanding National Resource Water.

Lake Tahoe already has such a designation, and Mono Lake is eligible, according to the EIR. Such a move would protect Mono Lake from future harm by setting maximum salinity levels which must be maintained by DWP.

3. Tell the Board that it is feasible to permanently protect Mono Lake and still meet the water needs of Los Angeles.

State and federal funds are available to help replace Mono Basin diversions with such environmentally sound alternatives as water reclamation and conservation.

Write a letter today! The deadline is August 30! Send it to:

The State Water Resources Control Board Division of Water Rights 901 P Street, 3rd Floor Sacramento, CA 95814.



Melting snows make Mono rise

by John Cain, Science Associate

hanks to the wet winter, Mono Lake will rise for the first time since 1986.

Snowpack in the Mono Basin was about 150 percent of average this year. However, runoff is proving to be only 135 percent of average, because this year's precipitation follows six years of drought. Depleted aquifers, parched soil, and thirsty vegetation is intercepting more water than usual.

Nevertheless, Mono Lake has risen over a foot and a half since the beginning of the year and should rise another foot, to around 6376 feet, by the time all the snow melts. If precipitation is average or better next winter, the lake should rise above the court-ordered minimum level of 6377 feet by next spring.

Flows in Mono's tributaries are highest since 1986. Below the

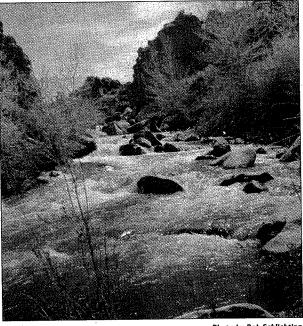


Photo by Bob Schlichting

Swollen by late spring runoff, Rush Creek flows through the area known as "The Narrows."

diversion dam, Lee Vining Creek reached a peak of 300 cubic feet per second in June.

Although the amount of water running into Grant Reservoir is much higher, releases into Rush Creek are being limited to 160 cubic feet per second as DWP tests the capacity of an artificial channel that dumps water from the reservoir into Rush Creek.

Cool weather in May and early June delayed the snowmelt. As a result, runoff did not peak until late June.

According to Ilene Mandelbaum, Mono Lake Committee Associate Director in Lee Vining, restoration work done on the creeks is holding up beautifully under the high flows. "Water is filling the newly rewatered channels according to plan," she said. "Newly planted willows and cottonwoods are leafing out just as we expected.''

More storms make dust problem worse

by Bob Schlichting, Publications Editor

alifornia's six-year-long drought has broken, and once again storm fronts are sweeping over the Sierra and into the Mono Basin. But the return to normal storm activity in the Eastern Sierra also signaled the return of winds that are intensifying a serious problem at Mono Lake -- clouds of airborne toxic dust.

Deprived of its fresh water source by DWP diversions, Mono Lake has dwindled in size. In the process, over 20,000 acres of lakebed have been uncovered by the retreating waters. These chalky flats are frosted with dried sulfates, alkali, and heavy metals normally dissolved in Mono's brine. Winds can pick up these emely fine particles and carry them

Such dust is officially referred to as "PMIO" - technical shorthand for

for hundreds of miles.

"particulate matter 10 microns or smaller in diameter." It is small enough to be sucked deep into the lungs, and a single exposure can be enough to cause permanent damage. Normal pollen, in contrast, is in the 20 to 100 micron range, large enough for the respiratory system to expel.

PM10 pollution can more damaging to lungs than mere smog or ozone. And the dust particles swept up from Mono's lakebed are extremely fine.

Because of the seriousness of the problem, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, on July 7th, proposed listing the Mono Basin for non-attainment of air quality standards under the Clean Air Act.

PM10 pollution increased as the Mono Lake's level fell during the prolonged drought. At the same time, the lack of storms meant that there was less

wind to whip up dust from the miles of exposed lakebottom.

The return to a more normal weather pattern promises unstable air and increasingly frequent windstorms. This May, gusts reaching 115 mph pummeled the Eastern Sierra, damaging buildings, blowing out automobile windows, and closing highways.

Unfortunately, wind can't be controlled; the only known way to prevent air quality problems in the Mono Basin is to raise the level of the lake, flooding the playa once again. According to the State Water Board's just released draft EIR, roughly a dozen or more air quality violations a year can be expected when Mono Lake is at its current level. The chart of EIR provisions on page 5 details the frequency of dust incidents at various lake levels.

On Labor Day Weekend:

Join us for the 15th annual meeting!

by Betsy Reifsnider
Associate Director, Los Angeles

ombine an environmental group's answer to an annual stockholder's meeting with a picnic, throw in some country-western dancing, and you have the Mono Lake Committee's Annual Meeting.

This year marks the 15th time that the Committee has hosted the event. The meeting will take place Saturday afternoon, September 4th -- the beginning of the three-day Labor Day weekend -- in Mono County Park, just north of Mono Lake. All Mono Lake supporters are invited.

"Holding the meeting on a holiday allows more Committee members to attend," said Martha Davis, Executive Director of the Committee. "It also is a chance to welcome scores of Bike-A-Thon cyclists, who have just spent six days riding from Los Angeles to Mono Lake.

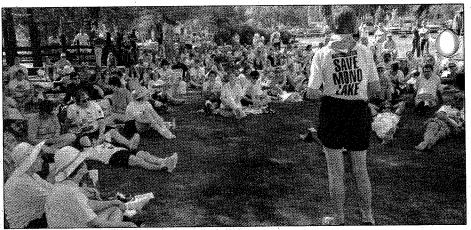


Photo by Bob Schilchting Saturday of Labor Day weekend, hundreds gather in County Park for the Mono Lake

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Committee's Annual Meeting.

It makes for an exciting Saturday."

Just before the meeting, Bike-A-Thoners, who have ridden 350 miles with vials of water taken from DWP headquarters in downtown LA, will gather at the Old Marina site on Mono Lake's shore. There they join with marchers who have brought buckets of water from the DWP diversion dam on Lee Vining Creek. Together, the two

groups pour the water into Mono Lake in

an annual "Rehydration Ceremony."

Once the picnic begins in the county park, Mono Lake's supporters get to hear the latest information about progress to save the lake. This year, Executive Director Davis and members of the Committee staff will be joined by Bryan Wilson of the legal team of Morrison and Foerster. They will offer those attending an insider's view of the legal and

political advances over the past 12 months.

This year's gathering will take on added significance. Not only does the Mono Lake Committee turn 15 years old this year; at this meeting the period for public comment of the State Water Board's draft Environmental Impact Report will just have ended.

"This is one of the most critical periods of time in the Committee's history, and we will have much to discuss," promises Davis. "We will also have much to celebrate as well. This past year has had lots of ups and downs, and we want to share the good news with our friends and supporters."

A few surprise guests are expected to take part before a live country dance band swings into action for an afternoon of dancing on the lawn.

Northern Europe trip benefits Mono Lake

15-day nature adventure to Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland next summer will help support Mono Lake. All proceeds from the tour will be donated to the Mono Lake Committee.

The itinerary includes such out of the ordinary activities as bike rides, nature hikes on bird reserves, and trips to marine mammal rehabilitation centers. Time has also been set aside to explore local museums and to view wildlife.

The 1994 vacation runs from July 1-15

and includes six days in Holland, three days in Denmark, two days in western Sweden, and three days in Finland.

"Our modes of transportation make this an umusual adventure," explained Tom Gwin, Director of Cal Nature Tours, sponsors of the trip. "Travel will be by air, ferry, first-class train, canal boat, bus, hydrofoil, sailboat, zodiac boat, and bicycle. Our accommodations will range from three-and-four-star city hotels to country inns, mountain lodges, and a unique canal boat 'boatel.' At mealtime, we will dine on high-quality regional cuisine."

The price of the 15-day trip is \$3,495 per person, based on double occupancy; single occupancy is an additional \$460. Prices includes air fare from Los Angeles, all ground transportation, accommodations, meals, and side excursions.

For more information, contact Tom Gwin, Cal Nature Tours, S. 7310, Victorville, CA 92392, or call (619) 241-2322.

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New Lee Vining Creek trail opens

by Sally Miller, Eastern Sierra Representative

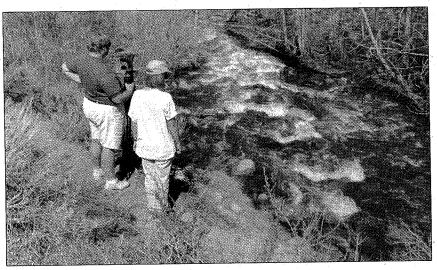
ore than 75 people braved an unseasonable winter-like storm on June 6 to celebrate the opening of the recently constructed Lee Vining Creek Trail. The dedication was sponsored by the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. It was part of a nationwide observance of National Trails Day.

The idea for a trail along Lee Vining Creek started with local

resident and motel owner Don Murphy. e the Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center is located a mile north of Lee Vining, Murphy sought a way for visitors to walk between town and the new facility by way of the reborn stream, now permanently flowing after years of diversions.

Murphy brought the idea to the Chamber of Commerce, which in turn contacted the Forest Service. Since much of the proposed path was located on DWP land, both DWP and the federal agency needed to give their permission.

An initial spring clean-up was held on the creek in 1992. Members of the community, the Forest Service and the



The new Lee Vining Creek trail follows the streambed through thick foliage before climbing the hill to the U.S. Forest Service Visitor Center north of town.

Mono Lake Committee helped to pull nearly a thousand tires and decades of debris from the creek's corridor. Then, in October, Committee staff joined other residents, the Forest Service, and a crew from the California Conservation Corps in building the trail.

Construction was completed this spring. Before the dedication ceremony in June, Lee Vining High School students again picked up trash along the route. Chamber members including Nicely's Restaurant and the Blue Skies delicatessen provided hungry crews with fried chicken, pizza, and other sustenance.

Speakers at the June 6 opening focused

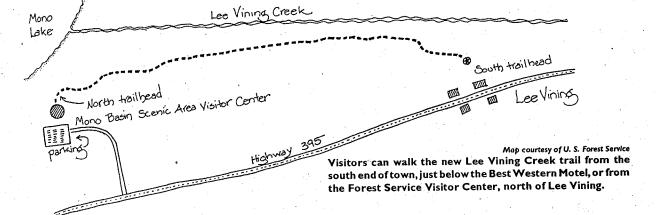
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on the unique partnership that was needed to accomplish the trail project. Mono County Supervisor Tim Alpers praised the collaborative effort, noting that, 'In the 90's, the real winners are going to be champions of cooperation, rather than champions of competition. "DWP's Northern District Engineer Glenn Singley said he was pleased to see water flowing down the creek once again, and acknowledged environmental damage

the Department had caused in the Eastern Sierra in the past.

'It's been very rewarding, working on the creek trail with the town, the Forest Service, and DWP," said Shannon Nelson, Manager of the Mono Lake Committee's Information Center. 'I hope we can continue to work with DWP on projects that benefit our local communities and celebrate the environment."

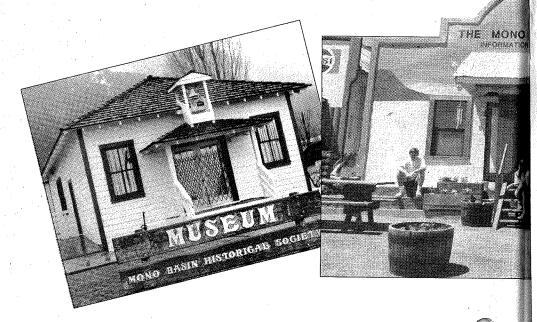
Visitors can begin the trail either in Lee Vining, just below the Best Western Motel, or at the Forest Service Visitor Center. Interpretive trail signs will be developed in the coming year to explain stream ecology and restoration.



Summer ato





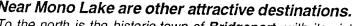


There's more to see in Lee Vining than ever before! This summer the Mono Lake Committee's newly—rebuilt Information Center is open 12 hours a day. Join us anytime between 9 AM and 9 PM daily for tours, our latest slide show presentation, exhibits, and current tourist information. Our amazingly cheerful bookstore offers T—shirts, books, gifts and practical water conservation items.

The Mono Lake Committee offers a free, guided walking tour of South Tufa each evening at 6 PM. The 90-minute, one-mile sunset walk will introduce you to the unique features of the Mono Basin. Meet your guide at the South Tufa parking lot.

Canoe tours take place each weekend from June 12 to September 12. Make reservations at the Committee's Information Center, or call (619) 647–6595. Tour prices are \$10 for

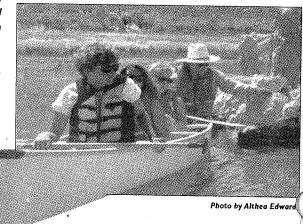
adults over 12 years old, and \$5 for children over four. Canoes leave every Saturday and Sunday morning at 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00.



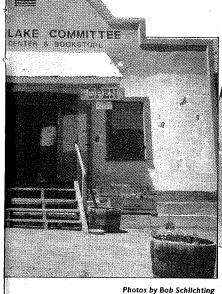
To the north is the historic town of **Bridgeport**, with its picturesque courthouse. Also nearby is the ghost town of **Bodie**, a state park that is open from 9 AM until 7 PM, with an admission charge of \$5 per car.

The scenic June Lake Loop offers spectacular Sierran scenery, as does the Mammoth Lakes basin. Across the Owens Valley are the beautiful White Mountains. And snowy Tioga Pass is open once again to the breathtaking Yosemite National Park.

The Mono Lake Committee's Information Center and Bookstore will be nappy to fill you in on more details. Stop by for more information!



Mono Lake!







hoto by Bob Schlichting

For a different interpretive perspective on the lake, visit the U.S. Forest Service's Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center. The year-old facility, just north of Lee Vining, is tentatively open from 9 AM to 5 PM, offering displays, a film, and interpretive talks. Check the desk for a schedule of activities.

State rangers and Forest Service naturalists give nature tours daily at 10AM and 1PMat South Tufa, part of the Tufa State Reserve. You can also visit the boardwalk at Mono County Park, five miles north of Lee Vining.

> The Schoolhouse Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 AM to 5:30 PM. The attraction, sponsored by the Mono Basin Historical Society, is housed in a restored 1922 schoolhouse nexttoLee Vining's Hess Park. Volunteers have amassed an impressive collection of memorabilia, artifacts and photographs from the early years of Mono's settlement.



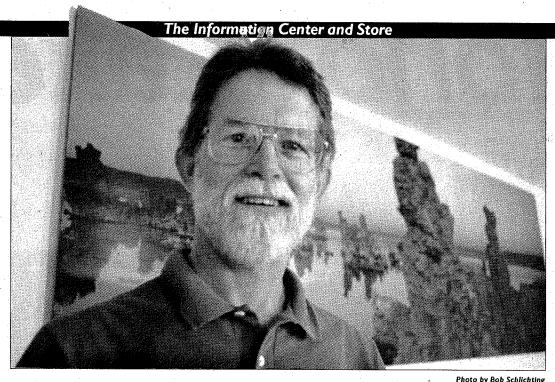
Yosemite Photo by Rick Knepb

We're the place to come for Eastern Sierra information!

The Mono Lake Committee's Information Center and Bookstore in downtown Lee Vining also serves as the Chamber of Commerce. We can tell you about the Mono Basin, and give you the latest road conditions.

We offer this free brochure which lists Mono Basin attractions, along with local restaurants. campgrounds, motels and stores. We will be glad to mail you a copy. Write to us or call the Chamber at (619) 647-6629. The information will to help make your Monovacation memorable!





Photographer Warren Marr stands before the huge color print he donated to our newly-remodeled Information Center and Bookstore in Lee Vining.

The Center's open again!

Supporters make new remodel possible

by Bob Schlichting, Publications Editor

he Mono Lake Committee
Information Center is open
once more. The building looks
better than it ever has before,
thanks to the work of many of
our generous supporters. Warren Marr
is one of them.

Over his career, the award-winning landscape photographer has taken many pictures of Mono Lake. When ColorHouse, a Burbank-based professional photo lab, asked for permission to make a giant print of one of his images to hang on their lobby wall, Marr readily agreed, providing the lab made an additional copy for the Mono Lake Committee as well.

In addition to donating the 12-footlong color photograph, ColorHouse carefully crated it for the long journey to Lee Vining. Marr personally delivered it in an oversized trailer and even helped to hang the artwork in the Committee's new center.

"Warren's huge image of Mono Lake dominates our new Information Center," said Sales Manager Rick Knepp. "It's a wonderfully striking focal point. People have told us they were driving down highway 395, saw the photo through our windows, and turned around to come into the Center."

The generous spirit shown by Marr has been echoed by a number of Committee members. Many volunteers helped to put the finishing touches on the first phase of the rebuilding of our 59-year-old building. Supporters have donated their time, money and materials to the project, enabling us to repair rain-damaged walls, provide muchneeded handicapped access, install a public restroom, and add a heating system for the first time.

Volunteers spent countless hours painting and plastering, refinishing old floors and building new cabinets and bookshelves. Our staff, too, quickly learned to use table saws and hammers. Some of them worked seven days a week for several months to finish the

construction in time.

When we asked for financial help in the last newsletter, 18 families contributed almost \$3900 toward the ongoing project. Special thanks to these most recent donors: Steve Anderson, from Fountain Valley; Steven Correll, of Scotts Valley: Douglas Crary, in Modesto; Dennis and Rosemary Frieborn, of Rocklin; Joe Fuhrman, from Los Angeles; Ellis and Jennifer Gans, San Francisco; Urla Garland, of Merced; Margaret and David Harder-Mac Phail, from Santa Rosa; Bob and Louise Hill, from Mariposa; Helen and Ernest Johanson, in Laguna Hills; I. M. Jones, of Livermore; Mary Macey, from San Rafael; Jennifer and Kendrick Miller, Jr., of Aptos: Kim Ogburn, from San Diego; Shirley and Joseph Oxarart, Chatsworth: Marian and Blaine Shull, of Palos Verdes Estates; Catherine Toft, from Davis and Tim and Laura Zadel, from San Jose.

The Information Center and Store

Not only individuals contributed. Patagonia, the Ventura-based mountaineering and clothing manufacturer, made a much-needed financial donation to the project as well.

All of those who contribute to the rebuilding fund will be listed in the Information Center, and those donating \$500 or more will be a part of a special commemorative display to be installed once the remodelling project is completed.

If all goes as planned, in 1994 we will complete the remodeling work that still needs to be done. The building's tin roof eventually must be replaced. The old sheds making up the north side of the center are presently uninhabitable and

must be rebuilt. Eventually these will add more space for educational displays on Mono Lake's unique ecosystem.

But for now the Information Center nd Bookstore is back in service. A grand reopening ceremony was held June 26. Over 40 people, including

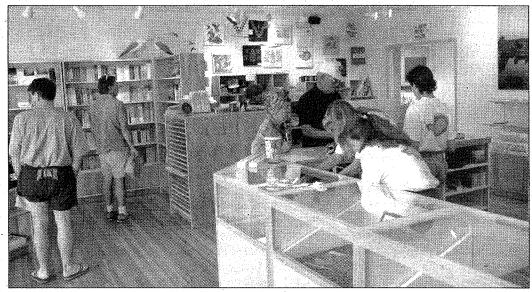


Photo by Bob Schlichting

After what some have called an "incredible transformation", the Mono Lake Committee's Information Center and Bookstore is again open in Lee Vining. Volunteers built new shelves, new lighting was added, and walls were moved to accommodate the public rest room.

> members from the Mono Lake Committee's board of directors; Libby Ellis, director of Patagonia's tithing department; and Mono County Supervisors Andrea Lawrence and Tim Alpers attended the Saturday night party. 'I think the phrase I heard most often at

the grand opening was 'incredible transformation'", said Knepp.

"Everyone seems amazed that we have accomplished so much. And Warren Marr's photo reminds us all of what a beautiful place Mono Lake is . . . and why its worth fighting for."

Join your fellow Mono Lake Committee members in supporting the new Information Center and Bookstore! Donate to these remodeling projects:

PROJECT	GOALS	MY DONATION	Yes!	I'm	contri	buting	to the M	Iono Lake Center!
Educational Displays	\$15,000		163.	Cor	mmittee	Infor	mation (Center!
Energy-saving Lighting	\$11,000							
Handicapped access ramp	\$1,000							
Demonstration water-conserving gard	en \$5,000		Name			•	Daytime	Phone
Visitor picnic and rest area	\$2,000		Address		·			
Audio-visual equipment	\$5,000		Address	~				
Slide Show Room and Gallery	\$6,000		City				State	Zip
Painting and fixtures	\$3,000		For the com	4 344 27 34	avativa	ict of A		
Cabinets	\$8,000		the Center,					
Fuel efficient heating system	\$6,000		ine Center,	pieus	e enter t	ie com	ivanon a	ю.
General construction support	\$20,000			٠				<u>.</u>

The Mono Lake Committee needs your contribution to support the remodel project, but donations to the Committee are not tax-deductible. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, please make your check payable to the Mono Lake Foundation. All funds so earmarked will be used toward the remodel, but if the funding goal for a project has been met, additional funds may be used to complete another project.

Mail this form and your check in the membership envelope, or send it to: Shannon Nelson, Mono Lake Committee Remodel Project, P. O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541.

Ballot initiative would protect land at Mono Lake and the rest of California

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by Bob Schlichting, Publications Editor

fforts are now underway to collect the 650,000 signatures needed to qualify the California Parks and Wildlife Initiative (CALPAW) for the June, 1994 ballot. Proponents say that passage of the bond measure would be a major step in preserving open space, wildlife habitat and wetlands in the Eastern Sierra and throughout California.

If approved by the voters, the plan would allocate nearly \$2 billion to hundreds of specific parks and wildlife projects throughout California, in both rural and urban areas.

CALPAW funds would be used to acquire, as new park land, remaining open space that harbor rare and endangered species. It would preserve old growth forests,

coastal and river habitat, and prime agricultural lands near developing cities. At the same time, it would provide badly needed funds to restore and develop urban recreational facilities such as playgrounds, ball fields, and swimming pools.

"The Mono Basin and Mono County would specifically benefit from the plan," said Sally Miller, the Mono Lake Committee's Eastern Sierra Representative. Included in the initiative is \$6 million for the acquisition and restoration of natural lands in the area, including what the proposal describes as "important wetlands and meadow habitat in the Mono Lake Basin."

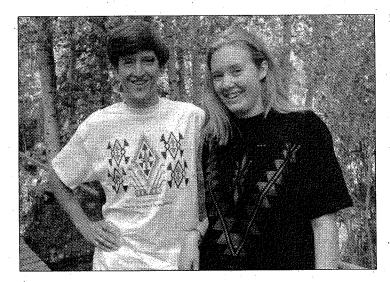
Also set aside is \$5 million to buy land and mineral rights for 'the protection and expansion of Bodie State Historical Park.''

The bond act stipulates that purchase of any private land is subject to the owner's willingness to sell. It does not in any way require or impose a tax increase.

"In order to ensure the initiative qualifies for the ballot, we need volunteers to collect signatures before the October 9 deadline," said Miller, who is coordinating the petition drive in the Mono Basin. "This is a statewide effort to preserve the best of our undeveloped lands for future generations."

If you would like to help, please contact CALPAW coordinator
Nathan Schumacher in Sacramento at (916) 444-2122, or Sally Miller in our
Lee Vining office at (619) 647-6595.

Mono Basin PaiuteT - shirts!



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Either design comes as a Black shirt/ purple and turquoise design, or Tan shirt/black and rust design. Please indicate sizes: S, M, L, XL

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\$10-\$25	\$4.00
\$25-\$50	\$5.00
Over \$50	\$6.00

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Send	
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some	
of those	
great shirts!	a

	Quantity	Size	Color
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"V Basket"	. :	,	
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☐ Mastercard	☐ Visa	☐ Check (to Mono Lake Com	mittee)
Signature	• (Card Number Expiration	on Date

Phone orders: Call (619) 647-6595.

Use the handy membership envelope!

The Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541

Eighth Annual Fine Wine Cellar Drawing a sellout

CELLAR DANING

by Tina Sanders
Development Coordinator



Harold Gilliam, honored with the Mono Lake Committee's first "Defender of the Trust" award, picks one of the winning tickets at the Wine Cellar Drawing May 21.

Photo by Bob Schlichtin

pproximately 190 Mono Lake supporters filled the banquet room at the St. Francis Yacht Club in Francisco for the eighth annual Wine Cellar Drawing and dinner on May 21.

"This year's event was a great success," announced Grace de Laet, Mono Lake Committee Board Director Emeritus who, along with her husband Rick, served as honorary chairpersons for the event. "In addition to the large turnout for the wine tasting and dinner, all 500 tickets for the wine drawings were sold."

This year, five fine wine cellars, each valued at over \$500, were offered in the

drawing. Individuals who purchased two or more tickets were also eligible for a special drawing to win a two-night stay for two at the Quail Lodge Resort and Golf Club in Carmel, a stay at the new Post Ranch Inn at Big Sur, or two cases of 1991 and 1992 gold-medaling wines from coma County.

Winners of the five wine collections

were Mrs. W.G. Bingham, of Modesto; Mort and Edie Gaines, residents of Los Angeles; Judge Norman S. Reid, from Riverbank, California; Kathy Fletcher, a Sacramento resident; and Grace Jacobs, of Santa Cruz.

Martin Rosen, from Mill Valley, won the Quail Lodge weekend offered in the special drawing, while Hod Kosman, of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, was awarded the Post Ranch Inn getaway. Norman Saltnes, from Cloverdale, California, won the two cases of gold medal wines.

Harold Gilliam, author and environmental writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, was presented with the Committee's first "Defender of the Trust" award at the dinner. Martha Davis, the Committee's Executive Director, saluted Gilliam for "his persistent and eloquent voice that has helped to defend such important public trust resources as Mono Lake, the San Francisco Bay Delta, and the Sacramento River system." A letter written especially for the tribute by late writer Wallace Stegner, read by environmentalist Martin Litton, cited Gilliam for having

"helped preserve what without you and others like you would surely have been lost." Ken Alexander, the former political cartoonist of the San Francisco Examiner, also presented Gilliam with a caricature especially created for the event.

Artist Beth Katz displayed a number of her Mono Lake watercolors at the event, and San Francisco pianist Chris Huson provided entertainment throughout the evening.

At the end the program, Grace de Laet offered special thanks to all those individuals and corporations whose donations helped make this year's event such a success. Wine donations came from Beringer, Saintsbury, and S. Anderson Vineyards, Freemark Abbey, Larry Wagner, Linda and Herb McGrew, Guy Kay, George Peyton, and Ken Rosenblum. Quail Lodge Resort and Post Ranch Inn donated the getaways for the special drawing. De Laet also saluted Gerald Asher, Wine Editor for Gourmet magazine, for his expertise and advice in the selection of wines for the five cellars.

> Martha Davis acknowledged the hours of work donated the de Laets. who conceived the Committee's first wine cellar drawing back in 1986. She added her thanks "to everyone participated in this event. You may not have won a wine cellar. But by helping to save Mono Lake, we all



Mono Lake Committee Executive Director Martha Davis spoke to the crowd of 190 at the Eighth Annual Fine wine Cellar Dinner held at the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco.

Honoring others with MLC donations

s part of their on-going donation program to worthy causes, the Southern California Gas Company recently made a \$2,000 contribution to support our efforts to protect Mono Lake. We deeply appreciate their support.

In celebration

Arthur Falconer, of Tiburon, made a contribution in honor of the 18th birthday of his friend, Nicole Smith, who lives in Clayton.

In memory

Mary B. Leinbach, a resident of the Bay area for over 40 years, designated the Mono Lake Committee as one of at least eight environmental groups and schools

to be remembered in her will. The Kensington resident died in March, 1989 at age 89.

Nancy Cate, a resident of San Diego, made a donation in honor of her aunt, Elizabeth J. Crawford, who introduced her to Mono Lake many years ago. Thanks to her aunt, Nancy has 'wonderful memories of camping all over the area... as I go there with my family today, I know she is there with us in spirit.''

Ralph Smith, 76, Professor Emeritus of Zoology at UC Berkeley, died in May. Mort and Edie Gaines, friends from Los Angeles, sent a contribution in honor of the activist who supported a number of worthy environmental causes.

Berkeley residents Miles and Mary McKey remembered Katherine Peyton

with a donation. The 87-year-old Bay area resident died in May. She is the mother of George Peyton, one of the attorneys working on the Mono Lake issue with the National Audubon Society. George is also a vital part of the Committee's yearly Fine Wine Cellar Drawing.

Dorothy Force, from Oakland, made a contribution in honor of her husband Stewart. Long a Mono Lake supporter, he died in 1991 at age 84.

A supporter from Sacramento, Michael Seaman, sent a donation in memory of his dog, Neahkahnie. Michael said that the black Irish setter, in her 15 years, "always used water sparingly, was fascinated when water came from the sky, and maintained a lifelong interest in birds."

MLC staff hellos and goodbyes

by Stacey Simon, Summer Canoe Interpreter

e are sorry to bid farewell to Lori Formicola, our Development Director in Los Angeles. With us for just under a year, Lori transformed the Committee's direct mail program, developed a concert as new spring fundraising event for Southern California, and helped to create new brochures and educational materials. She will be missed.

Her position has been taken over by Alan Magree, a long-time Committee member and native Californian. Alan brings to the job an extensive background in marketing and direct mail, business planning, and environmental consulting. He has even performed with a troupe of actors at the Renaissance Pleasure Faires up and down California.

Here in Lee Vining, summer brings four...well, four-and-a-half...new interns to the Committee's Information Center.

Juliet Landa hails from Wisconsin, where she got her degree in Conservation Biology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. While there, Juliet wrote a thesis in which she linked Mono Lake's current conditions to its political past and

California's historic water issues. She first visited Lee Vining last summer after receiving a grant to study Mono Lake.

Intern Karen Phillips is currently pursuing a degree in Community Development at UC Davis, but comes from San Francisco. Interested in grassroots organizing, she is looking forward to a summer of "educating the public about the issue of Mono Lake."

Michelle Rembs, is from Kansas City, Missouri. With a degree in environmental studies from the University of Kansas, she hopes to get involved with research projects in the basin and to expand her knowledge of wildlife biology.

Desiree Reyes is a zoology major at UC Davis and has spent the past three years working at Lake Tahoe. Desi wants to combine her scientific knowledge with her interpretive skills to help people understand Mono's unique ecosystem.

And finally, our half-time intern is **Doug Knepp**. The son of Sales Manager Rick Knepp, Doug is a sophomore at Eagle Point High School in Oregon. Since this is his second summer with the Committee, he

is turning into a seasoned environmentalist.

I was a summer intern back in 1991, after graduating from Occidental College in Los Angeles, and before accepting a job teaching English for two years in Costa Rica. Now I am back in Lee Vining, coordinating the Mono Lake Foundation's increasingly popular canoe program.

Other former interns are working on this season's interpretive canoe trips as well. Helen Constantine and Rick Shull, who both held the position during the spring, are both remaining in the Mono Basin for the summer to serve as canoe guides.

As interns, Helen and Rick contributed much to the Committee. Rick designed and built many of the cabinets and bookshelves in our newly-opened Information Center. On sale there this summer is a new book, Plant Communities of the Mono Basin, which Helen wrote and illustrated. She is heading north in the Fall to begin a Masters program in botany at Humbolt State University, but we're glad they're around for several months yet, volunteering their time to the Committee. We will be sad to see them go.

Despite recession, 1992 was a good year

by Stacy Brown, Business Manager

1992 was another busy year for the Mono Lake Committee.

With your generous support, we are surviving the recession and continue to make progress in securing protection for Mono Lake. We are deeply grateful to our friends and supporters who have made it possible to continue our work to ensure a healthy future for this natural treasure.

As always, we strive to use our resources effectively and responsibly.

The following financial highlights were prepared by management. The annual audit of our financial statements is in progress. Audited statements should be available July 15. To receive a copy, please send your request and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to my attention in our Southern California office.

Although total revenue decreased in 1992 (\$1,034,093) compared to 1991 ,223,385), when the attorney fee accovery awards are factored out (\$65,548 in 1992; \$297,776 in 1991) the remaining revenue shows a 5 percent increase.

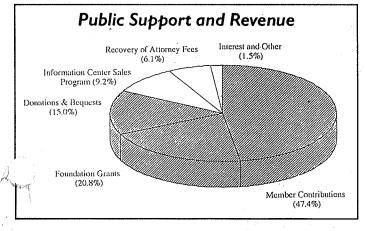
We held the line on spending. Overall, 1992 expenses (\$955,157) decreased slightly compared to 1991 (\$956,049).

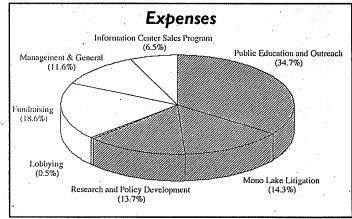
Thankfully, a projected shortfall for 1992 did not materialize. An attorney fee recovery award plus an unanticipated bequest enabled us to end the year with net income of approximately \$78,000 to carry forward into 1993 programs.

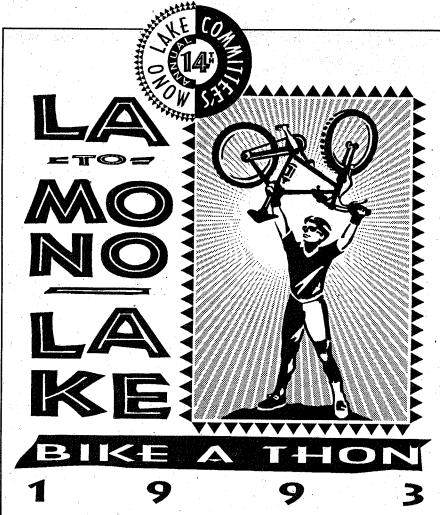
Mono Lake Committee Fiscal Year 1992 Revenue and Expense

Public support and revenue:

Public support:	Amount	Percent
Member Contributions	\$ 490,173	<u>rercent</u> 47.4
Foundation Grants	\$ 214,824	20.8
Donations and Bequests	\$ 154,985	15.0
Total public support	\$ 859,982	83.2
Revenue:		
Information Center Sales Program	\$ 94,713	9.2
Recovery of Attorneys' fees	\$ 63,548	6.1
Interest and Other	\$ 15,850	1.5
Total Revenue	\$ 174,111	16.8
Total Public Support and Revenue	\$1,034,093	100.0
Expenses by program:		
Program Services:		
Public Education and Outreach	\$ 331,253	34.7
Mono Lake Litigation	\$ 136,666	14.3
Research and Policy Development	\$ 131,224	13.7
Lobbying	\$ 4,970	0.5
Total Program Services	\$ 604,113	63.2
Supporting Services:		
Fundraising	\$ 177,279	18.6
Management and General	\$ 111,240	11.7
Information Center Sales Program	\$ 62,525	6.5
Total Supporting Services	\$ 351,044	36.8
Total expenses	\$ 955,157	100.0







JOIN US FOR AN INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE!

Mono Lake Committee's 14th annual Los Angeles to Mono Lake BIKE-A-THON

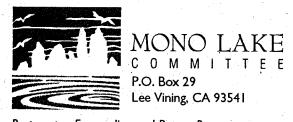
August 30 - September 4

It's a challenging and inspirational 350-mile, six-day journey. Each rider helps protect Mono Lake - one of California's most important natural resources - while cycling through diverse landscapes and making lasting friendships.

To participate, register and submit a \$250 registeration fee by August 2, 1993.

REGISTER EARLY AND WIN A PAIR OF TEVA SANDALS!

CONTACT TINA AT (818) 972-2025 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



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