

*Spring*

1994

# MONO LAKE

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## NEWSLETTER



# Mono Lake Newsletter

Spring 1994

Volume 16, Number 4

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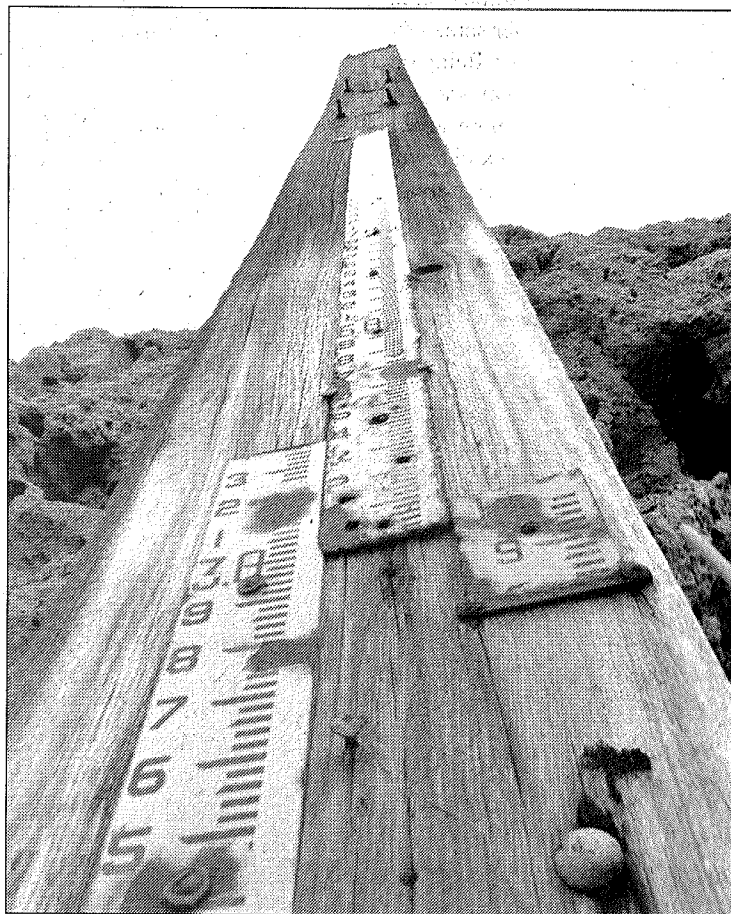
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## THIS ISSUE'S COVER



Looking northeast from Old Marina, clouds stretch across Mono Lake, a topic much on our minds as we complete the Water Board hearings. All the land in the foreground was once under the surface of Mono Lake, a topic much on our minds as we complete the Water Board hearings.

Evidence has illuminated the wealth of public trust resources lost at Mono Lake because of diversions, and we wonder how Mono Lake can be compensated for that unlawful damage. The photo below, and article to the right, look more closely at Old Marina; read further in the Newsletter for details of the Committee's closing brief to the Water Board and an analysis of DWP's agreement to finally apply for AB 444 funds.



An abandoned lake level gauge at Old Marina tells of Mono's rich past.

*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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This newsletter is partially funded by a grant from The Mono Lake Foundation, a non-profit exempt organization dedicated to studying and protecting the Mono Lake watershed. Donations to the Mono Lake Committee or the Mono Lake Foundation may be made using the enclosed envelope.

# Old Marina, new history

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

**T**he lessons of Mono Lake are often sad. Late in the afternoon last Friday, with clouds tumbling overhead and a chill wind bringing the last gasps of winter, I rode my bike north on highway 395, down the hill, and into the Old Marina parking lot. I simply wanted to get some exercise, escape the glowing computer screen for a while, breathe some fresh air. Being on a bicycle, though, always reveals more than driving, and I decided to explore several dirt roads before heading back to town. Along a gravel track, past a crumbling concrete foundation, around a corner, I found Mono Lake's past.

Empty, silent wood benches faced a now-distant lake. The roughness of their boards told of years of solitary sun and snow. I leaned my bike against a tufa and sat on one of the benches in the deepening night. Who once sat here, and why, I wondered; it sure would be nice if the lake were closer. And, of course, it once was.

I walked on, below the highway, through brown grasses, through thickets of buffalo berry, wild rose, and willow. And suddenly, before me on the side of a massive tufa block, was a strange sight. A familiar enameled strip of metal, screwed through rusty holes to a tall piece of wood pointing into the air — the tallest lake level gauge I've ever seen. And slowly turning around, I looked across the grass and mud and saw a little parade of gauges heading down the hill and across the mud flats toward the lake.

This ten-foot gauge must have quickly become useless when DWP's diversions began to lower the lake. It was probably clear there wasn't much point in installing such large gauges after that, since everyone knew the lake level would go down, but not up. Short gauges would do, and I found six of them between the highway and the lake's edge.

I never liked Old Marina much until then. Located at the edge of the highway, it always seemed flat and gray — squat tufa,



deep mud, salt-crusted ground. A quick stop for the traveler in a hurry, the four-minute Mono Lake experience, a mediocre point of access to Mono Lake. But now I know that the importance of Old Marina is the access it provides to the lost Mono Lake of yesterday.

Old Marina, I realized then, had little to do with what I wanted Mono Lake to be when I visited the shore: a paradise of birdlife, adventures, scenery, and wilderness. Old Marina tells a sadder story, of what was here once, and what is now gone. Of parents sitting on smooth benches while children dove into the lake, swimming wide-eyed through clouds of brine shrimp, perching on offshore tufa, and drinking from freshwater springs. Of visitors in the shade of willows, picnicking in tall grass, relaxing at the lakeshore. Of nearby streams rich in vegetation, full of fish. Of hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese darkening skies overhead.

These things are gone. The Mono Lake of 1941 is gone, and we have only begun to realize it. For a long time I have wondered if Mono would die, dry up, kill itself with salt; I forgot to ask what had already happened, what had already vanished by 1978 when the Mono Lake

Committee was founded.

The Water Board proceedings made the Committee ask that question and they provided a glimpse into the past, a sliver of information from which we can only guess at the actual beauty of Mono Lake before diversions. Walking across frozen mudflats in search of abandoned lake level gauges, I suddenly saw beyond the threat of the future to the true damage at Mono Lake, all the Old Marinas, the richness of the lake's past taken away by illegally excessive diversions of water.

As I pedaled through the dark, up the hill to my home, the pain of this realization gave way to hope for the future. If bison can return to the Great Plains and wolves (perhaps) to Yellowstone, then surely we can work toward the day when new springs flow on Mono's shores, when new species of birds must be added to the Basin Checklist, when wooden benches will be again worn smooth by lakeshore visitors.

And just as surely, I realized, environmental battles are never over; on that day there will be new threats to Mono's health, new struggles to be won, and more to be done to protect this remarkable place that one poet called in 1930 "a shimmering lake of silver where wonders never die."





# Water Board hearings almost complete

**O**n Friday, January 18 — after an estimated 44 days of testimony — the State Water Resources Control Board hearings for the amendment of Los Angeles' licenses to divert water from the Mono Basin drew to a close. The hearings, which began in November of 1993, supplemented and corrected the detailed information about the Mono Lake ecosystem contained in the Water Board's Draft Environmental Impact Report; together they are the most comprehensive body of data and opinion existing on Mono Lake.

This comprehensive body of knowledge is also one of the weightiest ever produced during the fight to save Mono Lake. Transcripts of the hearings weigh in at 85 pounds. And that doesn't even include exhibits (of which there were more than 600).

## THE TESTIMONY

The Water Board considers only information which is in its record when making its decision; as a result, almost everyone with something to say about Mono Lake said it to the Water Board. Many of the scientists who have studied Mono Lake testified or were represented at the hearings. Economists spoke on the

costs of replacement water for Los Angeles; doctors testified on the health effects of dust storms; and, significantly, the Metropolitan Water District testified that there is plenty of replacement water available for the Department of Water and Power (DWP).

Throughout the hearings, the Committee and the National Audubon Society (long time litigation partners), represented by Bruce Dodge and Patrick Flinn of the legal firm Morrison & Foerster, attempted to document the historic public trust values which have been lost at Mono Lake. Details of the Committee's arguments can be found on page 5 of this *Newsletter*; DWP's case was outlined in the winter 1994 *Newsletter*.

In addition to DWP and the Committee, more than ten other parties took part in the Water Board hearings. Specific interests brought most to the hearing room for only a few days, but counsel for the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), California Trout (CalTrout), the State Lands Commission, and the State Department of Parks and Recreation attended the entire proceedings.

Stream flows and the restoration of historical fish habitat were the primary concerns of the Department of Fish and Game and CalTrout. DFG conducted extensive studies on Rush and Lee Vining creeks to determine the minimum amount of water required to maintain fish populations in good condition in Mono's streams, and they presented their findings to the Board. (The Committee endorses DFG's recommendations).

CalTrout supported DFG's flow recommendations and presented evidence on the need for stream restoration. CalTrout also presented witnesses who testified regarding the real costs to Los Angeles of replacing water diverted from the Mono Basin.

On the subject of air quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) testified, noting that the Mono Basin is currently in

violation of the federal Clean Air Act. The local enforcement arm of EPA, the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, presented their Mono Basin air pollution model to the Board and summarized the results: the lake must rise to 6392 and possibly higher before the Basin will comply with the Clean Air Act.


The U.S. Forest Service, which manages the National Forest Scenic Area surrounding Mono Lake, testified that no solution to the air quality problem except raising the lake is acceptable under their management plan for the Mono Basin (proposals have ranged from massive irrigation to spreading Black Point cinders over thousands of acres of alkali flats).

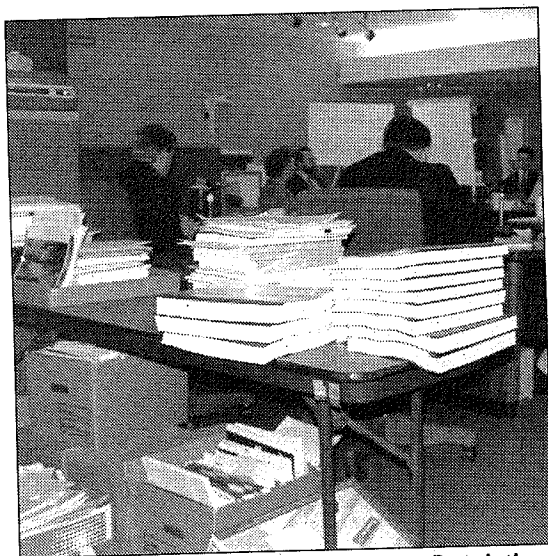
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service testified that the listing of Mono's brine shrimp as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act could be avoided if the lake rises to 6390 feet or above.

The State Lands Commission presented evidence regarding the degradation and loss of State lands due to the lake's decline. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund presented testimony on the former recreational uses of Mono Lake, which ranged from hunting and boating to swimming and picnicking. And the U.S. Forest Service and State Department of Parks and Recreation testified regarding the degraded visual resources of Mono Lake, the availability and quality of tufa groves for visitation, and future interpretive management options.

## THE WATER BOARD DECISION

The completion of the hearings was not the end of the Water Board process. Parties filed closing briefs on March 21, and now have additional time to rebut opposing parties' closing briefs. The Committee's brief ran 76 pages.

The Water Board will finally have everything it needs to make a decision on April 29. News of the Water Board's decision won't be heard until this summer. Keep an eye out for news in your local paper and expect a full report in the Fall *Mono Lake Newsletter*. 



As witnesses testified before the Water Board, the hearing record continued to grow.

# Committee files closing brief in State Water Board proceedings

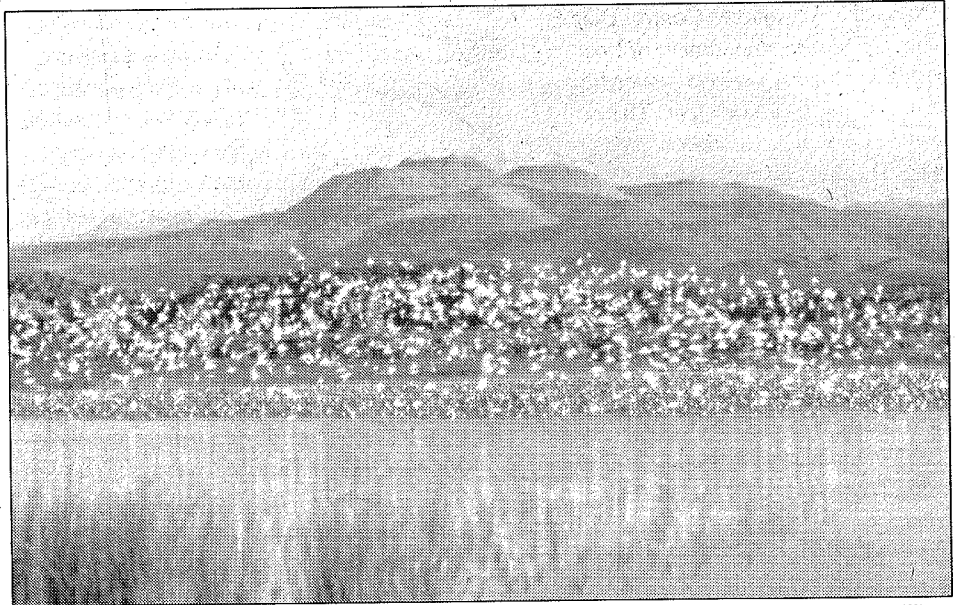
**T**he Mono Lake Committee and the National Audubon Society, longtime litigation partners, summarized the case for the protection of Mono Lake in a closing brief filed with the State Water Board on March 21. The brief documents the need for a managed lake level of 6390 feet, and quite possibly higher, to protect Mono Lake's public trust values.

The brief first examines the legal framework which guides the Water Board decision. It then discusses the protection that the 6390 level provides the lake, and closely examines evidence which demonstrates the importance of higher levels — 6405 in particular — for several key resources: waterfowl, recreation and access, and visual values. In conclusion, the brief looks at restoration and mitigation measures needed to compensate for years of damaging water diversions by the Department of Water and Power (DWP).

## THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Water Board process stems from the 1983 decision by the California Supreme Court that Los Angeles' water rights, as originally issued by the Water Board's predecessor, failed to take into account the protection of Mono Lake's public trust values, which include scenic, recreational, and ecological resources (see *Newsletter*: fall, spring 1993, spring 1983).

Public trust resources, the court ruled, must be protected whenever "feasible." In other words, if alternative water supplies, such as reclaimed water, exist for Los Angeles, they must be developed before harm to the public trust is allowed at Mono Lake. In fact, the brief points out that a permanent halt to diversions meets the "feasibility" requirement; nonetheless the Committee feels a level can be set which restores and protects most of the significant public trust resources that would otherwise be unnecessarily lost at Mono Lake, while still providing some water for



Lake levels as high as 6405 may bring back conditions which once supported over one million waterfowl and extensive recreation at Mono Lake.

the needs of Los Angeles.

The Supreme Court also ruled that the public trust values in question are those that existed when diversions began, not the impaired values of the current day. The law, the Committee's brief argues, is clear on this point: the Supreme Court "held that Mono Lake had been surrendered in 1940 without consideration of the injuries to Public Trust values which would result from the diversions proposed at the time ... [the court emphasized that] 'before state courts and agencies approve water diversions they should consider the effect of such diversions upon interests protected by the public trust.'"

## 6390: A MINIMUM LAKE LEVEL

The Committee's brief argues that a lake level of 6390 feet solves many of the adverse impacts the lake suffers today. 6390, the brief states, is the "minimum elevation necessary to comply with the Public Trust doctrine. . . . all parties agree that the Mono Basin cannot comply with the Clean Air Act below this elevation. In

addition, 6390 is at the lower range necessary to protect the brine shrimp, alkali fly, and other aquatic organisms in Mono Lake. This elevation also protects the Negit Island landbridge against exposure during a prolonged drought." The evidence which supports the 6390 level as a minimum is already well known (see *Newsletter*: winter 1994; fall, summer 1993).

## WHY HIGHER LEVELS?

What lake level protects the resources that existed before diversions began? What lake level will bring them back? The Committee brought forward testimony on these questions throughout the Water Board hearings. In several instances, that evidence makes a compelling case for raising the lake higher than 6390.

In light of this, the Committee devoted much of its brief to a discussion of how a lake level of 6405 could fulfill the Water Board's mandate to protect Mono's public trust values. Protection of the lake at 6405 is entirely feasible, it leaves the lake →

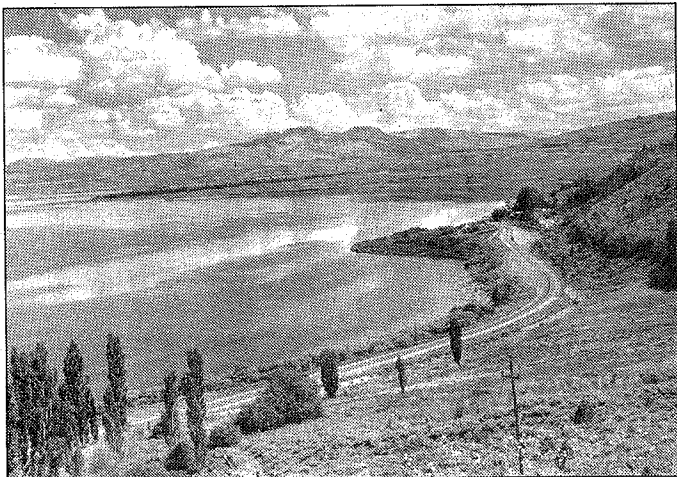


Photo by Burton Frasher

Mono Lake in 1938, before diversions, at an elevation of 6418 feet.

twenty to twenty five feet below the level it would be at today if diversions had never occurred, and it still allows DWP to divert some water. The case for 6405 relies on evidence presented by a number of witnesses which painted a portrait of Mono Lake before diversions began in 1941 (see also *Newsletter*, winter 1994).

Think of the more than 1 million waterfowl (ducks and geese) which visited Mono Lake annually before diversions began in 1941. Fresh water from Mono's streams provided bathing and drinking water for these birds, and it flooded lakeshore areas, creating wetlands.

At the same time, Mono's more productive waters (only half as saline as today) supported abundant food in the form of brine shrimp and alkali flies. Strong stream flows created a floating lens of freshwater on the lake, called the hypopycnal layer, providing excellent habitat for hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and migratory birds. Mono Lake, as part of the Great Basin wetlands, was a major component of the migration habitat of waterfowl along the Pacific flyway. Experienced observers reported waterfowl abundance exceeding that of other important California waterfowl areas including San Francisco Bay, Tomales Bay, Bodega Bay, San Pablo Bay, Bolinas Lagoon, and South Bay.

Today the number of waterfowl visiting the lake has shrunk to about 7,000 individuals, less than 1% of former numbers. The hypopycnal layer is virtually gone,

and waterfowl enthusiasts seldom travel to Mono Lake in pursuit of ducks and geese.

Imagine driving over Conway summit and seeing, in place of today's expansive alkali flats, a full Mono Lake stretching from the Sierra eastward into the sagebrush flats of the Great Basin. Consider driving down the highway as the lake waters lap at the edge

of the road. Families picnic at Old Marina, children swim in the water; boaters canoe above and alongside tufa towers and visit Mono's islands. Grasses, not mudflats, lead to the lake's edge. Huge flocks of phalaropes bank and turn overhead. Tufa reflect in the water while a diversity of waterbirds paddle by, eating plentiful alkali fly larvae. The sky periodically darkens as thousands of ducks fly noisily along the lakeshore.

Consider joining explorer J. Ross Browne in the 1860s: *"We sat on the front porch, overlooking the whole magnificent panorama outspread before us. The glowing atmosphere hung over the lake like a vast prismatic canopy. Myriads of aquatic fowl sported on the glassy surface of the water, which reflected the varied outlines and many-colored slopes of the surrounding mountains. Trees, rocks, islands and all visible objects were duplicated with wonderful clearness and accuracy. . . . A soft, delicious air, fragrant with the odors of wildflowers and new-made hay, made it a luxury to breathe."*

The evidence presented to the Water Board showed that these broad public

trust values — waterfowl, visual resource recreation, and migratory birds — will never regain their prediversion vigor unless Mono Lake is managed at 6405 feet.

The topography of the lakeshore is such that any waterfowl habitat regained by a rise in the lake level or active restoration efforts will be insignificant below 6405. It is only at levels above 6400 feet that the lake rises onto creek deltas, creating low gradient marshland habitat and, on the lake's north shore, brackish lagoons as water pools behind natural berms. Waterfowl experts testified, however, that if the habitat returns, so will the birds.

The lake, witnesses said, will be surrounded by a ring of dusty playa until elevations above 6401 feet are achieved. At higher levels, testimony indicated, access to the lake is vastly improved and Mono's saline water becomes diluted enough to swim with your eyes open (don't try this today).

Only one resource is impacted at the 6405 level, and DWP is making the most of it: tufa. South Tufa would largely remain to its native underwater habitat at 6405, testimony indicates that groves of equal quality would become accessible to visitors. Far from the lake's edge today, these hidden tufa towers would reflect in the waters of a much higher Mono Lake. DWP, however, takes credit for revealing the tufa, arguing that tufa *"can be enjoyed by the public only because of DWP's diversions."* Should we thank DWP and

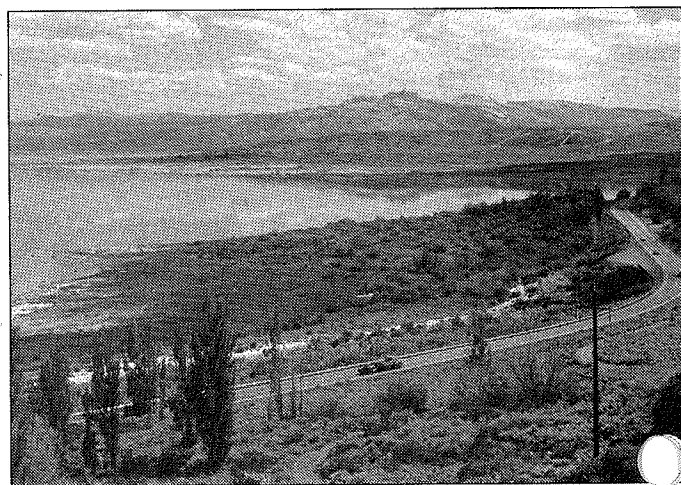


Photo by Jim Stimson

Mono Lake in 1994 at an diversion-induced elevation of 6375 feet.

port a lower lake level at the expense of Mono's ecological values?

Crucial to the Committee's findings is the fact that managing Mono Lake at the 6405 level meets the court's feasibility test. *"The water needed for the 6405 foot plan relative to the 6390 alternative is small,"* the Committee brief points out, *"and the difference pales in comparison to the enormous Public Trust resource loss below 6405."*

The cost of the 6390 alternative raises the average L.A. ratepayer's bill by less than 1%, roughly \$0.16 per month, according to a model introduced by the Committee and CalTrout; the 6405 alternative increases that cost by a mere penny.

The brief goes on to point out that *"For the past 5 years, DWP has done without any Mono Basin water during one of the longest droughts in recorded history . . . moreover, DWP admits that its current reclamation plans are sufficient to meet any future needs."* In addition, DWP stands to gain millions of dollars in both state and federal assistance to replace Mono Lake water (see page 10); in the end, the cost to ratepayers may not compare significantly with the cost of DWP's fifteen years of litigation.

Long-time Mono Basin resident Augie Hess summed up the situation when testifying before the Water Board. *"What's left of the lake may be still beautiful,"* he said, *"but there used to be so much more of it. The colors, the views, the shore — it's very different now."*

Imagine what Mono Lake once was and could be again. The public trust requires such consideration, the Committee argues. A sizable body of evidence supports 6405, and the costs of such protection are entirely feasible.

### RESTORATION AND MITIGATION

In its brief, the Committee urged the Water Board to implement a restoration program at Mono Lake for two reasons. The first is legal: in 1990 a court-ordered program began to restore the "conditions that benefited the fisheries" and must be completed to compensate for DWP's excessive diversions.

The second is ecological: Mono's streams, dewatered for years, have suffered

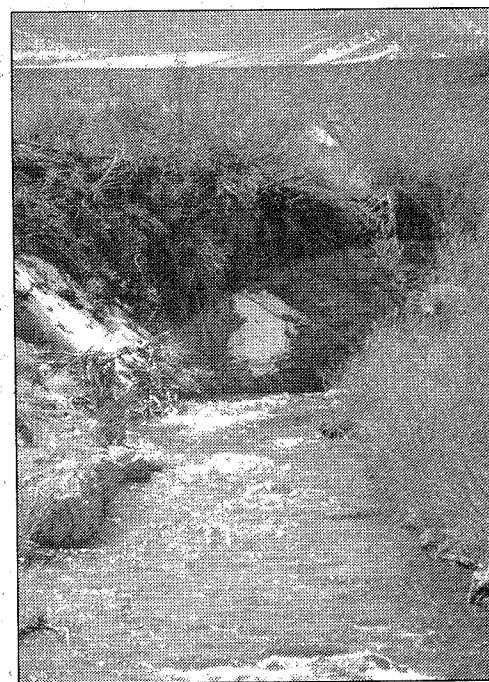
tremendously. Streamside vegetation has disappeared, the stream channel form has been lost in many locations, and occasional floodlike releases of water plugged some historic channels with gravel and destroyed others. Naturally existing features, such as pools, overhanging banks, and riparian vegetation, have been lost; they would take hundreds of years to return on their own.

A restoration program can help meet the requirements of the court, and can help compensate for stream damage, by accelerating the recovery of these natural features through careful manipulation of the streams.

The brief recommends *"site specific measures to restore conditions that would otherwise not come back naturally within a reasonable time frame or at all. For example, as to the multiple channels that historically existed in the Rush Creek bottomlands, Dr. [Scott] Stine testified: 'Active intervention will be required if multiple channels are to be restored, and if they are to be restored within a reasonable amount of time . . . Impacts caused by DWP's diversions — loss of vegetation, stripping of soils, widening and dewatering of channels, flushing of gravels — will take decades to centuries to millennia for nature to rectify.'"*

The Committee advocates undertaking restoration work on all four streams from which DWP diverts water. The restoration program would include the reopening of historic stream channels abandoned as a result of diversions. Spawning gravels would occasionally be placed into the stream to account for DWP's upstream dams holding back such material. Refuge habitat would be added for fish, through the digging of pools, to compensate for the widened, shallow stream created by diversions. And riparian vegetation would be planted in areas where it is returning slowly, often due to a low groundwater table and the loss of soils.

In some cases, damage to the creeks is irreversible; to account for this, the Committee calls for mitigation. For example, as Mono Lake's level declined, its tributary streams cut down through their



Damage to Mono's streams by excessive diversions requires restoration work and mitigation. Permanent incision on Rush Creek is pictured; note former floodplain 15 feet above the current stream.

own beds to reach the lowering lake, resulting in severe, irreversible incision. And because of incision, former floodplains and wetlands, and their accompanying vegetation, have been lost.

To account for these permanent public trust losses, the Committee proposes mitigation measures which include the rewatering of Mill Creek, a northern tributary of Mono Lake dewatered by upstream hydroelectric and irrigation diversions. DWP holds substantial water rights in Mill Creek and, by returning this water to the creek, could help reestablish historical wetlands and riparian systems in that watershed, partially accounting for those lost elsewhere.

### CONCLUSION

The Committee's brief summarizes a variety of evidence pointing to the need for a lake level of 6390 or higher. The Water Board's ultimate decision will be complex and might include a lake level, a restoration program, and other components. How well the Water Board's plan fits the needs of Mono Lake will be seen when it is released this summer.



# Summary of closing briefs

## Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

- The Water Board is "neither obligated nor empowered to adopt a management plan that will restore the Mono Basin to its 1941 condition."
- The Water Board "lacks discretion" to consider air quality issues.
- "The health of the Mono Lake ecosystem is not in jeopardy" at current lake levels."
- "The adequacy of the amount and quality of gull nesting habitat at current lake elevations" is clear.
- "There are an 'amazing number of alkali flies' at current Mono Lake levels."
- "Restoration activities are neither required nor desirable."
- "... the streams are recovering naturally, and to date, activities undertaken to mechanically create habitat for fish have impeded recovery of the stream ecosystems."
- "Fourteen years of data establish that Mono Lake is a healthy, vibrant ecosystem at current lake levels."
- "DWP's management plan will preserve the aesthetics of the Mono Basin."

### *The DWP Management Plan*

- Mono Lake should be maintained at an elevation of 6377 feet.
- Flows on Lee Vining Creek should range between 20 and 35 cubic feet per second (cfs), depending on the month.
- Flows on Rush Creek should range between 25 and 40 cfs, depending on the month.
- No diversions will be made from Walker and Parker creeks.
- In the proposed DWP management plan, diversions would cease if the lake is expected to drop below 6377 feet in a given year.

## The Mono Lake Committee

- The Water Board is obligated to protect the public trust wherever "feasible."
- An elevation of 6390 is the minimum necessary to protect, as required by law, Mono Lake's public trust values.
- Above 6390 — at 6405 in particular — important public trust values are restored, including waterfowl, visual resources, and recreation.
- A lake level of 6405 is feasible; it would increase L.A. water users' bills by less than 1%.
- The law requires, in contrast to DWP's assertion, the restoration of the pre-diversion fishery.
- A site-specific restoration program should be undertaken on the creeks, including the rewatering of historic channels and the planting of vegetation where necessary to accelerate the recovery process.
- To account for permanent damage to the Mono Lake ecosystem, DWP should mitigate by rewatering Mill Creek

### *Management proposal to achieve a lake level of 6405*

- The "fish flows" recommended by the Department of Fish and Game should be adopted (see below left); DWP has not shown they would harm the streams in any way.
- No diversions until the lake rises to 6384 feet.
- Diversions of 10,000 acre-feet of water per year, if available after fish flows, allowed when Mono Lake is between 6384 and 6390 feet.
- Diversions of 15,000 acre-feet per year, if available after fish flows, allowed when Mono Lake is between 6390 and 6405 feet.
- Diversions of all water after fish flows when Mono Lake is above 6405 feet (past data indicates this amount to be roughly 23,000 acre-feet).

## Department of Fish and Game

- Lee Vining Creek flows of 25 to 95 cfs, depending on month and precipitation.
- Rush Creek flows of 30 to 100 cfs, depending on month and precipitation.
- Higher "flushing flows" in early summer.
- "... streamflows are only a start and [will] not by themselves reestablish prediversion conditions within a reasonable time frame."

## California Trout

- "LADWP's operations have caused catastrophic damages to the fish habitats of the Mono Lake tributaries."
- "absent ... restoration, any flow regime adopted by [the] Board would fail to reestablish the historic fisheries in the foreseeable future."
- "... the record overwhelmingly establishes that the cost of ... the 6390 foot lake level is insignificant."

## State Lands Commission

- "The City's diversions have caused significant and continuing damage to state owned lands."
- "The Water Board has jurisdiction over air quality issues."
- "Restoring historic channels is an essential step in restoring the stream systems and thus fish habitat."



# AB 444 agreement is a step forward for Los Angeles

by Los Angeles City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter

*Los Angeles City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter was elected in 1987. She chairs the powerful Commerce, Energy, and Natural Resources Committee, which oversees the operations of the Department of Water and Power.*

*A long-time supporter of Mono Lake's protection, Galanter shared an office in 1981 with the Committee's first Los Angeles representative. She brokered the AB 444 agreement between the Committee and DWP discussed on page 10, and she offers the following commentary.*

California's population growth and the need to maintain and encourage economic activity will require reusing water that is already here. With the agreement and the application for AB 444 funds, the Department of Water and Power (DWP) has finally embarked on a serious water reclamation program which will begin when federal and/or state funds become available. DWP is optimistic that the East Valley Reclamation project, for which it will use the AB 444 money, will become a model for other water systems, primarily because of its location far upstream from the wastewater ocean-discharge point. This location will permit using the reclaimed water for groundwater recharge.

Conservationists have argued for years in favor of reclamation. But it has been very hard to get the program moving because the budget to build the plants and distribution system is directly tied to water rates. Many of my colleagues on the City Council, which sets the rates, have long since figured out that there is more political mileage in joining their constitu-



*Photo courtesy Councilwoman Galanter's office*


**Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan addressing the press at the announcement of the agreement between the Mono Lake Committee and DWP to apply for AB 444 funds. From left to right are: Governor Pete Wilson, DWP General Manager Dan Waters, DWP Commission President Dennis Tito, L.A. City Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky (partially obscured), Mayor Riordan, MLC Board Member Tom Soto, Assemblyman Richard Katz, MLC Executive Director Martha Davis, State Senator Tim Leslie, and L.A. City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter.**

ents' howls of outrage at the prospect of rate increases than there is in touting the need for water twenty years from now. With the AB 444 money — and the leverage it provides for obtaining federal help — DWP will soon be in a position to show Council members and the public how water reclamation benefits us all.

It is even more important, however, that Mayor Riordan is committed to this effort. The Mayor has said repeatedly that he believes there is no higher priority than hiring more police officers. To pay for these officers, he has proposed that DWP fork over more money to the city's general fund than it has in the past. To do that, DWP must cut costs, such as overtime and expendable programs. There certainly will be disagreements about what is expendable: conservation programs, for instance,

that give away low-flow showerheads may be eliminated.

In addition, changes in the structure of the electric power industry may make it more difficult for the electric power side of DWP to contribute to the general fund. Under these conditions, it is going to be hard for the water side of DWP to initiate new long-range programs. So although this agreement took far too long to come to fruition, it has come just in time.

But don't relax yet. In order to hold onto the gains achieved by reaching this agreement, we're going to have to secure the funding to implement it. And for that challenge, it is critically important that the Mono Lake Committee and the City of Los Angeles work together in Sacramento and Washington to secure a workable water future for us all. 

# Reclaimed water agreement underscores feasibility of protecting Mono Lake

by Martha Davis

On December 13, 1993, following more than four years of political prodding, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) finally agreed to terms set by the California State Legislature for the receipt of special State funds to develop new water supplies in Los Angeles.

With the Mono Lake Committee's endorsement, DWP has agreed to apply to receive \$36 million over four years from a 1989 fund created by the State Legislature in Assembly Bill 444 (AB 444), specifically written to help protect Mono Lake.

The agreement does not resolve the ongoing legal fight for Mono Lake's protection, although it is an important step

State funds. This marks the first time DWP has ever made a voluntary commitment to reduce its Mono Basin diversions.

The agreement, long sought by the Mono Lake Committee, was heralded by an extraordinary political coalition, including California Governor Pete Wilson, Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, State Senator Tim Leslie, State Assembly members Richard Katz and Phil Isenberg, Los Angeles City Council Members Ruth Galanter and Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Commission President Dennis Tito, and Mono County Supervisor Michael Jarvis.

*"This is a victory for the people of Los*

Over 40,000 acre-feet of new water supplies could be created annually for DWP through the construction of water reclamation and conservation projects in Los Angeles using the AB 444 funds. The Mono Lake Committee and DWP agreed on four projects that will receive State funding: a Los Angeles-based water conservation program, the Sepulveda Reclamation Project, the East Valley Reclamation Project, and the West Basin Reclamation Project.

Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan joined Governor Wilson in praising the agreement, saying *"This is an important step in ensuring that L.A.'s future needs are met, but also in protecting Mono Lake's pristine water system."* Riordan, calling the agreement a winning situation for everyone, emphasized how the construction of the water reclamation projects will create jobs and provide Los Angeles with a new, drought proof water supply. *"The only losers,"* Riordan added, in reference to the city's 15 year legal struggle with the Mono Lake Committee, *"are our lawyers."*

## AB 444 BACKGROUND

The State funds were made available in 1989 through the Environmental Water Act, AB 444, due to the efforts of an unusual bi-partisan alliance of northern and southern state legislators. Sponsored by Assemblyman Phil Isenberg (D-Sacramento), then-Assemblyman Bill Baker (R-Danville) and Assemblyman Richard Katz (D-Panorama City), AB 444 reserved up to \$60 million for the City of Los Angeles to help resolve the ongoing controversy over Mono Lake's future.

The bill specified that the money was to be used, on a matching basis, for the development of water reclamation and conservation projects benefiting Mono Lake. And while DWP was to receive the money, the bill required that they agree

**"Frankly, I never expected it to take so long to give away this money."**

— ASSEMBLYMAN PHIL ISENBERG

toward the creation of a workable solution which recognizes Mono Lake's values and Los Angeles' needs. And while the agreement does not directly affect the State Water Board proceedings currently in progress, it makes it harder for DWP to argue that the loss of Mono Basin water causes L.A. great hardship.

The key condition of the agreement requires DWP to replace, acre-foot for acre-foot, water diversions from Mono Lake with the water developed through the

*Angeles and for every Californian who cherishes our precious natural heritage,"* declared Governor Wilson. *"This agreement underlines yet again that we can reach cooperative solutions to environmental problems. It also shows that we can protect our environment and encourage economic growth."* Governor Wilson pledged that his administration would provide \$36 million in AB 444 funds, starting with \$9 million in the upcoming State budget.

On the Mono Lake Committee on the way it would be used.

The main obstacle to an agreement was DWP's long-standing refusal to credit Mono Lake with the water developed through the use of the State funds. AB 444 required that any project developed with the State funds "contribute to the permanent protection of Mono Lake." The State interpreted this to mean that an agreement must reduce Mono Basin diversions by the amount of water developed using the State funds. DWP was willing to take the money, but not if it benefited the lake.

"Frankly, I never expected it to take so long to give away this money," said Assemblyman Phil Isenberg. Unfortunately, the four year delay, along with the state's current financial crisis, allowed the AB 444 fund to be whittled from \$60 million to \$36 million.

With the election of Richard Riordan as L.A.'s new Mayor in June, 1993, State Assemblyman Phil Isenberg encouraged the new administration to work aggressively on the issue so that the city could take full advantage of the remaining AB 444 funds.

*"To date, there has been little or no effort by the city to join with the Mono Lake Committee to apply for all or part of the \$60 million . . . that could help the city find replacement water and power resources,"* Isenberg wrote last June. *"I'm not naive enough to think that the city can overcome 50 years of an aggressive water policy in the Eastern Sierra and solve this issue overnight. But, frankly, the city's legal position is deteriorating rapidly, and there's nothing that I see to suggest that this trend will change in the future."*

The impasse was finally broken last fall by City Councilwoman Ruth Galanter, who also is the new chairwoman of the committee which oversees DWP's activities. Supported by Mayor Riordan, Galanter picked up the pieces of previous negotiation efforts led by Mary Nichols, an earlier DWP Commissioner (see *Newsletter*: fall 1992, winter 1993), and held firm on the condition that any water developed using the State funds would be credited to Mono Lake. This cleared the way for the Committee to reach a final agreement with

## "The only losers are our lawyers."

— L.A. MAYOR RICHARD RIORDAN

L.A. on the jointly endorsed application for the AB 444 funds.

Another key player in the agreement was Mono County State Senator Tim Leslie, who led efforts to guarantee the funding for the pact. As the lead Republican on the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, Senator Leslie immediately contacted the Wilson Administration upon hearing that the AB 444 agreement was close to being final. Senator Leslie secured the pledge that was later made by Governor Wilson at the December 13 press conference: that \$36 million in AB 444 funds would be used to meet the needs of the joint application, and that \$9 million per year for four years would be provided, beginning in fiscal year 1994-1995.


### IS A SIGNED DEAL A DONE DEAL?

Unfortunately, steps to implement the agreement have progressed slower than the Committee anticipated. As of mid-March, DWP was still working to complete applications to the State of California for the four projects identified in the pact. The Committee has continued to urge the City to expeditiously submit the remaining applications so that these can be processed and receive timely approval by the State.

Another problem looming on the horizon is the issue of securing the promised AB 444 funding in the budget. Assemblyman Richard Katz, along with Senator Leslie and Assemblyman Isenberg, wrote the Wilson Administration in late February, stating *"In the Governor's proposed budget . . . funding for this agreement is not from the [AB 444 fund], but from Habitat Conservation Funds, which require voter approval and are questionable."*

The Mono Lake Committee does not support the use of these funds, already designated for other conservation uses, in place of the AB 444 money. The Committee is working with the Administration and the Legislature to ensure that the AB 444 monies are provided to fund the agreement, as promised by Governor Wilson at the December press conference and as originally and unanimously intended by the State Legislature when it approved AB 444 in 1989.

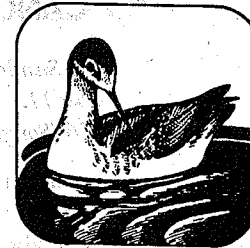
Overall, the agreement remains an important step in efforts to secure resolution of the controversy over water diversions from Mono Lake. The Committee has consistently pointed out that other ecosystems, like the San Francisco Bay Delta, do not need to be sacrificed in order to replace L.A.'s "lost" Mono diversions. DWP is wrong when it says that it has no other choice than to make additional purchases of water from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California to keep its supply whole.

Los Angeles has a wealth of water in its proposed conservation and reclamation programs. The provision of State funding for these projects only underscores that it is possible, as Councilwoman Ruth Galanter writes, to *"secure a workable water future for us all"* — one that ensures that the real needs of both Los Angeles and Mono Lake are met. 

*Martha Davis is the Mono Lake Committee's Executive Director. She, along with MLC Board members Tom Soto and Ed Manning, was extensively involved in the AB 444 agreement negotiations, and she plans, someday, to catch up on her sleep.*



# 1994 Mono Lake Foundation Summer Field Classes



## Human History

### GAVELS AND GRAVELS: A CREEKSIDE HISTORY OF RESTORATION AND LITIGATION

*Ilene Mandelbaum; June 4, September 10; \$40/person \$35/MLC member.*

Take a one-day tour of DWP's diversion dams, the creeks flowing into the lake, and the court-ordered restoration work. See what you have been reading about all these years. Ilene, the MLC Associate Director, will explain the involved legal battle and show you the results.

### PAIUTE CULTURE TODAY AND YESTERDAY

*Lucy Parker; August 27-28; \$80/person \$65 MLC member, plus \$25 for materials.*

Your instructor will teach you about the lifestyles and traditions of the Kuzedika (Mono Lake Paiute). Lucy is of Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Paiute, and Pomo descent. She will demonstrate traditional basketry techniques using willows and tule. Students will focus on preparing these materials and choose a coiled or twined basket project.

## Natural History

### BIRDS OF THE MONO BASIN

*Dave Shuford; June 4-5; \$80/person \$65/MLC member.*

Dave Shuford of Point Reyes Bird Observatory is a master birder and patient instructor. Beginners, as well as experts, will enjoy this intimate introduction to Mono's birdlife. We will learn to identify approximately 70 species by plumage and song, and to understand their roles in our environment.

### WILDFLOWERS OF THE MONO BASIN

*Mark Bagley; July 23-24; \$80/person \$65/MLC member.*

From Mono's shores to alpine meadows, few places on earth rival the colorful magnificence of Mono's summer wildflower bloom. Mark Bagley, a professional botanist, will introduce you to at least a dozen different plant communities and teach you to identify their flowers, trees, and shrubs. The class will hike several miles at elevations up to 10,000 feet.

### FALL BIRD MIGRATION OF THE EASTERN SIERRA

*Dave Shuford; August 6-7; \$80/person \$65/MLC member.*

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. This is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Reservoir. Your instructor is well acquainted with the birds and where to find them.



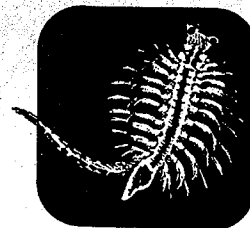
## WEEKEND CANOE TOURS

*Every Saturday and Sunday at 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11 a.m.; 1 hour.*

*June 11 to September 11.*

*Adults \$12, kids \$6 (Sorry, no kids under 4).*

Join your expert guides for natural history from a unique perspective: the lake itself. Starting at Navy Beach (near South Tufa), you will canoe through tufa spires along Mono's shoreline and learn about this ancient, life-productive lake. Reservations are strongly recommended for these one-hour tours and can be made by calling (619) 647-6595 (except Mondays and Tuesdays). Special group tours can be arranged. All participants must wear the life jackets provided and obey safety rules. Please arrive 20 minutes before departure time.



## Photography

### MONO - BODIE PHOTOGRAPHY

*Clinton Smith; July 8-10; \$200/person \$165/MLC member.*

The group will spend the first day exploring the ghost town of Bodie. At sunset participants will be allowed inside buildings closed to the public. The final two days will be spent experiencing and photographing tufa groves, aspen-lined canyons, volcanoes, and other unique features of the Mono Basin. Clinton's classes are not photo tours; rather, they are geared to stimulate thinking and sensitivity. The class is loosely structured and open to all levels of expertise. Participants are required to have a fully adjustable camera.

### MONO BASIN FALL PHOTOGRAPHY

*Jim Stimson; October 14-16 (meets 4 p.m. Friday); \$110/person \$90/MLC member.*

We will explore various locations along Mono Lake, as well as photograph the autumn colors in nearby canyons. Discussions will cover composition and exposure techniques in the Eastern Sierra's diverse lighting conditions. Other topics include the Zone System, visualization, filtering, and developing a personal vision. The workshop is for all levels of enthusiastic color or black and white photographers with a fully adjustable camera.

## Registration

Come join our field trips exploring creekbeds and tufa towers, ghost towns and wildflowers, seabirds and sagebrush. Travel by car and foot through one of the world's most paradoxical landscapes.

Classes are limited to fifteen people. Participants must sign a liability release form. If a class receives less than six participants, the class will be cancelled two weeks in advance — you will receive a full refund. The elevation of Lee Vining is 6700 feet; check with your doctor if you have a medical condition exacerbated by high altitude.

Payment may be by VISA, MasterCard, or personal check payable to the Mono Lake Foundation. If you cancel three weeks before the class starting date your payment will be refunded (less a \$10 processing fee). No refunds made after that date, but tuition can be applied to another class in 1994. Gift certificates are available.

### REGISTER BY PHONE

Call Sally Gaines at (619) 647-6496 (7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.)

### REGISTER BY MAIL

Include the following information and mail to: Mono Lake Foundation, P.O. Box 153, Lee Vining, California 93541.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card number (or check) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of class(es) and number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

# Restoration Technical Committee restructured, begins 1994 planning for streams

**A** reformulated Restoration Technical Committee (RTC) is working under court direction to plan the 1994 stream restoration season. RTC members, which include the Mono Lake Committee, have approved a budget of \$950,000 for the year and are debating how to spend the money. The restoration of Mono Lake's tributary streams is funded by the Department of Water and Power (DWP).

The Committee is seeking agreement on at least three points: the continuation of work on Lee Vining Creek, the beginning of earnest work on Rush Creek, and the implementation of a monitoring program to evaluate restoration progress. While Lee Vining Creek has seen the rewatering of dry, historic, stream channels and the digging of pools in washed-out areas, Rush Creek has undergone relatively little restoration to date.

The Committee's hope is that the RTC will see the wisdom of re-introducing water into now-dry abandoned channels in the Rush Creek "bottomlands," bringing back some of the historic abundance of fish, waterfowl, and vegetation. Construc-

tion projects such as pool excavation and channel rewatering typically take place during the low-flow period in the late summer.

Stream restoration in the Mono Basin proceeds due to a 1990 Third District Court ruling that DWP must restore the "historic fisheries" that were lost due to the illegal desiccation of Lee Vining, Parker, Walker, and Rush creeks. Judge Terrance Finney, of the Eldorado County Superior Court, is in charge of implementing the higher court's decision; he has ordered that the "conditions which benefited the fishery" be restored, recognizing the impediments to restoring once-vital fisheries without first repairing their degraded habitat.

The RTC is appointed by Judge Finney to direct the actual restoration work that occurs on Mono's damaged creeks and includes the Mono Lake Committee, the Department of Water and Power, California Trout, the California Department of Fish and Game, the National Audubon Society, and three fishery and restoration experts. Both the U.S. Forest Service and the State Water Resources Control Board attend meetings as contributing, but non-voting, members.

In the past, the need for unanimous approval of a project often left the RTC unable to move ahead without the court's intervention (many votes were 4 to 1, with DWP against the proposed project). In the late summer of

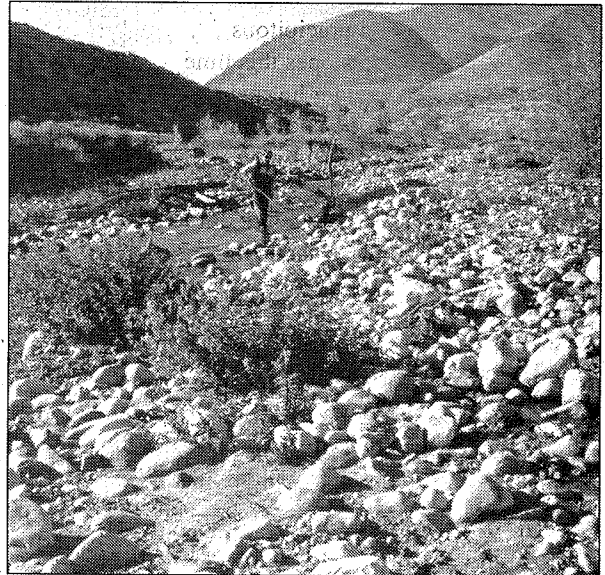


Photo by Ilene Mandelbaum  
**Lee Vining Creek in 1991. Years of diversions dried the creek, killing riparian vegetation; sudden releases of water washed out the channel, destroying fish habitat and carrying away soil.**

1993, Judge Finney reformulated the RTC in an attempt to solve the continuing stalemate.

Three scientific experts were added to the panel, chosen by the judge from a roster of names submitted by the member parties. The new RTC members are Dr. Richard Ridenhour, Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the College of Natural Resources, Humboldt State University; Dr. William Trush, Director of the Humboldt State University Institute for River Ecosystems; and Chris Hunter, of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department and author of *Better Trout Habitat: A Guide to Stream Restoration and Management*. Six of eight votes are now required to proceed with a project.

The RTC meets monthly with the help of a court-appointed facilitator. The panel is currently orienting the new scientific members to the work at hand, a lengthy process because discussion of restoration can only occur when all parties are given the opportunity to hear (and dispute) information. Look for summer plans and further updates in the summer *Newsletter*.

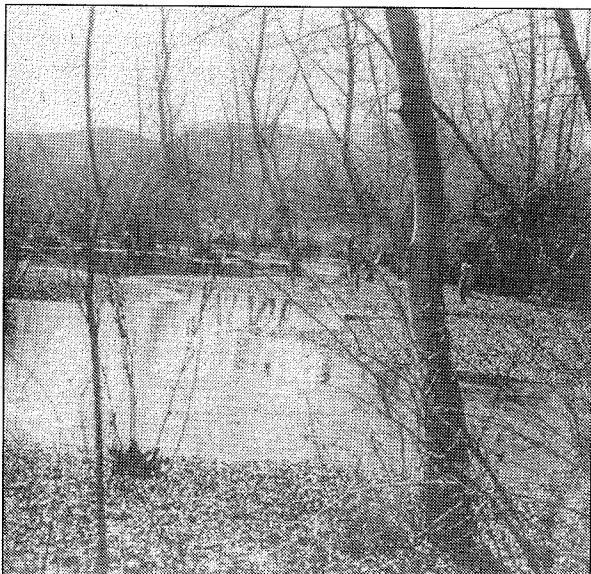


Photo from the Aiken case files  
**Lower Rush Creek before diversions. The complex stream ecosystem provided for waterfowl, mammals, and other wildlife in addition to fish.**

# Mono Basin Journal

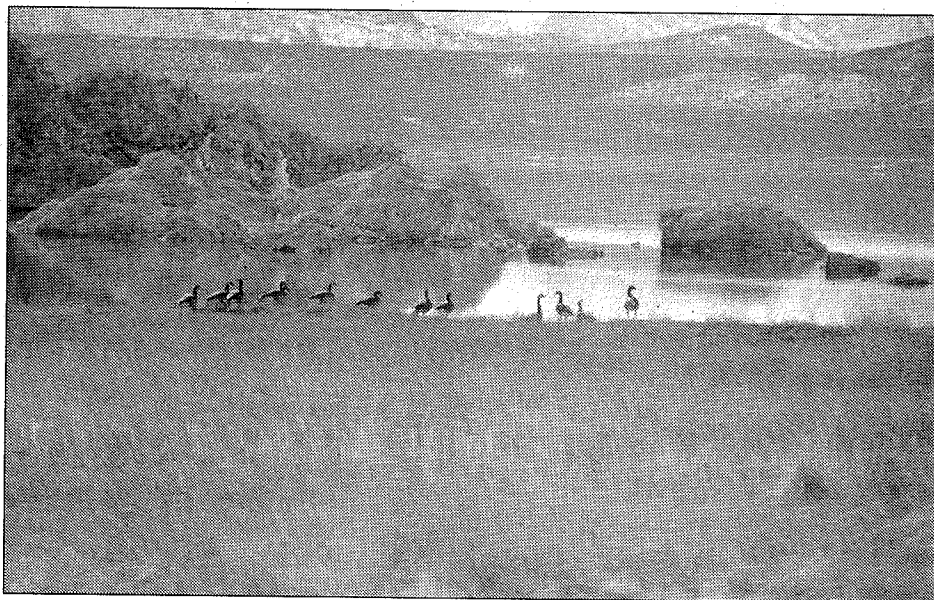
A roundup of lesser known events at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Orion walks the precipitous Eastern Sierra slopes this time of year. All winter he spent cold nights aloft watching snow flurry down on the Mono Basin, but now he walks behind town just after sunset, hinting of trails and hikes to come this summer. As the night progresses he disappears behind the mountains and the spring stars take over.

Early one morning in March, red-winged blackbirds showed up in town, bringing song to the streets. Down at the County Park they call from leafless willows and the tops of tufa, planning their families.


Closer to the shore they are sometimes drowned out by the honks of Canada Geese, common (but not numerous) Mono Lake visitors. Waddling at the water's edge, they suddenly lift off, flapping and honking into the distance. In the air with them are the first California gulls of the season. They flew over a snow-bound Sierra in early March and now can be seen in the



Canada Geese at County Park. Their numbers were much greater before diversions.

distance, white dots flying over Negit.

Winter is not forgotten, despite the signs of spring. I saw, one night, a waterfall over Mono, five thousand feet tall. A full moon rose into a snow-filled sky and slipped behind dark, low clouds.

I ventured out of my house just in time to see light sifting down like flour through the snow, forming a lightfall which splattered onto Mono Lake's surface. I turned away for a moment, looked back, and it was gone. 

## Committee needs computers, equipment

Help the Mono Lake Committee improve our office efficiency! Here's our "wish list;" please help if you can.

✿ 386 or higher IBM compatible computer with monitor: replace our IBM XT from the dark ages and its ailing hard disk with a computer capable of running Windows and spreadsheet software.

✿ RAM: 4 or 8 meg chips for Macintosh (72 pin, fast-paged mode, 80ns or faster), 1 meg chips for IBM compatibles; computers may double in speed every 18 months, but the MLC's sure don't... help us catch up with the latest software.

✿ Removable cartridge drives: Macintosh compatible SyQuest drive and/or cartridges, IBM compatible SyQuest or Bernoulli drives; for use with our sales, financial, and publications computers to store ever-growing amounts of data.

✿ Tape backup unit: 100 Mb or larger, for IBM compatible computers.


✿ Adjustable stool: for use at a drafting-table-height desktop

✿ Color monitor: 20" or 21" color monitor, Macintosh compatible; for use in production of the *Newsletter*, *Mono Lake Guidebook*, and other Committee publications.

✿ Scanner: Microtek Scanmaker IIxe, HP ScanJet IIcx, or equivalent, Macintosh compatible; for use in producing the *Newsletter* and other publications.

✿ Color television: 1990 or newer, 27" or larger; for showing videos in our Information Center slideshow room.

✿ Combined TV/VCR unit: 1990 or newer and not too big; for use in the store to preview videos for sale.

Contact Stacy Brown at 818-972-2025 if you have one of these items to donate! Your donation, if made to the Mono Lake Foundation, is tax-deductible. Thank you! 

# Moonlight

by Gary Nelson

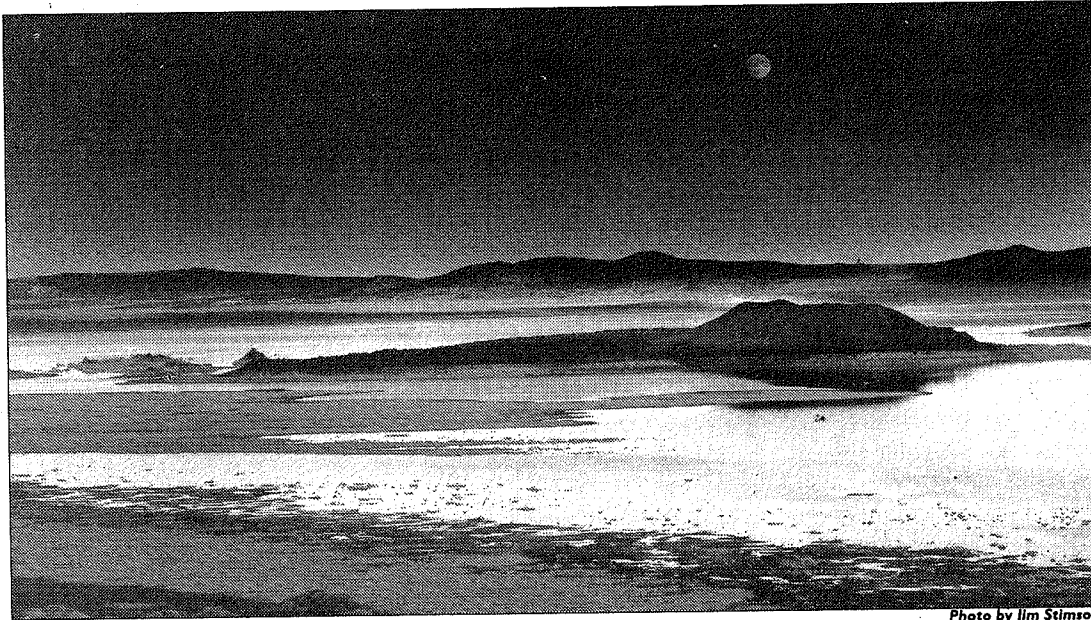


Photo by Jim Stimson

On winter nights us locals have Mono Lake pretty much to ourselves. Just twenty five miles south of here in Mammoth skiers eat, drink, and dance, oblivious to the faint white glow growing ever brighter behind the mountains to the east.

Meanwhile, I'm trying to back our canoe trailer down a dirt road toward the lake. "Sure is easier in the daylight," I mutter beneath my rapidly condensing breath. "Looks good Gar," shouts my friend Sue. I shut off the truck and get out to see an amusing sight. My friends, all bundled up like polyester polar bears, are cavorting along the snow covered shoreline, giddy at simply finding themselves in such a strange frozen place. And at night, no less.

A few minutes of fumbling and grunting later, the canoes are lined out along the shore, ready to launch. The sight of such a huge expanse of cold water awes everyone into silence. I take advantage of this to tell them to stay together, and be careful.

Quietly, we shove off onto the salty, subfreezing waters. All at once we are aware of an aura surrounding us. The moon has finally risen! The waters of the lake, leaden and gray only a few seconds ago, now dance with sparkles of pure white light. Although a few of my friends remain silent, most of us renew that most ancient response to this grand spectacle by howling at the moon like deranged coyotes.


The silence of our cruise is soon shattered by the sound of the lead canoe breaking through a thin layer of ice, spring water that has frozen on top of the salty lake brine before it could mix.

Ahead, in the distance, we can see the outlines of tufa spires.

I take the lead, and guide the canoes in towards the tufa grove on a course calculated to ensure that my friends' first close-up view of the towers will be impressive.

One by one we glide into a small bay surrounded by huge tufa towers. Their intricate surface features are illuminated by eerie, shimmering moonlight that is reflected up onto them by the water lapping at their bases. These moving moonbeams have a kinetic effect upon the tufa, transforming the stationary calcite into a ghostly pagan dance of shadow and light. Stowing our paddles, we simply float entranced by the spell of the winter moon.

After a while, the passage of time intrudes into our consciousness and I realize that we have hardly yet begun to explore this wondrous grove. As we paddle out of the bay and round a point I notice the shining, snowy crest of the Sierra. The top of Mt. Dana is clearly visible. It was from this summit that David Gaines got his first view of Mono Lake. He used to enjoy canoeing, and was the first to use canoe excursions to introduce people to Mono Lake as a way of expressing his concerns for its future. This is the tradition we try to carry on with the Mono Lake Foundation canoe tours.

But tonight's excursion is pure fun, or perhaps I should say lunacy. Certainly all of my local friends love this lake as much as I do. The moonlit waters are much more eloquent in their own defense than I could ever be. 

*Gary Nelson runs the Mono Lake Foundation Canoe Tour program. He is preparing for the summer season and wants our insurance company to know he never really canoes at night.*



# Staff and Board departures

**W**ith the close of the Water Board hearings we bid a sad farewell to the Committee's Science Associate extraordinaire, John Cain. John joined the Committee in early 1991 specifically to assist with the Board's EIR process on Mono Lake.

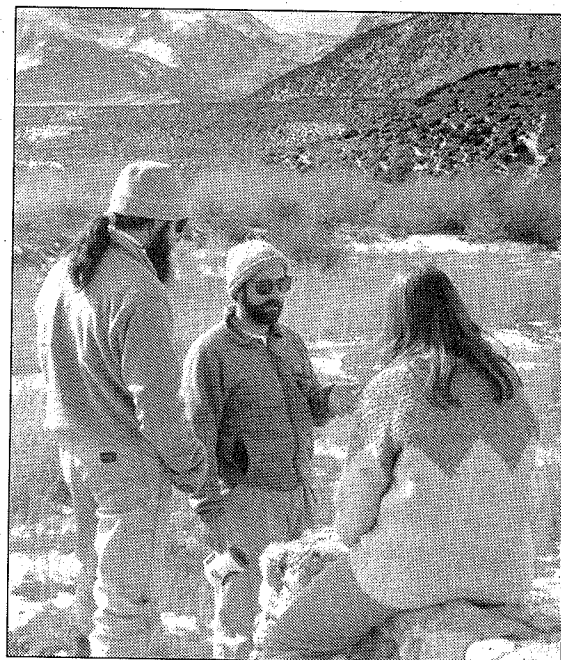
His contributions to the Lake extended far beyond the voluminous legal documents he helped our attorneys to prepare, ranging from the inspiration (and muscle) to refinish the floors in the newly remodeled Information Center to his efforts in wetlands restoration on Mono Lake's north shore. Thank you, John, for the fish philosophy, gourmet pizzas, good humor and years of hard, effective work. We will all miss you.

We also say farewell to Sharon Mundel, the Committee's Mail and Membership Coordinator, who left MLC in March. Sharon departed after the earthquake and is now looking for a position closer to her new home.

We wish Sharon the best in all her future endeavors.

Committee Board of Directors member Dave Phillips is also leaving due to the demands of his current job. Dave, the Executive Director of Earth Island Institute, has been with the Committee since 1981; his commitments at Earth Island, where he works intensely on whale protection among other issues, already require more time than he has.

Dave convinced Bay Area journalist Harold Gilliam to do one of the first stories on Mono Lake, and he fondly remembers camping on Mono Lake's shores. Equally memorable, he says, was the time Committee consulting hydrologist Peter Vorster lost Dave's car keys in a deep offshore spring while swimming.

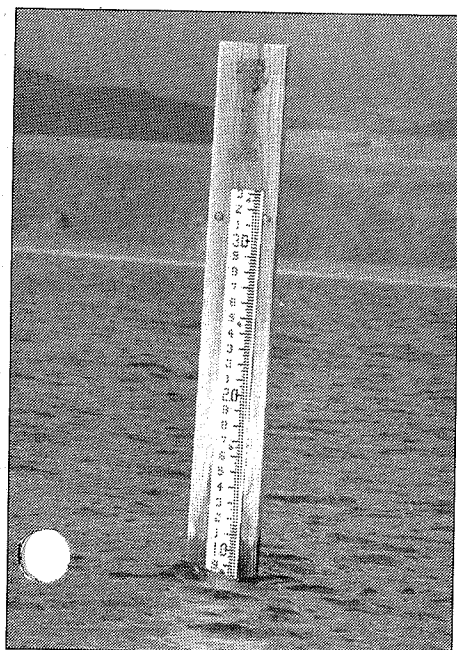


Science Associate John Cain explaining the restoration of Mono Basin streams. He plans to enter graduate school at U.C. Berkeley in the fall; we wish him all the best.



## Lake Level Watch

# A disappointingly dry winter at Mono



**T**he 1993-94 snowpack is like a bad dream after last year's wet winter. The only significant snowfall of the season came in December and February, making for a very dry winter. By March, no snow was left in Lee Vining and temperatures climbed to record highs — 70° on March 14, the highest ever recorded for a March day.

Unless unexpected precipitation arrives soon, 1993-94 will be drier than any of the recent drought years. Although some reservoirs brimmed last spring and Mono Lake rose about a foot due to above-average runoff, it appears that the drought is not over. In fact researcher Scott Stine, who has conducted extensive work at Mono Lake, suggests in a forthcoming article in *Nature* that the limited precipitation we call drought

may in fact be the more normal pattern of the last 1,000 years.

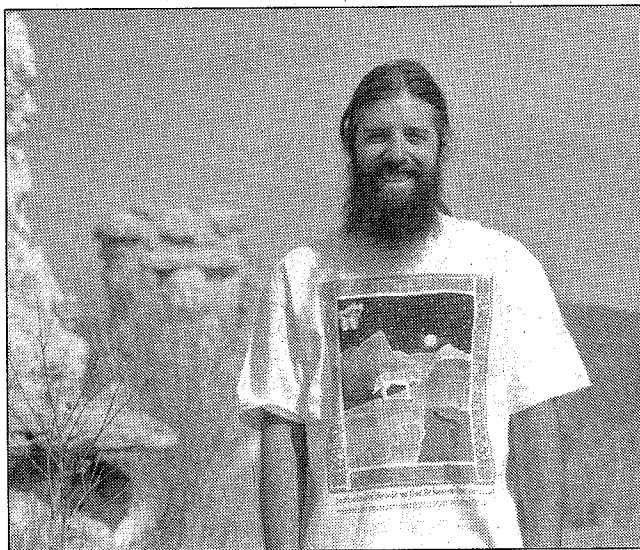
For the moment, Mono Lake stands at 6375.5 feet above sea level, one and a half feet below the level set by the court's temporary injunction in 1990. The failure of the lake to rise to the court-ordered level, despite the cessation of diversions by DWP, is a further indication that the higher the lake level, the safer the ecosystem will be from the effects of drought.

Unfortunately, visitors can expect to see more of the landbridge this year. Committee consulting hydrologist Peter Vorster predicts that the lake may rise slightly this spring but anticipates a drop to below 6375.0 feet by year's end. The lowest the lake has ever been is 6372.0 feet, in 1982, and we hope to *not* see that level again.

# FROM THE MONO LAKE COMMITTEE



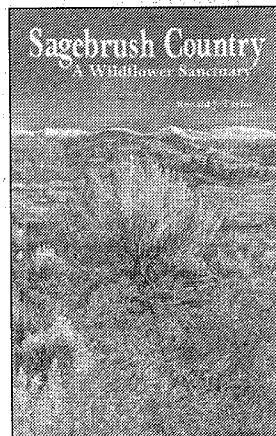
# INFORMATION CENTER AND BOOKSTORE



## NEW! DESERT WOLF T-SHIRT

The colorful pastels found in contemporary Southwest art splash across this high-quality shirt that carries a message: "In the silence of the wild, we find the home

we lost in the city." The shirt design includes information on how to help save our endangered deserts. Short-sleeve, in white or ash; preshrunk cotton; adult sizes S through XL: \$15.00



## SAGEBRUSH COUNTRY: A WILDFLOWER SANCTUARY By Ronald J. Taylor

A thorough field guide that "explores the elegance of the sagebrush steppe . . . the colorful spring and fall flowers [and their] wondrous adaptations...." Beautiful color photographs supplement the non technical text that describes the abundant

plant life in the high deserts of the American West. Logically organized and with an informative introduction, this attractive book is a perfect companion for your explorations of the Mono Basin or anywhere else in "the land of bitterbrush and coyotes."

Mountain Press; paperback; 211 pages, illustrated: \$12.00

## Sale planned for MLC store

by Rick Knepp

As beautiful, peaceful, and enjoyable as the Mono Basin is in the winter, by the middle of March most resident Monophiles are looking forward to spring and the return of warmer days, California gulls, avocets, wild iris, desert peach, and an occasional spring thunderstorm.

At the MLC Information Center and Bookstore, activity turns toward preparing for the busy summer season; a selection of books and gifts aimed at "the desert crowd" is on the shelves and spring cleaning will soon be under way. We have some exciting plans for new merchandise this summer, and that means creating

space for incoming goodies.

Should you find yourself wandering the Eastside after April 15, drop in and browse our "Desert Peach of a Spring Clearance Sale." Many overstocked and discontinued books, T-shirts, and gifts will be marked down from 10% to 50% (with a few real bargains at up to 75% off list!). The sale will continue through Memorial Day or until the merchandise is gone, whichever comes first . . . we suspect it will be the latter.

As the *Newsletter* goes to press, the 1995 Mono Lake Calendar is on its way to the printer. Noted writer-photographer

Galen Rowell's illustrated essay leads off a collection of striking photographs by Jim Stimson, Larry Ulrich, David Muench, and other leading landscape photographers. For those who can't wait until 1995, the calendar should be available in the Information Center — or by mail order — in mid-May.

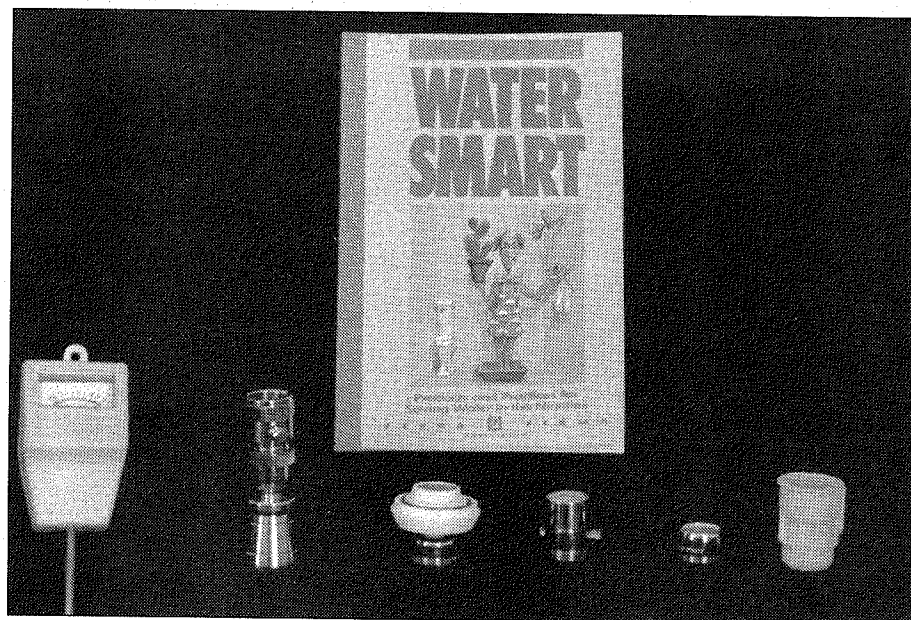
Retailers interested in carrying the calendar in their outlets should contact Rick Knepp in the Lee Vining office. What we hope will be a favorable Water Board decision is expected this summer, creating visibility that should bolster sales. Special publication wholesale discounts end May 27, so don't dally!

# FROM THE MONO LAKE COMMITTEE



# INFORMATION CENTER AND BOOKSTORE

If you haven't yet retrofitted your older home with these water-saving devices, now is the time! It is estimated that use of the shower head, toilet dam, and either of the aerators by a family of four could reduce consumption by over 43,000 gallons a year! Be a part of the solution to water problems in your home (and, especially if you live in the West, your area has them). Save money on utility bills and now save more than 40% on the devices themselves! Buy any three and add *How to Get Water Smart*, the definitive guide to home water conservation, a \$9.95 value, for just \$4.00.



**GARDEN MOISTURE METER**  
Avoid over- (or under-) watering. Easy-to-read gauge is accompanied by a list of acceptable moisture levels for many common plants.  
Regularly \$6.95, now \$4.00.

**FULL-PRESSURE SHOWER HEAD**  
with on/off push-button.  
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**FAUCET AERATOR** with 360° swivel head and push/pull stream/spray selector.  
Regularly \$6.95, now \$4.00.

**FIXED-POSITION FAUCET AERATOR**  
with on/off push-button.  
Regularly \$6.95, now \$4.00.

**BATHROOM FAUCET AERATOR.**  
Regularly \$1.95, now \$1.00.

**TOILET DAM** (not pictured) fits standard 7 gallon toilet tank.  
Regularly \$6.95, now \$4.00.

**HOW TO GET WATER SMART**  
Great tips for saving water in every aspect of your daily life. Terra Firma Publishing; paperback; 128 pages, illustrated. \$9.95, or \$4.00 with purchase of any three devices.

*Order conservation devices, books, T-shirts, or anything else from our Lee Vining store!*

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ County (for sales tax) \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Check (to Mono Lake Committee)

## SHIPPING RATES

Up to \$10	\$3.50
10 - \$25	\$4.00
25 - \$50	\$5.00
Over \$50	\$6.00

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Use the handy membership envelope!*

\$3.00 charge for additional mailing addresses

Quantity	Item	Price	Total
	Desert Wolf T-shirt	\$15.00	
	Sagebrush Country	\$12.00	
	Showerhead with on/off button	\$8.95	
	Faucet aerator with swivel head	\$4.00	
	Toilet dam	\$4.00	
	Garden moisture meter	\$4.00	
	Bathroom Aerator	\$1.00	
	How to Get Water Smart	(varies)	
Shipping (see left):			
Subtotal			
CA residents add applicable sales tax:			
Total			

Phone orders: (619) 647-6595

Fax orders: (619) 647-6377

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

# Earthquake rattles Committee's Southern California office

by Alan Magree

The Committee's Southern California office was rocked by the January 17 Northridge earthquake. Only 15 miles from the epicenter, the office suffered modest damage from the early morning trembler. When I arrived at our building nearly six hours after the quake, hardhat in hand, the structure was dark and empty. After a quick inspection of the exterior revealed no apparent damage, I ventured inside.

Our offices are on the second floor of a two story building and I anticipated quite a mess. When I opened the door, I faced the worst of the damage immediately: our photocopier had been thrown from its homemade stand and destroyed during the shaker. The copier — a demo unit which came to us at a one-time special price — was uninsured, and represents a loss of about three thousand dollars. Worse yet, we were just about to make our final payment on what had been a reliable machine.

As I inspected the offices, I found that a computer monitor had fallen off its perch and was wedged precariously between a window and a desk. Shelves had been knocked over, files scattered, coffee mugs broken, and plants de-potted. Books had fallen from their shelves, stacks of legal documents were jumbled on the floor, and file cabinets had been jostled open. The only permanent damage, however, was to the copier.

All the staff were unhurt, and only two staff residences suffered damage. We filtered back into work over the next couple of days to pick up our offices and resume our normal duties amidst swarms of aftershocks that kept everyone on edge. We quickly discovered that office work goes very slowly without a copier and we spent two weeks driving to a nearby copy center before we could purchase another new copier. Now — other than longer commutes, anxiety caused by the after-

shocks, and laughter at the sight of me in my hard hat — work has largely returned to normal.

*Alan Magree is the Committee's Development Director. The staff agrees that he is quite debonair in his hardhat.*

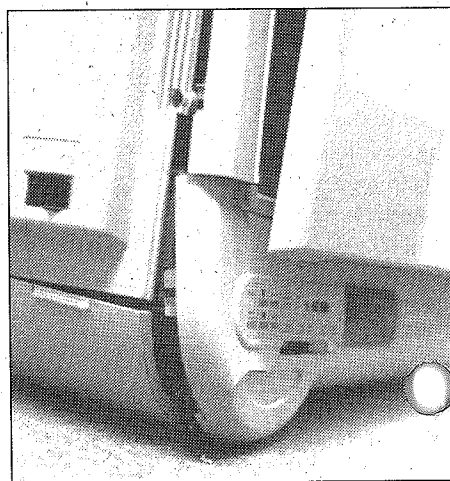


Photo by Alan Magree



Preparation for the fifteenth annual Los Angeles to Mono Lake Bike-A-Thon is underway! The Bike-A-Thon is the Committee's largest fundraising event, raising up to \$100,000 for the Committee's efforts to save Mono Lake. Participants cycle the 350 miles from Los

## Annual Bike-a-thon gearing up

Angeles to Mono Lake carrying vials of water dipped from the reflecting pools at DWP. The water is poured back into the lake at the conclusion of the ride in a symbolic Rehydration Ceremony.

This year's ride will begin on Monday, August 29, at DWP headquarters and arrive at Mono Lake on Saturday, September 3. All it takes to participate in the 'Thon is a bike and an interest in protecting Mono Lake (although we recommend some training, too). The Bike-A-Thon is not a race or a competition; while some riders routinely cycle hundreds of miles a week, others simply ride their bike to work. The Bike-A-Thon is the group effort of committed individuals who want to make a statement about Mono's destruction and raise funds to stop it. And if you don't feel up to riding in the 'Thon,

consider helping out as part of the support team that travels the Highway 395 route with the riders.

Bike-A-Thon riders raise money for the Committee by gathering sponsors for their journey. At least \$300 in sponsorship is required of each rider; many raise over \$1,000 each. The Committee provides rest stops with water and snacks, campsites, and support vehicles. Riders receive a pre-start meal, dinner and breakfast in Bishop, dinner in Mammoth, and a picnic lunch at Mono Lake as part of the ride but are otherwise responsible for their own meals.

For more information on riding or assisting with the 'Thon, contact Tina Sanders in the Committee's Burbank office at (818) 972-2025. Pre-registration forms are available, and it's never too early to start recruiting sponsors!



# Uzbekistani scientists, Chilean film crew visit Mono Lake

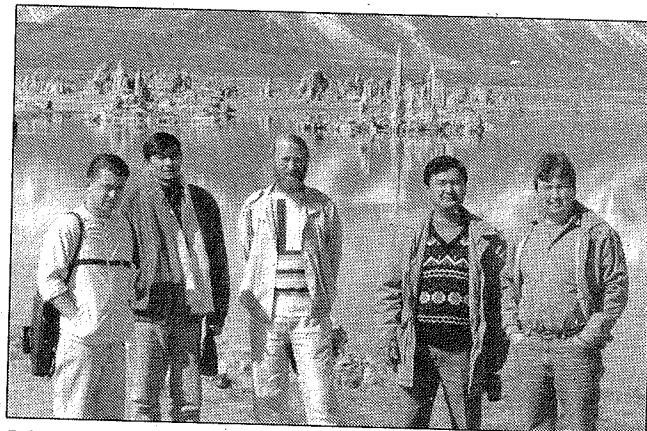
Ever popular with American and foreign visitors on vacation, Mono Lake has also gained international renown for the remarkable solutions being forged for its protection. While the precedents set at Mono for the protection of the public trust have ramifications throughout California, people come from across the globe to learn the Mono Lake story. Two groups recently traveled from afar to learn more about the Mono Lake controversy; one came from the former Soviet Union, the other from Chile.

In March, a team of scientists from the Aral Sea International Committee (ASIC) visited Mono to learn about the lake ecology and the Mono Lake Committee. The scientists, from the former Soviet Union states of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are working on water, land-use, and public health issues relating to the Aral Sea. Their trip to America includes visits to the Salton Sea, Owens Lake, Mono Lake, and Pyramid Lake, in addition to a four-day conference in San Diego.

The Aral Sea, once the world's fourth largest lake, faces problems much worse

than Mono. Since 1960 it has shrunk 75% due to the diversion of its tributary rivers for the highly inefficient irrigation of millions of acres of cotton. Residents of the area face severe toxic dust storms, degraded water quality, the destruction of the once-sustainable fishery (all 24 fish species in the Aral Sea have been extirpated), and the loss of a valuable resource. ASIC members, who still face opened mail and censorship in their home countries, communicate with scientists around the world using e-mail.

Also taking note of Mono Lake was a documentary film crew from Chile. Back in mid-November the four person group spent a several days at the lake with Executive Director Martha Davis. Hoping to inspire Chilean citizens, the crew used Mono Lake as a case study of how citizens



Scientists from Central Asia visited Mono Lake in March, hoping to take home ideas for the protection of the Aral Sea. Pictured left to right are Timur Raxackberdiev, geomorphologist Marat Daniyarov, herpetologist Olag Tsaruk, mathematician Nagmet Aimbetov, and wind energy engineer and co-founder of the ASIC Yusup Kamalov.

can make a difference in the protection of natural areas.

The natural link between Mono Lake and Chile, forged annually by 140,000 or so migrating phalaropes, made the lake a perfect case study. The show airs on Chilean television this spring. We wish both Chile and the Aral Sea luck with their respective environmental issues.



## Travel to Holland and help save Mono Lake



- Explore the Dutch Friesland Island nature reserves
- Try "Wadlopen," or mud walking, between islands
- Take birdwalks in woods and dune country
- Make bicycle excursions in Sweden
- Sail across the Zuiderzee
- Air, accommodations, all excursions, and most meals included
- June 30 — July 14, 1994; \$3,495 per person
- All profits go to the Mono Lake Committee

*To make reservations, or for more information, contact*

**Cal Nature Tours**

**7310 SVL Box, Victorville, CA 92392**

**(619) 241-2322**

# Speakers' Bureau looking for volunteers

by Stacey Simon

The Mono Lake Committee is looking for devoted Monophiles who are not shy about speaking in public to help us share the Mono Lake story with people around Los Angeles.


As a part of our Los Angeles Speakers' Bureau, volunteers present the Mono Lake slideshow to groups which are interested in protecting and restoring Mono Lake. Typical audiences are schools, community groups, and organizations like the Audubon Society and Sierra Club.

Ever since David Gaines put together the first slideshow and took it on the road in 1978, our volunteer speakers have

helped to teach thousands of people across California about Mono's plight. In Los Angeles, speakers aid citizens in discovering that they can help solve Mono's woes by conserving water in their homes and businesses and by supporting citywide projects such as wastewater recycling.

If you live in Southern California and are interested in becoming a Speakers' Bureau volunteer, or if you would like to request a speaker for your organization's meeting or for a school event, call Stacey Simon in our Burbank office at (818) 972-2025. The Committee supplies volunteers with the slideshow, the text, and the

training. You provide some of your time (the commitment is flexible with your schedule) and your enthusiasm to teaching people about long term solutions which will protect Mono Lake and its ecosystem for future generations.

Join our current and past Speakers' Bureau members and become an integral part of the effort to save Mono Lake! 

*Stacey Simon is the Committee's Public Education Coordinator. Stacey began her Committee career as an intern and looks forward to another summer of tours and sun at Mono Lake.*

## New membership list company promises better results, fewer errors

The Mono Lake Committee recently chose a new company to maintain the Committee's vital membership records. The Committee made the change in response to the numerous errors made by our previous company and the inconvenience they caused members.

Response Management Technology (RMT), of Berkeley, took over the list in February, 1994. The company, which also handles membership lists for Tree People and the Sempervirens Fund, has a strong background in the management of records like the Committee's, which require frequent updating and attention to detail.

Committee members should review the mailing label on the upcoming "Save Mono Lake" Free Drawing mailing, which should arrive in your mailbox in the next few weeks. If you find errors in the information on the label, please accept our apologies and correct them on the enclosed card. Pop it into the enclosed envelope (enter the drawing, too, if you like) and send it to the Committee for correction.


While RMT will strive to maintain the accuracy of records, the Committee's membership list is still contains errors made by the previous list company. The data RMT received contained all the errors made during the past year, all of which must be corrected. The Committee recently had RMT re-enter the information from over 10,000 renewals and donations from 1993 in an effort to correct the worst of the mistakes that occurred. Now, inaccuracies remain in only 5% of the records, which still causes an inconvenience for some 900 MLC members.

The Committee's problems stem from our choice last year of a company just beginning to expand into the type of record management we require. They were not prepared for the attention to detail and the volume of updates the Committee membership list requires.

The failure of data entry operators to advance members' renewal dates lead to much confusion, as did the inadvertent loss of members' full names and other informa-

tion. Unfortunately, even when errors were noted and the company was asked to correct the work, their corrections contained further mistakes.

The move to RMT should solve the problems with the membership list. The Committee apologizes to members who have received multiple renewal notices, found their name and address garbled on mailing labels, or who simply stopped receiving mail from us. "Our recent bad experience taught us a lot about the value of a well established list maintenance company, although we certainly wish we didn't have to learn the hard way," concludes Committee Development Director Alan Magree.

"A lot of research went into the choice of our new list company, and we expect to have the situation back to normal this summer. I know how frustrating it is to get multiple renewal notices, and sometimes it may seem like the Committee isn't going for contributions. This is not the case, and we're working hard to prove it." 

# Volunteers and donors support Committee

## In Memoriam

Charles Heyler of Portola Valley passed away recently. His love of the Sierra and the Mono Lake region was well known among his numerous friends; many have made gifts to the Committee in his memory. They are: **Katherine J. Sanjiyan** of San Carlos; **Drs. Jim and Pam Starr** of Portola Valley; **Wilbur and Marjorie Johnson** of Redwood City; **Tom and Mari Harrington** of San Mateo; **Ester Drees** of San Mateo; **Suzuye and Robert Shoda** of Foster City; **Mrs. Lyle Rasey** of San Mateo; **R. J. King** of San Mateo; **M. Alice McNamara** of San Mateo; **Mr. and Mrs. McMullen** of San Mateo; **Zanette A. Cornman** of Redwood City; **Robert K. Davis** of Long Beach; **Shirley M. Hairrell** of San Mateo; **M. S. Mosher** of Carmel; **Harriet B.** of Foster City; **Louis Wollenberger** of Portola Valley; **Mary Nicewander** of San Mateo; **Helen E. Olson** of San Mateo; **Eileen Gruggen** of Burlingame; **Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Williams** of Belmont; **Dr. and Mrs. Francis W. Michel** of Palo Alto; **Wilma and Sydney Marchant** from Palo Alto; **Ann Coleman** of Santa Cruz; **George and Josephine White** of Portola Valley; **Miss Ardath Bierlein** of Mountain View; **Mrs. D. Hibbard** of Menlo Park; **Ms. Marcelle Ashby**, a resident of Hillsborough; **Mrs. Fred Nason** of Beverly Hills; and **Ms. Shaz Tabata** from San Mateo. Thanks to all for the thoughtful gifts.

**Kathy Frank** of Reno, Nevada remembered **Robert A. Page** with a donation. **Annie Nilsson**, a resident of Carmel, made a gift to the Committee in memory of her husband **Einar Nilsson**. Sunnyvale citizens **Clare and Jim Meyerson** made a donation in memory of brother **Howie Meyerson** on what would have been his 30th birthday. **Margaret Reslock**, of San Diego, re-

membered **Sydell Braverman** with a gift to the Committee. **Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Schneider**, who live in San Francisco, made a donation in memory of **Daniel V. Niedorf**. The **Ione Wostengard Family**, of Beaumont, made a donation in loving memory of **Kathryn Finn Davis**. And **Donna, Chet, and Ross Thomas**, from Brooklyn, Wisconsin, remembered the members of the **Yates Family** with a donation to the Committee.

## Special Thanks

**Peter and Carlene Mennen**, from St. Helena, made a substantial gift to the Foundation. Mono Lake thanks you!

**James W. Bemis**, of Long Beach, wrote and set up several useful computer programs for the fundraising and mail and membership departments. Without his timely help this past winter we would have missed an important fundraising deadline.

Thanks also go out to the lovely and talented **Gregory Probst** for his good humor and tireless help in sending out calendars and thank you notes to our year-end donors.

**Calvin Yee**, of San Gabriel, graciously donated a previously owned laser printer for use in our Burbank office.

**Kensington Microware**, of San Mateo, gets thanks from the publications department. Their kind donation of a Turbo Mouse enables zippier mouse movement on the publications computer (and frees more desktop to pile papers on).

**Steve Patterson** and **Patterson Floor Coverings**, of Redwood City, made another donation of carpet squares to finish off a half-carpeted office. We love the carpet but hope we're finally done carpeting everything in the Lee Vining Information Center.

**Larry Breed**, of Palo Alto, made another appearance in Lee Vining and helped clean up (again) our tool room. He also gets kudos from our copier repair expert for building a removable step

allowing access to the back of the copier.


**Don Jackson**, ever active doing something for the Committee, has been recruiting new members for the Committee. Thanks Don!

**Sarah Taylor**, of Berkeley, has kindly volunteered her help in proof-reading newsletter articles (any remaining mistakes are ours).

**Rick Shull** and **Helen Constantine**, former Committee interns, showed true Monophilia when they returned to finish up a project from last year: building an information kiosk in front of the Committee's Lee Vining building. Rick and Helen will be married this summer overlooking Mono Lake and we wish them the best of luck in the future.

**Joanie Humphrey**, of Davis, has kindly lent her birding expertise to the reprinting the *Mono Basin Bird Checklist* in usable form.

**David Riley**, Vice-President of **Lowe Pro**, a manufacturer of custom camera bags for outdoor use, donated a camera bag to the Committee. We promise to do extensive field testing.

And **Patagonia**, the Ventura-based clothing manufacturer, has helped the Committee again by donating the digital typefaces used in our new logo. 

## Matched Gifts

**R. Edwin Streit**, a resident of Fresno, made a donation to the Foundation which will be matched by his employer, First Interstate Bank.

**William G. Dyer**, of Calistoga, sent in his support for Mono Lake; his donation will be matched by Sterling Vineyards.

Your employer may have a matching gift program; check with your company's human resources office. If so, every gift you make to the Mono Lake Foundation will be doubly effective!

# The Mono Lake Committee

## 9th Annual



Win up to four exquisite wine cellars,  
valued at over \$500 each!  
To insure excellent odds, only 250 tickets  
will be sold for each cellar.  
Tickets are available for \$50.

The drawing will be held May 21, 1994,  
following a spectacular dinner honoring George  
Peyton at the St. Francis Yacht Club, San Francisco.  
Dinner reservations are available for \$50 per person.  
Space is limited; dinner begins at 6:30 p.m.

For reservations or tickets,  
contact Tina Sanders at (818) 972-2025  
You need not be present at dinner to win a wine cellar

1 9 9 4

## "SAVE MONO LAKE" FREE DRAWING

Enter and Win Big for Mono Lake

### Grand Prize Trekking Adventure across the Grand Canyon

An extraordinary adventure for two! The  
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and camping in the Grand Canyon and make a  
daytrip to mystical Sedona, Arizona.

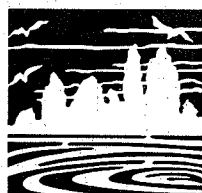
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