

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Summer 2004



Typically, summer is a season defined by warm weather and long days. Here in Lee Vining, summer is also defined by a marked increase in visitors. While the loss of the calm quiet of winter might be bittersweet, locals can definitely relate to the excitement that summer brings.

One of my personal favorite phenomena happens this time each year. When Tioga Pass opens the amount of traffic in town increases significantly, and the locals can get lost in the crowd. But even with (and maybe even because of) this increased buzz in town, locals make an extra effort in the summer to wave to each other and smile. It's almost as if that's how we keep the web of this community tight during the influx of new folks passing through. And don't get me wrong—we love the change and depend on visitors to be able to stay here year-round ourselves. But try this simple test: slow down as you drive through town and wave, or smile at someone as you walk down the street. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised to see the friendly response, and you'll get a glimpse of the true warmth of Lee Vining.

You'll feel that same warmth at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore, which also serves as the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce. Want to know a good place to go birding? Looking for a nice day hike? We can help you. We also have lots of information on Mono Lake—such as what has happened here in the past, and what is going on today.

In the same spirit we offer you the *Mono Lake Newsletter*. In this issue we've worked hard to address two of the frequently asked questions we get in the summer: Is Mono Lake Restored? Have the Creeks Recovered? Find the answers starting right here on page 3. We've also taken time to acknowledge that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the State Water Resources Board Order to save Mono Lake, so make sure to check out page 9. In the pages that follow you'll also find updates on our hot policy issues as well as the usual handful of goodies inspired by Mono Lake.

Have a wonderful summer, and we hope to see you in town or out and about around Mono Lake!

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director

COVER PHOTO BY VIC SMITH
SPHINX MOTH PHOTO BY KELLY MILLER



A white-lined sphinx moth caught in the act of extracting nectar from a larkspur flower. These moths, which can sometimes be mistaken for small hummingbirds, are often seen feeding at dusk in the Mono Basin. If you watch closely you can see their long proboscis, which can be over twice as long as their body, extend carefully into the flower.

Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.



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MONO LAKE
NEWSLETTER

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Is Mono Lake Restored? Have the Creeks Recovered?

Status Report of Restoration Ten Years After Decision 1631

by Lisa Cutting

It's been ten years since the California State Water Resources Control Board's landmark decision to limit Mono Basin water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP). That means ten years of returning flows to Mono Lake's tributary streams and ten years of a rising Mono Lake.

Included in the Water Board's historic decision was a mandate for DWP to develop and implement restoration plans in order to repair over 50 years of damage caused by water diversions.

During the past ten years the Committee has often been asked about the status of restoration—is the lake rising? Have the creeks recovered? Is Mono Lake restored? While much has been accomplished in the last decade, critical achievements are still necessary for a healthy future.

What is Restoration?

The scientists who developed the Mono Basin restoration plans relied upon the dictionary definition of the word restore: to bring back into existence or use; to bring back to an original state. Instead of attempting to just restore past appearances, the plans focused on restoring natural processes and functions, wherever possible, allowing nature to begin the healing process. For example, high flows at the right time of year would transport sediment downstream, which in turn would begin to rebuild the floodplain and provide a fertile substrate for streamside vegetation.

The goal of the restoration plans is to reestablish the habitat conditions and ecological processes that will enable the lake and streams to essentially restore themselves over time. The primary emphasis is on restoring natural processes to the fullest extent possible, although some damaged areas may not ever completely recover.

Prediversion Conditions

A key outcome of the 1994 Water Board proceedings was obtaining testimony that in essence pieced together the prediversion conditions. Historic photos, oral histories from long-time Mono Basin residents, and even some scientific sleuthing uncovered evidence that helped to create a fairly accurate picture of what the Basin was like before 1941. All of this information was important because it clearly laid out the "original state" that is the target of DWP restoration.

The Mono Basin has always been a rich and varied landscape. Before diversions, Mono Lake was a mecca for



Mono Lake's benchmark tufa, 1962, lake level 6394.



1968, lake level 6387.



1995, lake level 6378.



2003, lake level 6382.

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WALLACE WOOD, SR.

The County Road bridge over lush lower Lee Vining Creek, June 1946.

migratory shorebirds which capitalized on the rich food source of brine shrimp and alkali flies available in the lake's saline waters. Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl used the freshwater lagoons, lake-fringing wetlands, and stream deltas for refuge and feeding.

The streams flowed down from their High Sierra source, lining a meandering path with cottonwoods, willows, and other stream vegetation. As the streams approached Mono

Lake, their flows branched into a multiple channel system across the wide valley bottom. The high groundwater levels and addition of spring water inflow supported lush vegetation over a broad area—creating bottomland oases. This vegetation and spring flow in turn kept the streams cool and provided the habitat diversity needed for trout and other aquatic life to flourish.

The complexity of this inter-related system was all the more critical because it was situated in the Great Basin. The Great Basin is an arid area of sagebrush steppe and desert stretching from Mono Lake to Utah. Because this landscape was and still is cut off from the Pacific storms that bring moisture to the west side of the Sierra Nevada, stream systems and lake habitats in the Eastern Sierra are all the more important as refuge areas for birds and wildlife.

Damage Caused by Excessive Water Diversions

In the mid-1800s the Mono Basin began to see the arrival of settlers. And while streams were diverted for irrigation purposes, most of the water still reached Mono Lake and the streams remained relatively healthy.

It was in 1941 that things began to change significantly—and for the worse. The extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct from the Owens Valley was completed and four of Mono Lake's tributary streams were diverted and essentially dried up. Streamside forests and trout died. The ability of the streams to function properly was significantly impaired.

Mono Basin Water Diversions How Much Water Gets Diverted When...?

D1631 clearly states the amount of water that DWP can divert to Los Angeles—both before and after Mono Lake has reached its target level of 6391 feet above mean sea level.

Water diversions allowed until Mono Lake reaches 6391

- Below 6377 feet = no diversions allowed
- At or above 6377 feet = DWP can divert up to 4,500 acre-feet of water per year
- At or above 6380 and below 6391 feet = DWP can divert up to 16,000 acre-feet of water per year

Water diversions allowed once Mono Lake reaches 6391

- Below 6388 feet = no diversions allowed
- At or above 6388 and less than 6391 feet = DWP can divert up to 10,000 acre-feet per year
- At or above 6391 feet on April 1 = DWP can divert all available water in excess of the amount needed to maintain channel maintenance and fishery flows, up to the amount otherwise authorized

Note: 6391 is a “trigger” lake level in these rules. When the rules are modeled hydrologically, the long term average lake level is 6392 feet—so you’ll hear both numbers used. And regardless, the lake will fluctuate under these rules as much as eight feet upward and four feet downward.



Irreparable incision on Rush Creek happened when excessive water was released down the creek after years of diversions, left the creek dry and without vegetation to stabilize the banks.

At this time, almost no water was reaching Mono Lake, and in less than 50 years the lake dropped 45 vertical feet, lost half its volume, and doubled in salinity. When stream runoff water exceeded amounts that could be diverted, the high flows came crashing down the creeks, dislodging the desiccated streamside vegetation and straightening the creek channels. Nesting California Gulls became accessible to predators when their once-safe nesting islands became linked to the land. Toxic alkali dust storms resulted from exposed salt flats and waterfowl population sizes crashed to only 1% of their previous amounts.

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Scientists identified important once-dry stream channels to be opened and rewatered. With water now flowing in this section of Rush Creek, vegetation is returning.



HEIDI HOPKINS

Orders 98-05 and 98-07, such as channel rewatering and cottonwood planting, the majority of restoration work began in 1998.

Hydrologic models estimate that the lake will reach the target level established by the State Water Board by 2014. Mono Lake will still be 25 feet lower than its prediversion level, the streams will carry less flow than they once did, and former cottonwood-willow riparian forests will still be maturing. And some damage will never be restored—most notably the deltas of Rush and Lee Vining Creeks. These two creek deltas will never be the vast wetlands of the past and the lush bottomlands of the past will never fully return to their previous condition.

What Specific Activities Were Ordered

Mono Lake Restoration

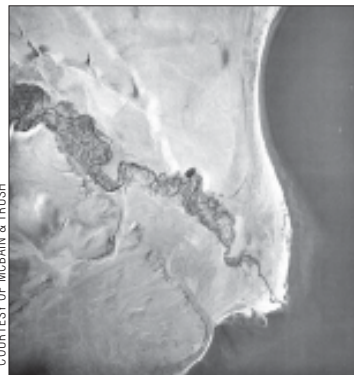
The 1994 Water Board Order set the rules for the restoration of Mono Lake to a healthy level. A target lake level elevation was set—6391 feet above sea level—and a deadline of September 28, 2014 was set to achieve this goal. Mono Lake’s ecosystem—alkali flies, brine shrimp, and gull populations—will be stable at this level and

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Water Board Decision and Significance

In 1994—after a lengthy series of court battles and public outcry lead by the Mono Lake Committee—the California State Water Resources Control Board issued Decision 1631 (D1631) which set a target lake level for Mono Lake, established minimum flows and annual peak flows that DWP must deliver to the creeks, and also ordered DWP to develop restoration plans for the streams and for waterfowl habitat. D1631 continues to be routinely touted state-wide as a win-win solution because it allowed limited water diversions to the City of Los Angeles while recognizing the water needs of Mono Lake.

The restoration plans were formally adopted in 1998 when the Water Board issued Orders 98-05 and 98-07. These two orders identified specific actions that DWP is required to complete to fulfill its restoration obligation in the Mono Basin. And while some interim restoration activities had already taken place prior to D1631 and



COPY FROM THE FAIRCHILD COLLECTION
COURTESY OF MGBAIN & TRUSH

Aerial view of Rush Creek, 1929. Note the wide corridor of vegetation and the multiple stream channels.



COURTESY OF LADWP

Rush Creek, 2002. Vegetation and stream channels are returning.

What Exactly is the Rush Creek Return Ditch? And Why is it so Important?

The Rush Creek Return Ditch is located below Grant Lake Reservoir and is the only way—other than water spilling over the dam—that water gets to the lower portion of Rush Creek. It also serves as the point of diversion for DWP’s water exports to Los Angeles.

The ability of the Rush Creek Return Ditch to carry its maximum amount of water—380 cubic feet per second—is critical to the restoration of Rush Creek. These springtime “peak” flows ordered by the State Water Board are the single-most important component of the restoration process (see main article for details).

Just last year, DWP completed work on the ditch to eliminate seepage and to strengthen the wall of the ditch. These improvements will enable the ditch to transport its full capacity of water.

At the request of the Water Board and the Mono Lake Committee, DWP has agreed to test the new capacity by performing a “flow test” which will gradually increase water flows through the ditch and peak at 380 cfs for two days, then slowly decrease flows. This test will not affect diversion amounts to Los Angeles or the amount of water that Rush Creek will receive under the Water Board decision for this year-type. It is merely to ensure that when flows of this magnitude are required in the future, they will be able to be reliably delivered, to the great benefit of Rush Creek.

Restoration from page 5

shallow flooding will cover areas that currently produce toxic dust storms. Specific diversion amounts allowable by DWP were established and these amounts correspond to lake level—both when the lake is below or above the target management level. (see box on page 4)

Stream Restoration

The stream restoration plan focuses primarily on maintaining flows that mimic the pattern of former natural flows—but not the magnitude, since some water is still being diverted to Los Angeles. Most important to this plan are the specified peak flows—called the stream restoration flows—in the spring and early summer runoff season. DWP was also ordered to open certain side channels in the stream's floodplain in order to spread out the water to raise groundwater levels allowing riparian vegetation to spread out across the floodplain.

Other stream related restoration activities include:

- Rehabilitating the Rush Creek Return Ditch (see box on page 5). This allows for restoration flows to be reliably conveyed to Rush Creek.
- Prohibiting livestock grazing within the riparian corridor



Lee Vining Creek in 1992 with small flags marking recently planted trees along the washed-out stream bank.



The same spot on Lee Vining Creek in 2001 but here the trees have taken root and stabilized the stream bank.



ARNA DEGENHARDT

In 1999 DWP placed large woody debris such as this tree stump in Rush Creek in order to increase habitat complexity. This gives the in-stream habitat a jump-start as it will be a long time before large trees naturally mature and fall into Rush Creek.

- on DWP land for a minimum of ten years. This allows for riparian vegetation to reestablish along the creeks.
- Restoring riparian vegetation to pre-diversion acreage amounts. This will ensure that vegetative habitat complexity is established and self-sustaining.
- Evaluating and implementing ways to pass sediment down the creeks below the diversion structures. This will ensure that fine gravels are available for fish habitat and seed beds for new vegetation.
- Limiting vehicle access in sensitive areas near the streams. This allows vegetation to spread out from the creek edges.
- Removing invasive Tamarisk along lower Rush Creek. Tamarisk, an introduced, invasive plant species, outcompetes native species and must be eliminated in the Mono Basin.
- Placing large woody debris in the creeks. This helps to create habitat complexity in the creeks by creating cover for fish and providing habitat for invertebrates.

Waterfowl Habitat Restoration

The single most important action identified for restoring waterfowl habitat is to raise the level of Mono Lake, and thus recreating shoreline habitat

The Water Board also ordered DWP to implement a controlled burn program with the goal of reestablishing open

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ARYA DEGENHARDT

A controlled burn in 1999 on the south shore of Mono Lake.

water areas at springs around the shores of Mono Lake that have been identified as essential waterfowl habitat.

Status Report on These Restoration Activities

- The Rush Creek Return Ditch—the means of water conveyance from Grant Reservoir to Rush Creek—was rehabilitated last year and will be tested this summer.
- DWP has physically reopened several side channels on Rush Creek. Others remain on the list and scientists are evaluating potential benefits against any impacts associated with the required mechanical intrusion.
- DWP plans to retrofit the Lee Vining Creek diversion dam this fall with a sediment bypass facility and upgrade to the diversion structure itself thereby insuring the appropriate flow amount is delivered downstream. Walker and Parker Creek sediment bypass evaluation continues.
- DWP conducts annual monitoring of restoration progress in order to chart its course to successfully fulfilling its requirements under the Water Board orders for restoration. Every year a comprehensive report is produced by DWP that documents restoration activities completed, identifies those still outstanding, and summarizes the previous year's monitoring results.

The DWP monitoring includes:

- Lake level measurements
- Vegetation studies at key sites around the lake
- Aerial photography of stream and lakeshore
- Geomorphic monitoring of stream channels
- Vegetation mapping of the entire stream corridor
- Fish population studies
- Waterfowl surveys

What is Adaptive Management and How Does it Come Into Play?

Adaptive management is an approach that addresses restoration uncertainties by viewing management actions as experiments derived from hypothesis, conducting extensive monitoring, evaluating the results, and then determining if the management and underlying assumptions need to be changed.

Stream restoration flows (SRFs) are a good example of how adaptive management works on the ground. The magnitude, duration, and frequency of the SRFs and the physical actions specified by the Water Board orders were based upon the educated “guesses” of the stream scientists of what was needed for restoration. Because of the uncertainty associated with some of the restoration recommendations, especially the SRFs in wetter years and the ability of DWP to reliably deliver them, the Water Board approved an adaptive management process that the involved parties developed through the legal settlement.

The Water Board specifically ordered that the “stream monitoring shall evaluate and make recommendations, based upon the results of the monitoring program, regarding the magnitude, duration, and frequency of the SRFs necessary for the restoration of Rush Creek; and the need for a Grant Lake bypass to reliably achieve the flows needed for restoration of Rush Creek.” Presently, Grant Lake Reservoir does not have an outlet for reliably delivering the recommended SRFs in wetter years. However, the Committee has agreed to a test period of monitoring the streams and evaluating alternative approaches to delivering the SRF's to Rush Creek, including augmenting Rush Creek peak flows with Lee Vining Creek diversions. Eventually the stream scientists will make recommendations about whether a Grant Lake Reservoir outlet is needed.

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ERIN BRANDT

Each summer Committee staff help with monitoring the creeks. Here, Intern Kim Rollins measures groundwater levels using a piezometer on Lee Vining Creek.

When is Restoration “Done”?

In some ways, the Mono Basin restoration as contemplated by the Water Board and scientists may not be “done” in our lifetimes. At the time of the Water Board decision, it was estimated that it would take 20 years for Mono Lake to rise to its management level of 6392 feet. The streams will take even longer to fully recuperate. While riparian vegetation is coming back along the formerly dry channels, the cottonwood seedlings along the stream banks will take 50 years to mature. And rebuilding the floodplain and stabilizing channels will take decades of sediment aggradation and revegetation.

Although restoration will take a long time, DWP’s obligations under the Water Board order may be satisfied much sooner. The restoration orders specify certain “termination criteria” which are essentially stated endpoints that DWP is striving to meet. Once DWP successfully completes these requirements to the Water Board’s satisfaction, DWP will be relieved of any future monitoring obligations.

The termination criteria include:

- Acreage of riparian vegetation, including mature trees of sufficient diameter, height, and location to provide woody debris in the streams
- Length of main channel
- Channel gradient
- Channel sinuosity
- Channel confinement
- Variation of longitudinal thalweg elevation
- Size and structure of fish populations

The Mono Lake Committee’s Role

The successes as well as compromises embodied in D1631 ten years ago were the culmination of a long and hard-fought legal and political battle that was just the beginning of the real work of restoring Mono Lake. The Committee and its dedicated consultants continue to work closely with DWP in the ongoing restoration process.

The Committee is often viewed as the “watchdog” for restoration because we use our presence in the Mono Basin

to stay on top of what is happening day-to-day and month-to-month.

The Committee also attends annual restoration meetings, reviews annual monitoring reports produced by DWP’s consultants, and provides informed comments on any proposed changes to the restoration program. For example, this past year DWP and the Committee worked collaboratively to modify the waterfowl monitoring protocol used to assess waterfowl population numbers in the Mono Basin.

The Committee is in contact with DWP regularly, and especially at critical times of the year such as prior to and during the peak runoff season. The Committee is often viewed as the eyes and ears for DWP since it no longer has as regular a presence in the Basin and the Committee can provide real time information and feedback. The Committee’s current relationship with DWP is one of mutual respect in working to meet the requirements of the Water Board order. And while there certainly are disagreements, there is also commitment from both sides to work together and to resolve issues internally whenever possible.

Prevention Better Than the Cure

The ongoing restoration work at Mono Lake is cutting edge restoration science, but the first and foremost lesson learned is that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. It is far less expensive to both people and the environment to maintain functioning natural systems instead of damaging them and then trying to restore them later.

In other areas of the state and the world, Mono Lake offers the lesson that it is best to find solutions and collaborative approaches that respect the balance of water needs between human and natural systems in order to prevent the need for restoration.

It is important that Committee members continue to track the restoration process at Mono Lake. One way to stay connected is through the Committee’s Clearinghouse website. There you’ll find all the restoration orders and many of the scientific reports—which provide greater detail related to the ongoing restoration activities occurring in the Mono Basin. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee’s Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She’s been busy practicing her casting for some fly fishing in British Columbia this fall.



ARVA DEGENHARDT

The Decision That Saved Mono Lake

Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the State Water Resources Control Board Order

By Geoffrey McQuilkin

Mono Lake, once imperiled by the excessive diversions of water to Los Angeles, celebrates 10 years of being saved this year.

It was a simple vote that took place on September 28, 1994, not unlike hundreds of votes that occur in the state's capitol every day. But the unanimous revision of the LA's water rights that resulted was deeply meaningful—transforming Mono Lake from a symbol of environmental destruction into a shining example of how both people and nature can have the water they need.

The Mono Lake decision was a landmark for the State Water Resources Control Board, which has authority over water rights in California. Based on broad and thorough scientific studies, the decision contemplated everything from the impact of water diversions on Mono Lake's brine shrimp and birds, to toxic dust storms, to the water needs of Los Angeles to the Public Trust duties of the state to protect Mono Lake for all the citizens of California.

The result was a decision that set an ecologically sound management level for Mono Lake, guaranteed flows for Mono's once-dry tributaries, and called for the restoration of damaged streams and waterfowl habitat.

A Decade of Recovery

On the day of the vote, back in 1994, many celebrations took place (in the crowded capitol hearing room, the Water Board itself received the only standing ovation for a decision in memory). But a walk to the lake revealed the obvious: the rules changed on that day, but Mono Lake was yet to rise. The Water Board decision, so many important words on paper, was yet to be translated into physical reality in the landscape.

Ten years out, we're seeing that ink come off the page and turn into rushing streams, green cottonwoods, darting

fish, nesting birds, a disappearing landbridge, healthier brine shrimp, and, at the core of it all, Mono Lake rising. The lake is six feet higher now, with ten feet still to go. Streamside forests that were lost in the dry years are now recovering. Toxic dust storms still blow off the exposed east shore lakebed, but as the lake rises further they are expected to diminish.

The process is far from over; much that is on paper is yet to be realized in the landscape. But the progress of ten years is heartening and inspiring, a fact easily confirmed by walking the lakeshore or along a recovering stream.

Los Angeles Prospers Too

And what of Los Angeles? Today the city is allowed just a fraction of its former water diversions. But it is not suffering as a result. The Mono Lake Committee worked tirelessly to protect Mono Lake, but it also worked just as hard to be certain that replacement water—in the form of water conservation and recycling—would offset the water returned to Mono Lake. By obtaining state and federal funding for conservation and helping to launch innovative conservation programs, the Committee was able to ensure that the water demands that endangered Mono Lake were not simply shifted to another water source, another ecosystem.

Today, Los Angeles is one of the most water efficient cities in the country and programs linked to Mono Lake's protection have had huge success. The city's toilet retrofit program, for example, has replaced over a million water guzzling toilets with new water saving models, making it the centerpiece of a conservation program that is saving over 100,000 acre-feet of water per year—the amount of water once diverted from Mono Lake!

In fact, the water conservation

programs have sparked valuable educational connections between the city and the source of its water. The Committee's Outdoor Experiences program began when Los Angeles community groups engaged in conservation came for a week to Mono Lake, to see the place they were part of saving. The experience was so striking, and the connection so strong, that the program has grown to serve hundreds of youth; the future holds the promise of connecting even more urban youth with Mono Lake.

A Decade's Lesson

In the decade since the Water Board decision, the Committee has learned that although water diversions were by far and away the single largest threat to Mono Lake, other threats arise in their absence. The fight to protect the lake for ourselves and future generations is a fight to be sure that the everyday political processes of our human world include, respect, and protect this most wonderful of saline lakes.

There is much yet to be done at Mono Lake: much more restoration, much more education, much more protection. The final words of the Mono Lake Newsletter Water Board Celebration issue still apply a decade later: "We invite you to polish up your 'Long Live Mono Lake' bumpersticker and stay with us for the important, exciting times ahead." ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Co-Executive Director. His Mono Lake family is growing with a second daughter due in the fall!

A Road of Opposition

Caltrans Heading in the Wrong Direction on the Mono Lake Highway Project

by Jen Nissenbaum

The Mono Lake Committee continues to look for solutions despite disappointing news from Caltrans regarding the Mono Lake Shoulder Widening Project (Project). By denying the Committee's request for a new environmental document and limiting the amount of information available for additional public review, Caltrans is pushing the Committee closer to litigation.

The proposed Project is located within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, and would widen and straighten 3.1 miles of Highway 395 along the west shore of Mono Lake.

While the Committee has worked with Caltrans for over three years to develop a project that minimizes environmental impacts along the scenic highway corridor, both build alternatives proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) will result in significant impacts to wetland and riparian areas, water quality, wildlife habitat, and visual quality. Based on the Mono Lake Committee's extensive analysis of the DEIR, the Committee concluded that Caltrans must redraft and recirculate a new environmental document in order to adequately study the Project (see Winter 2004 *Newsletter*). Recently, Caltrans denied the Committee's call for a new DEIR and the Final EIR is expected to be released in August.

Early on in the process, Caltrans made a commitment to hold a public hearing with the Mono County Local Transportation Commission (LTC) and to reconvene the Project Development Team (PDT)—the group of agency representatives that has been meeting regularly on this Project (see Spring 2004 *Newsletter*). To be effective, these commitments must be upheld after Caltrans releases its responses to public comments and indicates the final Project decision; however, Caltrans recently stated this information will not be

available by June—when the PDT meeting and public hearing are tentatively scheduled.

The Committee is urging Caltrans to change its course and commit to making the necessary changes for the project to move forward, otherwise, legal action will be necessary to protect Mono Lake. According to Section 15112 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Committee has 30 days after the release of the Final EIR to challenge the Project's final decision in court. The Mono Lake Committee will continue to work with Caltrans towards developing a balanced project; however, time is running out. The Committee is prepared to litigate if the Final EIR is released without substantial modification from the DEIR.

Caltrans Denies Committee's Call for a New Environmental Document

The Mono Lake Committee submitted a detailed and comprehensive 64-page analysis of the DEIR prior to the close of the public comment period. The Committee's comments identified major inadequacies with the draft environmental document and supporting studies. For example, the DEIR ignored federal parkland protection regulations, failed to identify a perennial stream running through the project area, and failed to address the threat of fill-slope erosion to water quality in Mono Lake. The DEIR contained many other deficiencies, and as a result, the Committee called on Caltrans to redraft the environmental document, which, according to CEQA guidelines is required when a DEIR is fundamentally flawed.

Caltrans recently confirmed that the Final EIR is scheduled to be released in August and that no new environmental studies are planned. The Committee is not only disappointed that Caltrans is not redrafting the DEIR, but also

surprised that new studies are not mandatory based on the detailed comments Caltrans received. Over 1,300 letters were sent to Caltrans from Mono Lake supporters prior to the close of the public comment period. In addition, public agencies—including the US Forest Service, California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board—all submitted letters to Caltrans identifying major deficiencies in the DEIR.

Caltrans Limits Information Available for Public Review

Caltrans made a commitment to hold a joint public hearing with the LTC—the governing body for highway projects in Mono County—almost two years ago. In light of the concerns being raised at that time by public agencies and the Committee, the LTC requested the joint public hearing in order to stay closely involved in the Project's progress. Recently, Caltrans denied the LTC's request for a public hearing, and instead plans to hold a public meeting. At that meeting, Caltrans will listen to public comments, but will be under no obligation to record or respond to the comments made.

In addition, Caltrans has drastically reduced the amount of information that will be on hand at the LTC meeting. Caltrans will not have their responses to public comments available for the LTC commissioners to review. Furthermore, Caltrans will not indicate to the LTC or the public their determination for the Project's final outcome at the public meeting.

Project Development Team (PDT) members will also have limited updated information available for Project review at the upcoming PDT meeting. With over two years of experience working with Caltrans to create a balanced

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Courtroom Victory for Mono Lake

Mono Lake Protection Remains Strong

By Jen Nissenbaum

A recent court case confirms that anyone who wants to undertake a commercial enterprise within the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve must obtain a permit from the State.

A boat tour operator, Tom Crowe of Mono Lake Charters, had been cited by the State Reserve for operating commercially on Mono Lake without a permit. With a no contest plea, Mr. Crowe abandoned the effort to argue that the California Department of Parks and Recreation does not have permitting authority at Mono Lake.

In a series of legal briefs regarding the citation, the defense questioned State Parks' authority at the Reserve. The case came to an abrupt ending when the defense notified the courtroom that the defendant had already signed the 2004 State Reserve permit and was interested in negotiating a settlement.

While this case has been resolved, it may be a prelude of things to come. Mono Lake is beginning to face recreational use pressures that are already common throughout California.

Mono Lake Charters' Boat Tour Permit is Signed

Despite years of discussions and several months of negotiations, the owner of Mono Lake Charters refused to sign the 2003 permit offered by the State and was eventually cited for operating in the Reserve without a permit. The defendant filed a Motion to Dismiss—essentially arguing that the State does not have permitting authority on the waters of Mono Lake. Reasons presented by the defense were numerous, among them the claim that the waters of Mono Lake are not under the jurisdiction of the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve.

After three days in court in 2004, the defense presented new information—the defendant had already sent the 2004 State Reserve permit with the associated permit fees to the Department of Recreation and was interested in negotiating a settlement. In the end, the boat tour operator abandoned his

claim that State Parks does not have permitting authority over the waters of Mono Lake by pleading “no contest” to both citations and by paying a token fine. In addition, he made a good faith statement to the court that he would follow the guidelines and regulations within the permit.

In May, the State Reserve completed Mono Lake Charters' permit application enabling the boat tour operator to legally operate during the summer 2004 season. As many Mono Lake supporters have pointed out, the interpretive motorized boat tours offered by Mono Lake Charters can be a valuable addition to the existing ways to experience and learn about Mono Lake.

The Mono Lake Committee is pleased that Mono Lake Charters is now in compliance with State Reserve regulations, as it is these rules that help maintain the appropriate balance between commercial recreational use and the protection of the Mono Lake's natural resources. Buffer zones around stream deltas, no-tour zones on the east side of Mono Lake, and low-pollution engine specifications (for the motorized boat tour operator), are examples of provisions included within the State permit to minimize impacts to natural resources.

While this recent recreational problem has been resolved, it is just one example of the types of issues Mono Lake is certain to face more of in the future. With over 250,000 annual visitors and rapidly increasing interest in recreational use of Mono Lake, planning for and implementing sound recreation policies is essential for maintaining the health of the lake and surrounding ecosystems. The Mono Lake Committee will continue to apply the principles it developed regarding boating (see Spring 2003 *Newsletter*), and will no doubt need to develop additional principles for other recreational uses—in order to ensure that the lake continues to receive the protection it deserves. ❖

Caltrans from page 10

project, members of the PDT are the most qualified in helping Caltrans determine the final outcome for the Project. PDT members will have essentially no new information available to assist in making recommendations to Caltrans since the DEIR was released eight months ago.

What options remain?

In this critical time before the release of the Final EIR, the Committee continues to look for creative ways to modify the Project—to minimize environmental impacts within the unique and sensitive west shore habitat. In the meantime, the Committee is paying close attention to CEQA guidelines.

CEQA establishes a 30-day statute of limitations to challenge an agency's final decision through the courts. Assuming that the Final EIR is essentially the same as the draft, the Committee will need to act within 30-days of the release of the Final EIR. Co-Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin explained this at a recent PDT meeting stating, “The Committee is fully prepared to go to court on behalf of its 15,000 members to assure that Mono Lake and the Scenic Area receive the protection they more than deserve.” ❖

Jen Nissenbaum is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Coordinator. She is settling in to her new home in Mono City!

Streamwatch

March Warmth Accelerates Peak Runoff

by Greg Reis

After a promising start to the winter, a very warm and dry March depleted the snowpack that would normally accumulate that month. Peak snowpack occurred around March 1—about a month earlier than usual. Late spring weather started in March and summer temperatures occurred in early May with the earliest 80 degrees on record for May.

The warm weather caused a peak flow to occur on Lee Vining Creek the first week in May, about a month earlier than was projected based upon historical records. DWP is required to pass the

peak downstream of its diversion. However, since the peak was so early, DWP diverted water during the peak, expecting a larger peak later. As of early June, DWP had passed a smaller secondary peak, with a higher peak unlikely since most of the snow had already melted. DWP has not had good success passing Lee Vining Creek's peak, and the Committee continues to encourage DWP to manage the Lee Vining Creek peak based on real-time data available for temperatures, snow-melt, reservoir levels, and stream flows.

DWP will deliver a 380-cfs (cubic

feet per second) test flow to the Rush Creek return ditch this year. This flow is not required, however it will test the full capacity of the Mono Gate One Return Ditch, which was recently upgraded in capacity. (See the box on page 5 for an explanation of the Rush Creek Return Ditch.) This flow, the highest on Rush Creek since 1998, will ensure that the ditch can carry high flows to 380-cfs when required in the future. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. He recently adopted a spunky, sunscreen wearing, toothless cat named Luna.

Lakewatch

Sixth Drier-Than-Average Year in a Row

by Greg Reis

Meromixis, the failure of the lake to mix each year, ended last fall (see Winter 2003 Newsletter). This means a green, productive lake this year, however, the lake didn't experience a sudden turnover like in 1988 when the whole basin smelled like ammonia and brine shrimp populations plummeted. This year there are reports of unusually large numbers of brine shrimp.

runoff, Mono Lake is expected to drop 1 foot by December from its current elevation of 6381.8 feet above sea level. During next winter the lake should rise a bit so that by next April the lake will experience a net loss of about 0.4 feet in the 2004–2005 runoff year (in the Eastern Sierra the April–March period is referred to as the runoff year). The lake

has dropped 1.2 feet between April and December every year since 2000, when it only dropped 1.1 feet. This very consistent April–December behavior means that the differences in how far the lake fell in recent years (ranging from a 0.3 to a 1.0 foot drop) were due to the rise caused by winter weather in the four months from December to April. ❖

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6392'

Target lake level

6382'

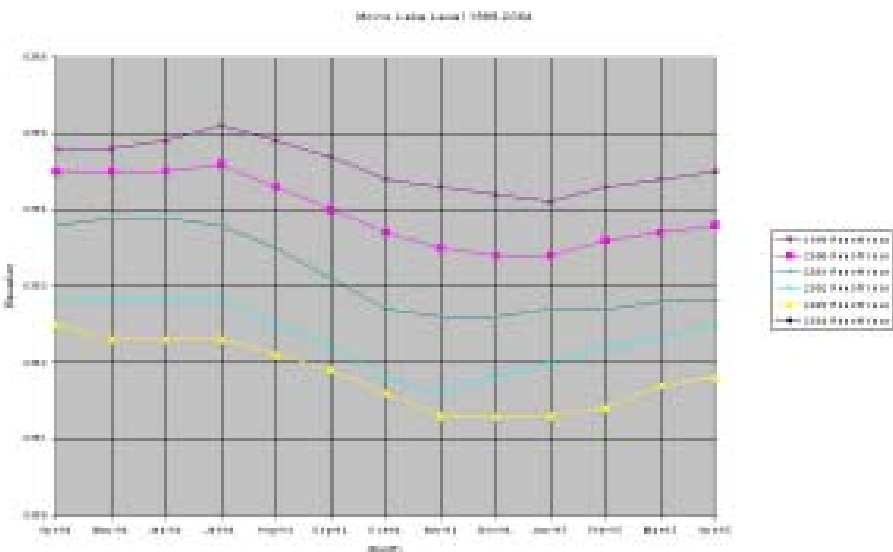
Current lake level

6372'

Historic low, 1982

Assuming runoff is close to DWP's forecast of 80% of average, 2004 will mark the 6th drier-than-average year in a row, tying 1987–1992 for the longest string of dry years on record. 1987–1992 was much drier, however: the driest year of the last 6 years was still wetter than the wettest year of the previous dry period.

As a result of the lower-than-average



Mono Lake Monthly Levels from 1999–2004.

Mono Basin Journal

A Roundup of Quiet Happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

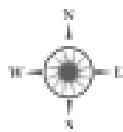


As the days grow long, winter retreats from the Mono Basin. But that retreat is hardly as large as you would expect for sunny California. All spring, enthusiastic travelers arrive, ready to cross Tioga Pass to Yosemite. The weather at the lake may be intermittently mild, the sun strong, the hardy may even be wearing shorts and T-shirts, but 3,000 feet higher at the top of the pass the road lies closed under tens of feet of snow.

Weeks later comes the opening of Tioga Pass, and you'd think that would guarantee summer weather at Mono Lake. But we're in the Sierra Nevada, 7,000 feet above sea level, and the temperature records show that a 70° day and 30° night are regular partners. So confirms an early morning walk. As

Yosemite visitors roll out for the now-clear pass, the sun sparkles through ice that encases grass, fences, and flowers—the overnight art of sprinklers and dripping faucets and freezing temperatures.

Not that these extremes hold nature back; all things adapt. Walk the trail to Parker Lake and the phlox are already blooming, little five-petaled carpets of white and pink showing bright through hot and cold alike. The desert peach blooms pink, then the bitterbrush turns yellow, blanketing the Mono Basin. California Gulls nest, brine shrimp hatch, alkali flies roam the lakeshore, and songbirds return from points south; so comes summer, hot and cold, to Mono Lake's corner of California. ❖



Benchmarks



DAVID GAINES

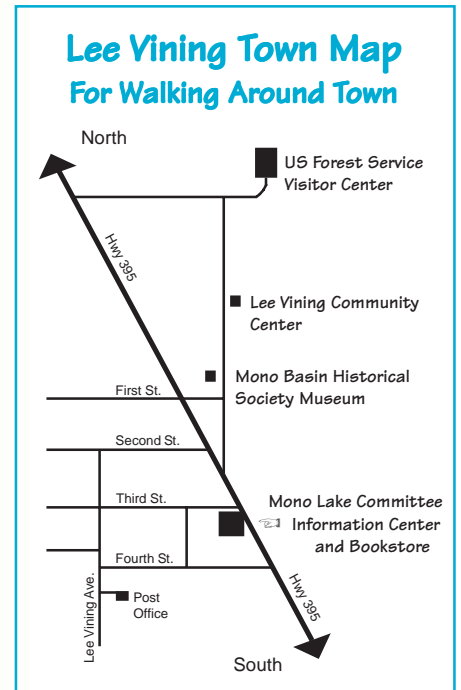
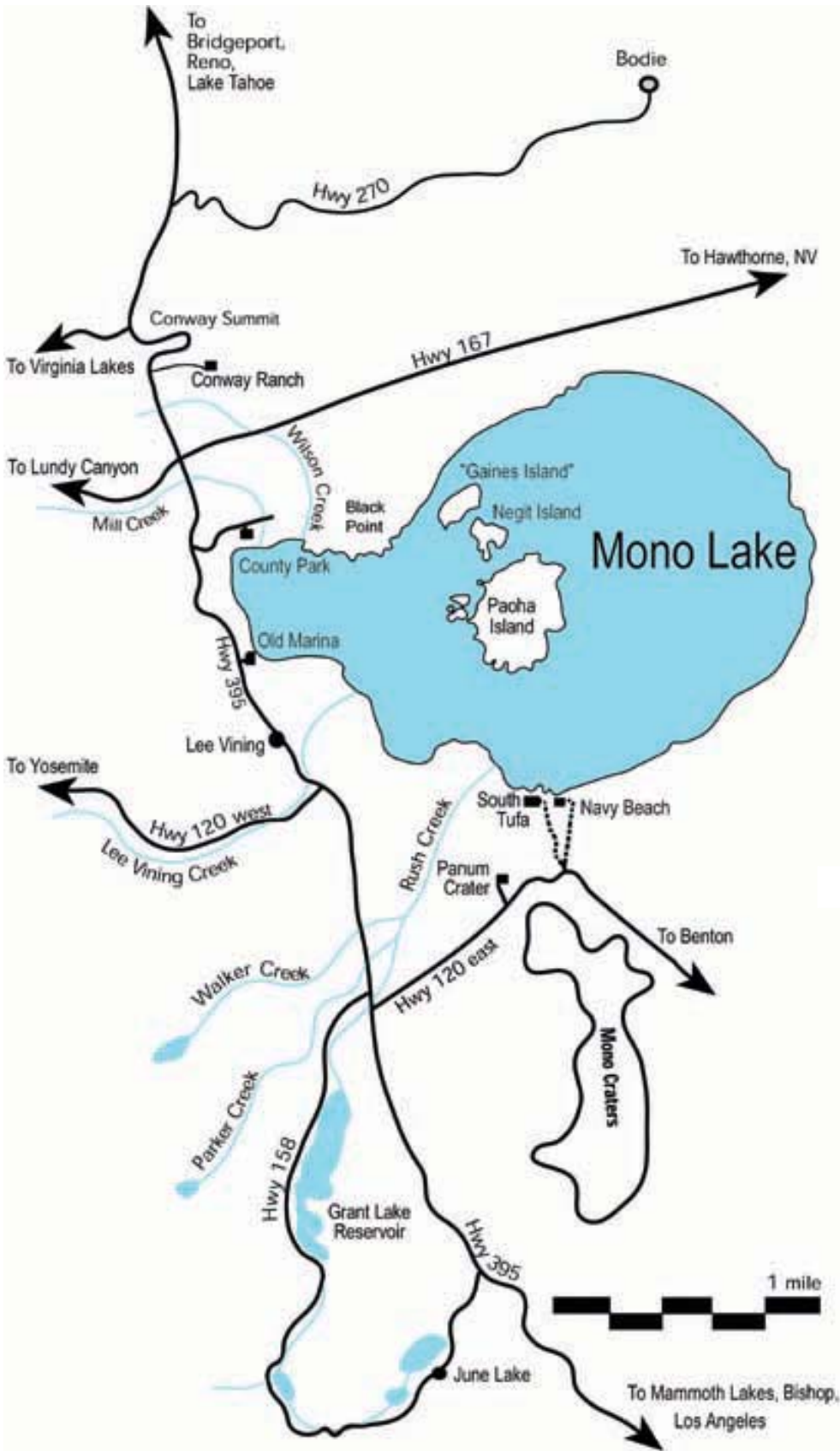
Lower Lee Vining Creek and delta, winter 1979. Note how visible the stream channel is due to lack of vegetation. Because it is winter some defoliated vegetation is difficult to see.



ARVA DEINHARDT

Lower Lee Vining Creek and delta, summer 2004. Note the increase in vegetation along the creek and more channels carrying water!

Mono Lake and Vicinity Map



How far is it?

Distance From Lee Vining To:

South Tufa	11mi	18km
Yosemite Park entrance	13	21
Tuolumne Meadows	21	34
Mammoth Lakes	27	44
Bodie	32	52
Bishop	66	106
Yosemite Valley	77	124
Lake Tahoe	110	177
Reno	140	225
Death Valley	177	285
San Francisco (via 120)	250	402
Los Angeles	303	488
Las Vegas	326	525

Things to do in the Mono Basin

Activities

Hiking, photography, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, bird-watching, biking, fishing, and exploring are all great activities in the Mono Basin. Not sure where to start? Just stop by the Mono Lake Committee and our knowledgeable staff can help!

- **South Tufa tours** take place three times a day during the summer. Join a naturalist on a walking tour at the South Tufa area to learn about the ecology, geology, and natural and human history of the Mono Basin. The walking tours are an excellent introduction to Mono Lake. The walk is approximately one mile long on easy terrain and lasts about an hour. Meet at the South Tufa parking lot at 10:00AM, 1:00PM, and 6:00PM daily during the summer months. There is no charge for the walk, but a \$3 per person fee is required to enter the South Tufa area. No reservations are necessary.

- **Canoe tours** depart every Saturday and Sunday morning during the summer months at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00AM, and last for about one hour. \$17 for adults, \$7 for children. Reservations are required; call (760) 647-6595.

- **Birding walks** take place Fridays and Sundays at 8:00AM throughout the summer. Meet at the Mono Lake County Park with binoculars (not required), a bird book, hat, and sunscreen. Tours last 1½–2 hours and are open to all levels of birders. Committee staff can also suggest good birding areas around the Basin so come in, check out our recent sightings board, and learn about good spots to go during any season!

- **Lee Vining Creek hikes** take place Thursdays and Saturdays at 8:30AM from June 26–Sept 4. Meet in front of the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore prepared with water, hat, sunscreen, and binoculars if you like for a two-hour walk along the moderate Lee Vining Creek trail. Learn about restoration, natural history, and human history as you go!

Visitor Centers

- **The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore**, located in the heart of Lee Vining, offers a free video, educational exhibits, a photography exhibit, and activity schedules. The bookstore offers an excellent selection

of regional books, maps, T-shirts, posters, local crafts, and specialty gifts. The Committee also houses the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce with information on lodging, dining, and recreation opportunities as well as weather and road conditions. Come on by and we'll help you make the most of your visit! The Mono Lake Committee is open from 9AM–10PM daily during the summer, or call (760) 647-6595 for more information.

- **The Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center**, located just north of town, features an excellent view of Mono Lake, interpretive displays, and natural history trails. A dramatic Mono Lake film shows regularly in the theater, and during the summer rangers give patio presentations daily. Contact the Visitor Center at (760) 647-3044 for hours of operation and special programs.

- **The Mono Basin Historical Society Museum**, located in Lee Vining at Gus Hess Park, houses a fascinating collection of materials from the Mono Basin's past. See Native American artifacts, gold mining implements, and even the legendary upside-down house! Contact the museum at (760) 647-6461 for hours of operation.

Travel Resources

- Mono Lake Committee Information Center (760) 647-6595 www.monolake.org
- Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce (760) 647-6629 www.leevining.com
- U.S. Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center (760) 647-3044 www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/vc/mono/
- Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve (760) 647-6331 www.cal-parks.ca.gov
- Bodie State Historic Park (760) 647-6445
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center (760) 924-5500
- June Lake Chamber of Commerce (760) 648-7584
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce (760) 932-7500
- Inyo National Forest 24-hour Wilderness Permits/ Info (760) 873-2408 www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo

- Yosemite National Park www.nps.gov/yose
Information by phone (209) 372-0200
Campground Reservations (800) 436-7275
Hotel and Motel Reservations (559) 252-4848
Wilderness Permit Reservations (209) 372-0740
- Devil's Postpile (760) 934-2289 www.nps.gov/depo
- White Mountain Ranger District–Bishop (760) 873-2500
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center (760) 876-6222
- Manzanar National Historic Site (760) 878-2932
www.nps.gov/manz
- Death Valley Reservations (760) 786-2345
- Bridgeport Ranger Station–Toiyabe National Forest (760) 932-7070
- California Road Conditions (800) 427-7623

Land Trade is Best Hope for Mono Lake Property

Committee Letter Outlines Legal Difficulties of the Development Option

By Geoffrey McQuilkin

Progress on the public acquisition of the Cunningham property, located next to Mono Lake, remains stalled.

Despite broad support, the Forest Service has not reappraised the property to establish a current market value. In the face of the continuing threat of subdivision and development in violation of federal land protections, Committee attorneys laid out the legal obstacles to such development in a recent letter.

Public acquisition of the property, however, is the goal of everyone involved in the issue. Such protection would ideally occur via a land trade that would add the Cunningham property to the Forest Service's holdings in the Scenic Area while making land available in nearby Mammoth Lakes for expansion of the community hospital.

The Mono Lake Committee, American Lands Conservancy, Mammoth Hospital, US Forest Service, Mono County, and the Cunninghams, who own the property, have all supported a trade. However, the deal has been stymied by disagreement over the value of the land.

The Cunningham property is located next to Hwy 395 near the west shore of Mono Lake, in the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The approximately 120 acres are undeveloped, with the exception of one small house, and are part of the sweeping scenic views available at Mono Lake. The property, which includes aspen groves, springs, and a small perennial stream, also provides valuable wildlife habitat.

Committee Lays Out Legal Obstacles to Subdivision

If the land trade is unsuccessful, a much-advertised subdivision and resort home development of the property could take place instead. Currently the subdivision concept has been officially put on hold by the Cunninghams.

Nonetheless, the subdivision concept has been widely advertised as an acceptable use of the property in real estate listings and promotions designed to attract interest from a developer. Subdivision, however, violates the development guidelines established by the federal government as part of the 20-year-old Scenic Area protection of the lands surrounding Mono Lake. The guidelines do allow limited development and have been followed by other private property owners in the Scenic Area.

In April, Mono Lake Committee attorneys detailed how California state law could be violated by property subdivision and development without Scenic Area approval. As a result, the letter pointed out, the Committee and other interested parties would have grounds to sue a developer to halt such unapproved subdivision and development.

In the end, the letter underscores the wisdom of the land trade option for the property. The trade offers benefits all around and avoids the extensive public controversy that would accompany development of the property. The Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the Cunninghams to make a fair trade become reality. ❖

Settlement Process Continues: North Mono Basin Update

by Lisa Cutting

During the month of May, the North Mono Basin settlement negotiation process reached a heightened level of intensity and fervor which directly demonstrates the involved parties willingness to achieve a negotiated settlement agreement ... and soon. Focused negotiation discussions are the direct result of a recent June deadline set by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)—the governing agency in these proceedings—for the group to reach a settlement.

What's at Stake?

For the Committee, restoring the multiple-channel, cottonwood-willow riparian system of the Mill Creek bottomland and delta within the context of the FERC relicensing procedure is first and foremost (see Spring 2004 *Newsletter*).

The creek has been degraded by a century of unnecessarily large water diversions for hydropower and irrigation. The return of significant water to Mill Creek will provide an opportunity to restore vegetation diversity, enable groundwater recharge throughout the bottomland and delta area, provide

freshwater skim at the confluence at Mono Lake which creates important waterfowl habitat during the fall and winter months, and establish a productive fishery in Mill Creek.

Other interests represented by the parties include generating hydropower, irrigating meadows, grazing, fish-rearing, and maintaining water in Wilson Creek.

Who's at the Table?

The parties—United States Forest Service, Southern California Edison, Bureau of Land Management, Mono County, California Department of Fish and Game, American Rivers/California Trout, People for Mono Basin Preservation, and the Mono Lake Committee—have been meeting for over three years in an attempt to resolve a 20 year-old FERC relicensing procedure while simultaneously developing a comprehensive watershed management plan for the entire north part of the Mono Basin (see Spring 2003 *Newsletter*). And while the details of the settlement discussions are confidential, the Committee remains optimistic that an acceptable outcome can be reached.

Statewide Water Policy Updates

by Frances Spivy-Weber

Sierra Conservancy Inching Toward Reality

In late May, Assembly Bills 2600 (Laird) and 1788 (Leslie) were sent to the Senate, recommending the formation of a Sierra Conservancy. While this might sound normal, it is actually a historic occurrence. First, it is rare that two bills—one from a Democrat and one from a Republican—addressing the same issue are approved in one House and sent to the other. In this case, however, the two legislators, Assemblyman Laird from Santa Cruz and Assemblyman Leslie from Roseville, are not trying to kill each other's bill. They are working together as their bills leap the various hurdles to try to craft a Conservancy that both parties can support. Secondly, there is broad-based support for a Conservancy from the Sierra. In April more than 60 citizen lobbyists formed one of the largest Sierra gatherings in Sacramento in many years to meet with the Conservancy bill sponsors and other key legislators. Third, the Laird bill is gaining support from throughout California. Urban and rural cities and towns, businesses, labor unions, inner city community groups, and environmental groups are all letting their legislators know that the Sierra is important to the whole state.



GEOFF MCQUILKIN

The Natural Resources Committee of the State Assembly considered two Sierra Conservancy bills in April and approved both. More than 60 citizens attended in support of AB2600.

The Mono Lake Committee has made a Sierra Conservancy its highest legislative priority. Committee staff are working with the Sierra Fund to have someone working full time on the Laird bill and where appropriate, the Leslie bill. The Committee is also gathering political support for a Conservancy in Southern California and Mono County. Staff members Geoff McQuilkin, Lisa Cutting, and Jen Nissenbaum left Lee Vining in the wee hours of April 18 to drive to Sacramento for the Sierra Lobby Day, which the

Committee co-sponsored, and for the Committee hearing. The dedicated staffers returned to Lee Vining that evening, because the policy crises at home (see policy articles in this *Newsletter*) needed attention the next day.

There are four milestones coming up. By June 18, one or both Sierra Conservancy bills must get out of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee. Then in August, the Senate must take action on just one bill, and if the final bill is different from the Assembly bill, there will be a Conference Committee between the two Houses. Finally, the Governor has until September 30 to embrace his campaign promise to establish a Sierra Conservancy.

If there is trouble, Mono Lake Committee members will be the first to know. We have an email list of members who are willing to write letters. If you would like to be on that list, please send your email address to frances@monolake.org. The progress of the Conservancy is also posted at www.monolake.org. Stay tuned!

Water Policy Legislation

The Mono Lake Committee is also supporting the following:

AB2528 (Lowenthal), the “Drinking Water Quality: Emerging Contaminants” bill, which will make it clearer what action water agencies, cities, and counties should take when there are unregulated contaminants in surface and/or groundwater.

AB2572 (Kehoe), the “Urban Water Meter” bill, which requires all remaining unmetered cities to meter water.

State Water Plan (Bulletin 160-03)

Every five years the state is required to update its long-range (20-30 years) plans for meeting the water supply needs of the state. The update is called the State Water Plan. To make a very long story short, the plan, which was to be completed by the end of 2003 got caught in the change of administrations. Now, in mid-2004, it is unclear what the new Schwarzenegger water team will do with the report. The Mono Lake Committee is well represented on the State Water Plan Advisory Committee, and is working to ensure the strong role of urban and agricultural conservation in the plan is not weakened. Once the draft Plan is approved, possibly in August, it will be open for public comment. Your voice at this time will be very important! Keep your eye on the website, www.monolake.org for updates. ❖

Fran is the Committee's Co-Executive Director. She just returned from a birthday trip to Italy and has renewed energy for carrying the lessons of Mono Lake to Sacramento.

EDUCATION IN FOCUS

LEE VINING CREEK HIKES

by Bartshé Miller

This summer, Mono Lake Committee intern-naturalists will once again lead interpretive walks on Lee Vining Creek! After a two-year absence, in part due to Caltrans' construction south of town, interpretive walks will resume this year. Lee Vining Creek is often overlooked and the trail brings hikers to a world of green trees and rushing water, surprisingly far-removed from the traffic and bustle in town.

The trail begins at the south end of town, and descends into a riparian corridor that reveals a creek recovering from ecological collapse wrought by decades of excessive water diversions.

Lee Vining Creek Tells its Story

Lower Lee Vining Creek was once a wasteland. Beginning in 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) maximized diversions from the creek. Deprived of water a few miles upstream, the vast riparian system below town was doomed. Willows, cottonwoods, and Jeffrey pines languished and died. In 1954 a fire, exacerbated by the dry conditions, was the final blow to a portion of the riparian forest. The charred remains of Jeffrey pines, interspersed with the woody debris of willows and cottonwoods littered the bottomland of Lee Vining Creek. Without live vegetation to stabilize the channels, the creek was vulnerable to flood damage. The floods came, particularly during the epic winters of 1968–69 and 1982–83. With more spring runoff than DWP could divert, the resulting cascade of water over the dam incised and re-routed channels finally transforming a once magnificent riparian forest system into a barren, narrow, single channel. For the town, the devastated area below was a convenient and attractive place to discard unwanted

debris. It must have been fun over the years to send tires careening down the ravine into the empty creek, as a community clean-up in 1992 retrieved almost a thousand old tires.



Lee Vining Creek Hikes are a fun way to learn about Lee Vining Creek.

Restoration in Action

Today, Lee Vining Creek is a place of rushing water, swaying willows, healthy young cottonwoods and pines. There are aquatic insects, darting trout, blooming flowers, and singing birds. The water began to trickle back in 1986, ordered on behalf of the fish. More water was ordered to flow below the dam in 1990, and now Lee Vining Creek has healthy, variable flows mandated by the 1994 Water Board Decision. In addition to water, restoration work and monitoring were also ordered. Lee Vining Creek is on the mend, and along the Lee Vining Creek trail you can see for yourself how successful the combination of water, time, and well-balanced intentions can be.

The Creek Trail is Born

The Lee Vining Creek trail is a testament to the changing attitude people have toward water, and the power people have to make positive changes in local landscapes. As the water began flowing year-round, and the surrounding lowlands turned green, Don Murphy, owner of Murphy's Motel, proposed the idea of a trail linking the new Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center with the rest of town. DWP and the US Forest Service granted permission, and in 1992 the Lee Vining community and the Mono Lake Committee initiated a clean-up and assisted the US Forest Service with trail construction.

If you can't join a Mono Lake Committee intern-naturalist for an interpretive tour, you are welcome to hike the trail any time. Interpretive panels are interspersed along the trail so you can learn as you go. The trail runs for 1½ miles between the south end of Lee Vining by the Best Western Motel, and the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center on the bluff just north of town.

Creek Hike Details

Lee Vining Creek walks begin in front of the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore located in the center of Lee Vining on Thursdays and Saturdays at 8:30AM, June 26 through September 4. The tour is free and all you have to do is show up. The 2-hour, easy-going hikes are punctuated with brief stretches of steep trail. Bring sunscreen, a hat, water, and binoculars if you have them. For more information please call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595. ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee's Education Director. He's often out of the office giving education programs ... hey, wait, where is Bartshé?

First Season for the Mono Basin Field Station

Science Flourishes as Scientists Rough-It in New Facility



It's the first summer season for the Mono Basin Field Station, and things are already bustling! Nine hearty scientists willing to make do with in-progress conditions at the new Field Station have hit the ground running for the 2004 research season.



The Mono Basin Field Station Building in Lee Vining.

With scientists studying a wide range of topics, the Mono Basin Field Station has quickly transformed to fit its intended purpose of providing support for important research in the Mono Basin. Here's list of researchers and their projects:

Justin Hite from Cornell University is studying the population size and reproductive success of California Gulls. Ben Winger, also of Cornell, is monitoring local Tree Swallow and Violet-green Swallow populations. Chris Tonra of Humboldt State is studying the productivity of Brown-headed Cowbirds. Leah Culp is working on the Eastern Sierra Riparian Songbird



GEORGE MCQUILKIN

Extensive renovations were necessary to ready the building for scientists.

Project with PRBO Conservation Science. John Everett of UC Santa Barbara is researching Mono Basin land conservation opportunities. Lori Fenton from the University of Arizona is studying east shore sand dunes. Quresh Latif of UC Riverside continues his research in songbird nest predator ecology. Chris McCreedy with PRBO Conservation

Science continues his research on Willow Flycatchers. Lara Rachowicz will be studying a fungal pathogen of the mountain yellow-legged frog.

The Mono Lake Committee is pleased, but not surprised, to have filled the station in its first year. The Mono Basin has a legacy of field research starting in 1976 with the group of undergraduate students that completed the first comprehensive ecological study of the Mono Basin. Researchers, commonly on shoestring budgets, have historically camped out at various locations around the Mono Basin. But with increased use of computer technology and surprisingly rare rental space in town, the Field Station provides a home base, making it easier to focus on field work.

The Field Station buildings are in the process of being transformed from motel rental units into working and living quarters for researchers. Located just behind the Mono Lake Committee intern houses in Lee Vining, the Field Station building itself was once two rental units and a motel wash room and now has office space, kitchen, meeting room, and computer room complete with wireless internet.

It is an exciting time for research in the Mono Basin, and the Mono Lake Committee is proud to be promoting scientific endeavors by providing support facilities for scientists. ❖



ARVA DEGENHARDT

PRBO Conservation Science tech support guru Noah Eiger making things work at the Field Station.

A Summer Selection

from the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore



TIE DYE T-SHIRTS

Dads and daughters Geoff, Caelen, Brett, and Sabine are quite a sight in our new tie dye T-shirts! A vivid spiral pattern is highlighted with an embroidered "Long Live Mono Lake" across the chest in a fun and colorful font. Definitely the wildest shirt we've ever sold! Available in both adult and youth sizes.

*Adult Tie Dye T-Shirt Sizes Small-X-Large, \$16.00, XX-Large, \$17.00
Youth Tie Dye T-Shirt Sizes X-Small-Large: \$15.00*



Red-Purple



Yellow-Orange



Blue-Violet

TIE DYE BANDANAS

Retail Assistant Heidi is modeling our fun bandana and finger puppets too! The two-color tie dye bandanas were so popular we couldn't keep them in stock last summer.

Available in three great colors on soft 100% cotton.

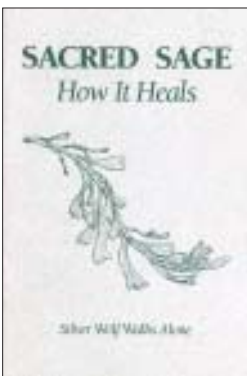
Tie Dye Bandana, please specify Red-Purple, Yellow-Orange, or Blue-Violet: \$2.00 each



FINGER PUPPETS

These furry little friends are a favorite of kids and adults alike. They are approximately 6 inches long and will nestle comfortably in a pocket and on your finger. Choose from Field Mouse, Black Bear, Gray Squirrel, Chipmunk, Bald Eagle, or Beaver.

Finger Puppet, choose from Bald Eagle, Beaver, Black Bear, Chipmunk, Field Mouse, Raccoon, or Gray Squirrel: \$6.00 each



SACRED SAGE: HOW IT HEALS BY WENDY WHITEMAN

This short book provides an overview of the ceremonial gathering and medicinal uses of the different species of sage, as well as a description of the smudging ceremony. It's a great introduction to this wonderful plant.

Sacred Sage: How It Heals, soft cover, 29 pages, 5 1/2 X 8 1/2": \$5.00



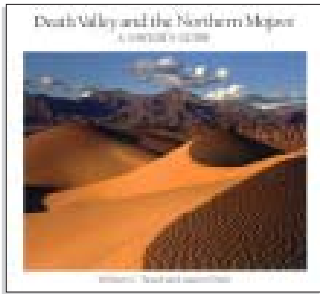
SACRED SAGE

The sacred sage line is a blend of traditional purifying herbs made with handpicked, wild and organically grown white sage grown in California, along with other herbal essences. The harvesting and gathering practices support renewable resources and sustainable agriculture.

Sacred Sage Massage Oil, 8 oz, \$13.95

Sacred Sage Hand and Body Lotion, 8 oz, \$13.95

Sacred Sage Smokeless Mist Air Freshener, 4 oz, \$14.95



DEATH VALLEY AND THE NORTHERN MOJAVE: A VISITOR'S GUIDE

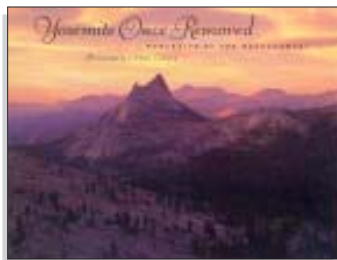
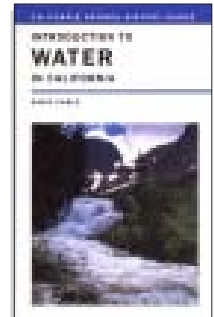
The Northern Mojave beckons to those who love solitude, wide open spaces, and wild desert landscapes. Death Valley National Park's 303 million acres hold an astonishing number of natural wonders and historic treasures. Co-written by local author Lauren Davis, this guide is filled with beautiful photographs and wonderful stories.

Death Valley and the Northern Mojave: A Visitor's Guide, Cachuma Press, softcover, 196 pages, 8¾"x8": \$22.95

INTRODUCTION TO WATER IN CALIFORNIA

Written by local author David Carle, this book tells the story of California's most precious resource, tracing the journey of water from the atmosphere to the snow pack to our faucets and eventually to the food we eat. Features 137 color photographs, 27 color maps, and a table "Where Does Your Water Come From?" for 315 California cities and towns. Provides up-to-date information on water quality in California, including discussions of Giardia, groundwater contamination, fluoride, and the bottled-water phenomenon.

Introduction To Water In California, UC Press, softcover, 261 pages, 4¾"x7½": \$16.95



YOSEMITE ONCE REMOVED: PORTRAITS OF THE BACKCOUNTRY

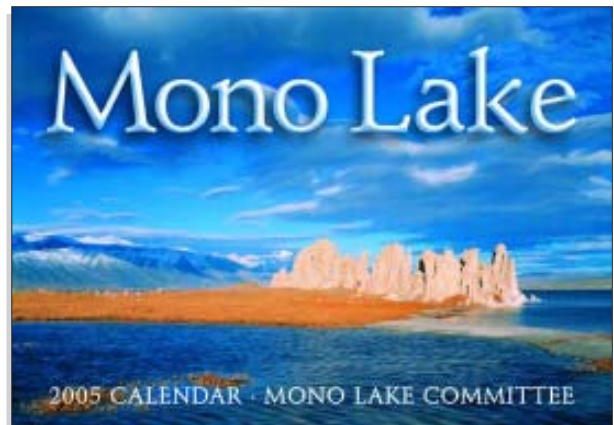
Most people associate the name Yosemite with images of Yosemite Valley, which only occupies seven of the 1,200 square miles of Yosemite National Park. Local photographer Claude Fiddler's remarkable photographs and essays by five veteran backcountry travelers take you to the beautiful and remote Yosemite backcountry.

Yosemite Once Removed, hardcover, Yosemite Association Press, 127 pages, measures 11½"x9¾": \$29.95

2005 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

The 2005 Mono Lake Calendar is full of beautiful images of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin. From awesome storms to views from high above and high mountain streams, this 12-month calendar captures many unique views. Each month also features insets of local flora and fauna. Can't get enough of Mono Lake? This is a great way to catch a glimpse of the Mono Basin through the months and seasons of the year right in your home or office! Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

2005 Mono Lake Calendar, measures 13 ¼" x 9 ¼": \$10.95



Order by phone: (760) 647-6595, fax: (760) 647-6377, or email: bookstore@monolake.org

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE MAIL ORDER FORM

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\$26 - \$50	\$7.00
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Mono Lake Committee P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541

2004 Field Seminars

California Gull Research: Chick Banding

July 2-5

Justin Hite/PRBO Conservation Science

\$120 per person per day; overnight; meals included

Join a research team directed by PRBO Conservation Science and Cornell University in collecting data on the California Gull rookery at Mono Lake. Gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques while observing how the lake's changing chemistry—due to Mono's recent meromictic conclusion—is affecting gull reproductive success. Your help is needed in continuing this important research. The rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets and observing at close quarters the second largest California Gull rookery in North America is for the stout of body and heart. Please talk to Bartshé Miller for more information on this unique Mono adventure. No previous research experience required.

The Tao of Flyfishing

July 16-18

Doug Virtue

\$320 per person/ \$300 for members

Rod, reel, and tackle provided for the weekend

Limited to 4 participants

Whatever your level of skill, this unique fly fishing seminar gives you the opportunity to direct your own learning. Instructor Doug Virtue will be contacting each participant prior to the seminar to identify goals and prepare individualized lessons, from fly tying to casting to catching and releasing large fish unharmed. With only four participants, you'll receive an unusually high degree of personal attention. Daily schedules will be developed with the input of participants, but you should plan on starting early and ending late, with mid-day siestas while the sun is too bright for good fishing. The seminar begins Friday night at the Mono Inn with an intimate meal (included) and a slide show. Saturday will be devoted to fishing with a special session on a nearby private pond where you'll have an honest chance of catching and releasing a trout over five pounds. Depending on conditions, the class may also be able to try for Golden Trout at one of the regional lakes. Participants will also be introduced to the ancient fishing philosophy of "making a good day." Although meals aren't included after Friday night, there will be ample time for picnics in the beautiful locales where we'll be fishing. Instructor Doug Virtue has been flyfishing since 1975. He has a wealth of experience from operating a remote lodge in Alaska's Iliamna Lake to catching oceanic yellowtail in

Baja California. He emphasizes a holistic, appreciative approach to fishing that's appropriate for the waters of the Eastern Sierra.

Other Winged Wilderness

July 23-25

Verina Bird and Paul McFarland

\$110 per person/ \$95 for members

Not all things that fly have feathers. There is another world at flight during the height of summer, and the Mono Basin provides ideal habitat to observe it all. Join local naturalists Verina Bird and Paul McFarland on an exploration of the varied habitats of flying insects. On leisurely walks through alkali meadows to moraine ridgetops participants will learn the basics of butterflying, the insect lovers counterpart to birding. This seminar will focus on Jeffrey Glassberg's wonderful new field guide *Butterflies through Binoculars*. The class will cover identifying host plants, understanding the life cycle of butterflies, migration, habitat preferences, and their relationship to the entire ecosystem. Throughout this seminar, we will also be keeping an eye out for other creatures including, but not limited to, dragonflies, damselflies, moths, beetles and, of course, the larger winged creatures that eat them all. This seminar begins on a Friday evening and includes a long leisurely day of hiking on Saturday. Sunday will be a shorter day of hiking and the day will wrap up by early afternoon. Verina is a local lepidoptera enthusiast who has spent several summers chasing down butterflies. Paul McFarland, also a Lee Vining resident, is Executive Director of Friends of the Inyo, and is adept at chasing down pupae life stages, host plants, and birds.

Introduction to High Country Plants and Habitats

July 30-August 1

Ann Howald

\$110 per person/ \$95 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats that make up the Eastern Sierra high country—lush flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, forests of hemlock, lodgepole and whitebark pines, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery rock gardens. The class will focus on sight identification of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, but won't neglect any birds, bugs, or critters that come to check us out. With any luck, we'll be zoomed by hummingbirds defending their patches of paintbrush and columbine, and we'll see noisy Clark's Nutcrackers collecting and

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

storing whitebark pine seed. This weekend's seminar will begin Friday evening with an introductory slideshow session to introduce the basics of plant identification. Walks will be around the 10,000-foot elevation level with a modest pace over moderate terrain. Ann is a consulting botanist who has taught plant classes in the Eastern Sierra for many years.

Identifying High Country Wildflowers

August 13–15

Mark Bagley

\$110 per person/ \$95 for members

At the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek there's a rich summer display of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees along cascading creeks, jewel-like lakes, green meadows, and rocky granite slopes. There, amid the towering peaks of the Sierra at the source of Mono Lake's water, learn how to identify this great diversity of plants using Norman Weeden's *A Sierra Nevada Flora*. This is the most complete small field guide to Sierra plants and provides identification keys and plant descriptions that minimize the use of special terminology and are suitable for use by beginners. This weekend's seminar will begin Friday evening with a three-hour hands-on session to introduce you to the basics of plant identification. Saturday and Sunday will be spent in the field on easily paced short walks (generally less than a mile) at high elevations (generally above 9,000 feet)—with much more time stopping and keying out plants than walking. Mark is a consulting botanist in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert who has been leading field seminars in the Mono Basin since 1988. He is well known among past seminar participants for his easy-going pace and engaging teaching style in the field.

Tule and Cattail Basketry

August 20–22

Lucy Parker and Julia Parker

\$175 per person/ \$160 for members

primitive group campsite included

\$60 materials fee

During this three-day seminar participants will prepare materials and create a small tule and cattail gathering basket. Whole shoot tule and cattail will be used for both foundation and weaving. Participants will learn a plain-twining process with a half wrap around each foundation stick. Tule and cattail fibers are gathered in late spring when flowers begin to show. Participants will have enough time and material to finish a small basket during this seminar. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the

campfire with traditional songs and stories. **This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels, beginning through advanced.** Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, and Kayasha Pomo Peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother, a master basket weaver, and will pass on some of her knowledge in this special three-day/two-night camping seminar. Julia Parker is Lucy's mother and has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry as well as continuing the traditions of her people. She is one of the famous basket weavers of California, and the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women that wove in the early 20th century.

Fall Bird Migration

August 21–22

Dave Shuford

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, early autumn is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for twenty years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond, and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra. This is one of our most popular field seminars so register early for this one!

Winging into Autumn

August 28–29

David Lukas and Simone Whitecloud

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

This field seminar will focus on the identification and ecology of both resident and fall migratory birds. We will visit a wide variety of habitats, including marshes, riparian forests, and mountain slopes in search of migrating birds. This course is appropriate for beginning and more advanced birdwatchers. We will intensively explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and discussion, taking time to learn about birds by watching them closely. The natural history and ecology of the bird's habitat will also be discussed. Generally walks will be chosen for their accessibility, but participants should be prepared and capable of wandering off-trail in pursuit of special sightings. David Lukas has led over one hundred birdwatching and natural history programs for the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Elderhostel, and other groups. He is the author of *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin*, *Wild Birds of California*, and the revised *Sierra Nevada Natural History*. He is hard at work on an upcoming field guide to birds of the Sierra

Call (760) 647-6595 to Register

Nevada. Simone Whitecloud is a Bay Area naturalist with a biology degree from University of San Francisco. In addition to leading many popular classes in the Bay Area, she has conducted research on the birds of the Eastern Sierra for PRBO Conservation Science and co-led bird walks at last year's Chautauqua.

Thin Air and Steep Slopes: Sierra Bighorn Sheep in the Mono Basin

September 11–12

John Wehausen and Karl Chang

\$150 per person/ \$130 for members

The US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Sierra Bighorn Sheep as Federally Endangered in 1999. This field seminar will involve discussions of the biology and conservation of these animals with attempts to view them on foot. John Wehausen is a research scientist at White Mountain Research Station in Bishop. He has been investigating various aspects of the Sierra bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974. In the late 1970s he initiated the restoration program that brought bighorn back to the Mono Basin. There is a very good chance of seeing Sierra bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, but no guarantee. In the words of one past participant, "this is a High Sierra-safarison experience if there ever was one." Some of the proceeds from this seminar will benefit the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation. **This seminar involves strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.**

South Shore Kayak

September 12

Stuart Wilkinson and Mono Lake Committee Staff

\$75 per person/ \$65 for members

Early fall is an ideal time to kayak Mono Lake! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition along Mono's south shore. Your leaders are well versed in Mono Lake geology, ecology, history, and politics. This natural history kayak tour will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unusual Great Basin lake. Plan on four to five hours for the tour. Expect to see underwater tufa towers, birds, and lake bottom springs. Some kayak experience is helpful, but not necessary. Kayaks and safety equipment are provided. This seminar is being offered for the 9th year in a row, and is highly rated by past participants. Please note that this year's kayak seminar is on a Sunday. Space is limited in this popular seminar so register early!

Paiute Coil Basketry

Sept 17–19

Lucy Parker and Julia Parker

\$175 per person/ \$160 for members

primitive group campsite included

\$60 materials fee

In this seminar participants will gather and create a miniature Paiute coil basket. Crafting miniature baskets became common after Native American contact with European-Americans. The Paiute utilized only a few materials, and willow was the only foundation used. During this three-day seminar students will prepare willow fibers—learning to split materials for strings. California Red Bud will be added for design. Willow, gathered in fall and spring, and Red Bud, gathered in winter, will be provided. Participants will be able to finish a miniature basket during this seminar. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. **This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels, beginning through advanced.** Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, and Kayasha Pomo Peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother, a master basket weaver, and will pass on some of her knowledge in this special three-day/two-night camping seminar. Julia Parker is Lucy's mother and has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry as well as continuing the traditions of her people. She is one of the famous basket weavers of California, and the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women that wove in the early 20th century.

Reading the Aspen Groves: Arborglyphs and Aspen Natural History

October 2–3

Richard Potashin and Nancy Hadlock

\$105 per person/ \$90 for members

Known for their breathtaking fall color displays and distinctive quaking, aspens border the high meadows of the Glass Mountains and the Mono Basin. A century of sheep grazing brought many Basque shepherders into these meadows. With their leisure time they left numerous carvings—or arborglyphs—on the aspens. Join us for an enchanting journey into the aspen groves to explore this historic, organic art form and the natural history of the trees themselves. We'll learn about the numerous wildlife, insects, and birds that are drawn to the groves. During our leisurely walks we'll discuss the history of the sheep grazing in the Mono Basin, the Basque culture, the cultural significance of the carvings, and efforts to document them. Richard Potashin, aka Alkali Aspenowza, is a long-time Eastern Sierra resident and

past Mono Lake Committee intern and canoe guide who has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for many years. He's involved with numerous interpretive activities throughout the Eastern Sierra. Nancy Hadlock has her BS from the University of Nevada at Reno, her MS from California State University, Sacramento and has worked as an Interpretive Ranger since 1982. She has participated in UNR's Basque Studies Program and has been a passionate student of Basque culture, history and stories for over 20 years.

Mono-Bodie Fall Photography

October 8-10

Richard Knepp

\$250 per person/ \$225 for members

Autumn in the Mono Basin is one of the greatest photographic experiences in the country. Spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter for photographers in both color and black and white. **And, for the first time, the class will spend Saturday in Bodie!** Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, and fall color in nearby canyons. Beyond his photographic expertise, Rick is intimately familiar with the Eastern Sierra and Mono Lake locale. In Bodie, Rick will be joined by Bodie expert, photographer, and good friend Jill Lachman. Jill has taught photo workshops in Bodie for many years. It is quite a special treat to have the opportunity to photograph *inside* some of the buildings. Subjects for discussion include composition, exposure techniques, filtration, basic theory of the Zone System, and developing a personal vision. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This photographic seminar is offered for the 10th year in a row, with a new Bodie twist for 2004!

Late Fall Photography at Mono Lake: Finding Personal Vision

October 23-24

Claude Fiddler

\$365 per person/ \$345 for members

October is the time of year when the Mono Basin and surrounding High Sierra come alive with fall color. Claude Fiddler will guide participants to a grand and intimate landscape and help each workshop participant develop their personal photographic vision. All types of camera and photographer are welcome at this workshop. Especially unique to this workshop will be Claude's thorough demonstration of the use of a large format, 4x5 camera. The workshop will begin with a personal portfolio review and reception. Field time will emphasize the role of personal photographic goals and how these influence photo composition. Camera technique will focus on the essentials needed for the creative photographic process. Participants will review their photos each day by recording compositions with a digital camera and displaying them at a workstation. Famous for making large format photographs of the remote and wild High Sierra, Claude Fiddler is also renowned for his climbing and skiing exploits from the West Ridge of Mount Everest to a winter ski of the John Muir Trail. He is the author/photographer of Sierra classics: *The 100 Best Climbs in the Sierra Nevada*; *The High Sierra: Wilderness of Light*; *A Vast and Ancient Wilderness: Images of the Great Basin*; and *Yosemite Once Removed, Portraits of the Backcountry*.

Optional: on Monday, October 25th Claude will lead a photo excursion trek into the High Sierra open to seminar participants for an additional fee of \$115.00. Register at the time of the seminar.

Field Seminar Registration Information

Call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 and ask for the seminar desk to register. More extensive seminar descriptions are available upon request or online at www.monolake.org.

We accept VISA, MasterCard, and Discover or personal checks payable to the Mono Lake Committee. Sorry, we cannot accept registration by mail or email.

Seminars are limited to fifteen people except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants (certain seminars excepted), the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance, and full refunds will be given. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$10 processing fee). No refunds after that date, but tuition can be applied to another class in 2004.

Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars

operate under permit from the Inyo National Forest; some operate under additional permits from the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Committee works with instructors and field leaders that have received high ratings from past seminar participants. We emphasize a spirit of learning and camaraderie in magnificent outdoor setting for a reasonable cost.

The Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars are open to everyone, but Mono Lake Committee members get advance notice and class discounts. If you are not a current member of the Mono Lake Committee, you may receive the discount by joining when you register.

2004 Defender of the Trust Award to Dennis Tito

Dennis Tito, Founder, CEO, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Wilshire Associates, Inc., and former Chairman of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Commission, received the 2004 Mono Lake Committee Defender of the Trust Award. The event was held March 28 in Los Angeles at the home of Mono Lake Committee Board member Amy Holm.

Mono Lake Committee Board members Tom Soto and Martha Davis were joined by Tom Houston, former Deputy Mayor of the City of Los Angeles and environmental inventor, in presenting the award to Mr. Tito, praising his skill in working with the City of Los Angeles, the City Council of Los Angeles, and his fellow Commissioners to gain their acceptance of the 1994 State Water Resource Control Board order that DWP share its water with Mono Lake. Martha Davis pointed out that this is the first time the Mono Lake Committee Board has given this award in recognition of how important it was to have someone within the Department of Water and Power agree that the legal battles should end and conservation and restoration should begin. Tom Soto linked Mr. Tito's pioneering role as the first space tourist to his willingness to pioneer a new relationship between DWP and the Mono Lake Committee.

Mr. Tito responded, "For me, it was a business decision. LA was unlikely to win, and it seemed senseless to spend more and more money on attorneys." Then he added, "My son is very interested in the environment, too."

The Committee's Board of Directors has given the Defender of the Trust Award since 1993 to a person or persons who have made extraordinary contributions to champion the protection of Mono Lake. ❖



Tom Houston, Dennis Tito, Martha Davis, and Tom Soto with the Defender of the Trust award.

Staff Migrations

Tioga Pass opened on May 14th this year, and as visitors spill over the mountains, we're full swing into another great summer season. In order to serve visitors with naturalist walks, information, and increased store hours the Committee expands significantly with seasonal staff. We are excited to introduce the crew for this year.

Retail Assistant Heidi Hall joins the Committee from the nearby town of Walker. Formerly of Victor, Idaho, and Johnson, Wyoming, Heidi enjoys skiing, is a massage therapist, and an accomplished guitar player.

Retail Assistant Anna Scofield has returned from her first year at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo to help out again this summer. We're lucky to have someone who knows and loves Lee Vining so much out on the front counter.

Canoe Coordinator Cliff Rocha is spending a summer canoeing before starting the Environmental Science program at UC Berkeley this fall. Cliff has worked extensively in the Bay area and enjoys photography, birding, and backpacking.

Canoe Coordinator Ariel Rown is back! A graduate of UC Berkeley with a BS in Environmental Science, Ariel spent the winter months traveling in Central America, working with special needs students, and researching soil ecology.

Outdoor Experiences Coordinator Kristie Reddick has a BFA in Theater from the University of The Arts in Philadelphia. She recently went back to school to study Biology and is pursuing a Masters in Entomology because she is absolutely crazy about bugs.

Intern Erin Brandt is a graduate of University of Richmond with a BA in Spanish and a minor in Biology. Erin has also studied in Argentina and Spain and she is excited to explore and rock climb in the Eastern Sierra this summer.

Intern Ryan Carle is no stranger to the Mono Basin or the Mono Lake Committee. While he is currently studying literature at UC Santa Cruz, Ryan grew up in Lee Vining and has helped out the Committee on vacations in years past. Welcome home Ryan!

Intern Reagan Heater will be returning to the Mono Lake Committee this summer for his second year as an intern. Currently studying at Sierra College near Lake Tahoe, he's another local excited to be back on his home turf for the summer.

Intern Elin Ljung is an English major with concentration in Environmental Studies from St Olaf College in Northfield Minnesota. Arriving here straight from Australia, Elin is returning to her family's vacation grounds for a crash course in water policy.

Intern Kim Rollins is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a B.S. in Mass Communications, and a minor in Writing. Most recently from Bishop, Kim brings with her a love for environmental issues, natural history, and exploring the outdoors.

Birding Intern Alison Young is a graduate of Swarthmore College where she earned a BA in Biology. Alison has also studied in British Columbia and Alaska. We're lucky she migrated south to help out here in the Mono Basin.

Here's to another great summer season at Mono Lake! ❖

From the Mailbag

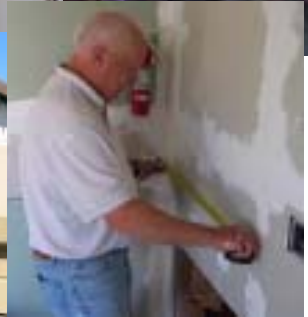
News from Members and Friends

by Erika Obedzinski



Thank You!

We have many people to thank for making it possible for the new Mono Basin Field Station to get up and running. To everyone that has helped in ways small or big, we are grateful for your support and enthusiasm! Thank you to our dedicated work week volunteers and staff: **Barry Boulton, Lori Bowermaster, Leah Culp, Chris Degenhardt, Nick Carle, Paul Clark, John Fernandes, Brook Fisher, and Kelly Miller.** Thank you also to **Donnette Huselton** for all of her hard work on this project—you may know that Donnette is also the Committee's Controller—it's a little known fact that she's also an expert handy-person and contributed invaluable effort to this project. Materials were generously donated to the new Field Station by **Paul Clark** (who also gave other volunteers a very useful crash course in dry walling), **Gwen Plummer, and Joe Roberts.** Additionally, the **Asian American Drug Abuse Program** and **Adrow Environmental Inc.** made donations of low-flow toilets—both of these organizations distribute low-flow toilets in the Los Angeles area. Thank you to **Gary Walecke** of Gary's Electric for rewiring the Field Station, and to **Bill Banta, the Lee Vining Public Utilities District** and **Construction Specialty** for excavating and repairing the ancient and leaking water main next to the Field Station. Another big thank you goes to **Sarkis, Eduardo, Carlos, and Reveg of Microsystemas** in Los Angeles for installing the wireless ethernet connection between the Committee's main offices and the new Field Station. And last but not least, thank you to **Cara, Rocky, Carrie, and Woody at the Mono Cone** for helping to keep everyone well fed during the workweek. We look forward to an exciting future of research in the Mono Basin!



Volunteers working away during the Field Station Work Week in April.

In Memory

A gift was made in memory of **Helen Ball**, a long-time supporter of Mono Lake, by her husband **William Ball** of Oakland and their two daughters. **Janet Demmler** gave a contribution in memory of **Rex Rice.** Gifts in memory of **Milton L. Speckels** were received from **William & Vickie Black** of Ridgecrest and **Eileen Dietz** also of Ridgecrest. **Mr. & Mrs. Fred Seiji** of Vallejo made a donation in memory of **Janet Elisabeth Farmer Huss,** and **Donna Young** of Playa del Rey gave a gift in memory of **Clem Nelson** of Bishop.

In Honor

Edith and Mortimer Gaines of Los Angeles made a contribution in honor of **Martha Davis' 50th birthday**—Happy Birthday Martha! **Julia Hart** of Azusa, sent a contribution in honor of **Doug Virtue** for the “wonderful Introduction to Fly fishing seminar ... landing the Lahontan Cutthroat trout was an extraordinary experience.” **Janice Jacobson** of Nevada City made a donation in honor of **Jane Straus' 50th Birthday**—Happy Birthday Jane! Former Mono Lake Committee intern **Camden Richards** of Arlington, VA and her husband **Josh Dickinson** made a contribution in celebration of their marriage, to be used for tree planting and stream restoration—Congratulations Camden and Josh! ❖

Erika Obedzinski is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She prepared for summer by canoeing in the Boundary Waters.

A special thank you also goes to thoughtful member **Richard Russell** of Santa Monica, who donated his 1986 Isuzu Trooper. The Trooper, at left with Geoff, Bartshe and Richard, is being put to great use with the Outdoor Experiences program!



ARYA DEGENHARDT AND GEOFF MCCOULIKIN

Visit Mono Lake to Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the US Forest Service Scenic Area Designation

Saturday, July 10, 2004

Birthday Party at Forest Service Visitor's Center at Mono Lake
Scenic Area Field Trip
Mono Lake Canoe Tours
And More



For a schedule of events and to RSVP
please contact frances@monolake.org



Travel to the Galapagos Islands ... *and* benefit Mono Lake!

Visit the Galapagos Islands for 11 days
aboard a sailboat with Mountain Travel Sobek!

August 9-19, 2004

The 15-person group will be accompanied by an expert naturalist guide
for 11 days of sailing, hiking, snorkeling, and island-style relaxation.

The trip benefits the Mono Lake Committee

For more information, contact Susanne Methvin 1-800-282-8747 x6023
or email Susanne@mtsobek.com



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Lee Vining, CA 93541

