

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Summer 2008



30th
Anniversary
1978-2008

One of my favorite job responsibilities is photo-documenting the happenings out and about at Mono Lake. At any given moment I'll drop everything to run out with the camera—for a fire, a dust storm, a high spring flow, a beautiful sunset. I love it.

This week Elin and I went out to re-photograph what we at the Committee call “benchmark tufa.” As the story goes, benchmark tufa was first photographed in 1962 by an astute vacationer who noticed two knobby spires peeking out above the water’s surface. The photograph, uncovered years later during the Mono Lake hearings, has been re-photographed over time at various lake levels, providing a powerful representation of Mono’s falling lake level, and now, its rise.

There are many changes that have taken place out at that particular tufa. Willows have grown up around the land-locked towers—willows so thick it’s now impossible to capture the original photo exactly. We poked around attempting to get a good shot, when suddenly I realized something was different: I could hear waves crashing close by! See more benchmark tufa photos on page 13 and you’ll see why it’s so exciting.

Thirty years ago, when the Mono Lake Committee was founded, the idea that someday the lake level would be making its way back up the benchmark tufa spires was a distant dream. In that moment out at the lake I wanted to shout so loud that every single person who has contributed to the effort to save Mono Lake over the last 30 years could hear—the water is getting close!

Back in the office I realized that that’s exactly what this *Newsletter* does. For 30 years it has served to get the word out about Mono Lake—unsettling news, unusual news, uplifting news. In this 30th anniversary year the Mono Lake Committee has much to celebrate. I hope that is what you’ll find in the pages that follow. And, if it makes you feel like celebrating, come on up here and listen to the waves yourself!

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



1962, lake level 6394 feet above sea level.



1968, lake level 6387.



1995, lake level 6378.



COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT ARNIZ

ELIN LJUNG

A lucky glimpse of an American Dipper chick at Lee Vining Creek on its first foray out of the nest near the rushing snowmelt current.

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.



Mono Lake Office Information Center & Bookstore

Highway 395 at Third Street
Post Office Box 29
Lee Vining, California 93541
(760) 647-6595

info@monolake.org
www.monolake.org
www.monobasinresearch.org

Los Angeles Office

322 Culver Boulevard
Playa Del Rey, California 90293

Staff

Executive Director..... Geoffrey McQuilkin
Eastern Sierra Policy Director..... Lisa Cutting
Education Director..... Bartshé Miller
Communications Director..... Arya Degenhardt
Office Director..... Erika Obedzinski
Membership Coordinator..... Ellen King
Information Specialist..... Greg Reis
Policy Coordinator..... Emily Prud'homme
Sacramento Policy Associate..... Betsy Reifsnider
Outdoor Experiences Mgr..... Santiago Escruceria
Los Angeles Education Coord..... Herley Jim Bowling
Communications Coordinator..... Elin Ljung
Information Center & Bookstore Mgr..... Duncan King
Book & Map Buyer..... Laura Walker
Bookkeeper..... Donnette Huselton

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MONO LAKE
NEWSLETTER

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The Mono Lake Committee turns 30

Inspired year after year by Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The Mono Lake Committee began with a passion for Mono Lake, a vision for the lake's protection, and the names of a few concerned individuals stored on index cards in a recipe box. Our efforts, now 30 successful years long and 16,000 grassroots members strong, are inspired by our love for this wild and natural place—a place where a remarkable salt lake lies at the center of a landscape and ecosystem unmatched anywhere else on earth.

This year we celebrate the Committee's 30th anniversary. I could write pages and pages on the remarkable events of the Committee's history: David Gaines and the ever-traveling Mono Lake slideshow, the bucket walk, the LA to Mono Bike-A-Thon, the Supreme Court victory for the Public Trust, the day Mono County sheriff deputies stopped DWP from turning off Rush Creek, the State Water Board vote, the first youth from Los Angeles learning about the source of their water, and so much more.

This morning I looked back through the essays and interviews gathered for our 25th anniversary (a great historical resource—see the *Newsletter* online if you don't have copies handy). As I read, I was reminded of the incredible power of the Mono Lake story, of how the Committee, with a base in science, seeks principled solutions to Mono Lake's problems, of how we are an optimistic community of people who have built a place-based advocacy organization of tremendous strength.

Our successes mean we have an important responsibility to make our efforts on behalf of Mono Lake as thoughtful, comprehensive, and effective as possible. Back in 2003 I listed our major goals for the next 25 years. So let's take a quick look: how are we doing?

The goals were listed with much detail but in broad strokes they were: meet



Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore and headquarters, 2008.



1990



1982



1978

public policy challenges proactively to assure continued protection of Mono Lake, its tributaries, and surrounding lands. Restore the Mono Basin's ecological health. Expand our education program, particularly with urban youth. Assure scientific research continues to answer critical ecological questions. Provide sustainable, modest office and public information space.

I'm happy to report that we're making great progress. We've turned back major policy challenges including damaging highway widening, inappropriate lakeshore land development, and even the federal efforts to abandon air quality protection at Mono Lake. We've engaged people in on-the-ground stewardship work for the lake. We've advanced the ecological restoration of the lake and its tributary streams, and made sure that DWP's restoration projects are the best they can be.

Our education program is growing, including major steps forward toward expanding our Outdoor Experiences program that connects LA youth with the source of their water. In 2004 we opened the Mono Basin Field Station to support robust scientific inquiry at the lake (it has been full each summer ever since). And thanks to fantastic member support we've been able to put a new leakproof roof on the office and Information Center building and pay off the mortgage on our critical Annex property in town.

Wow! Working together, we've got good reasons to celebrate!

Celebrating all year long

We're celebrating this anniversary throughout the year, and Mono Lake events like the Bird Chautauqua, our Field Seminars, and volunteer stewardship projects will all include opportunities to share stories. Plus, stop in

Continued on page 27

People protecting Mono Lake for future generations

A new exhibit at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center

by Bartshé Miller

If you walk into the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore you might notice some exciting changes. A large colorful map, exhibit panels, a brine shrimp tank, an expansive image of Mill Creek, and a painted mural will greet visitors beginning in summer 2008. Titled, “People protecting Mono Lake for future generations,” seven interpretive panels highlight a few of the individual stories that contribute to the protection of Mono Lake. The new education wall illustrates the difference that individuals have made and continue to make in protecting the Mono Basin. The world can be complex and overwhelming with big global players, but change often begins with individual voices and action. In many ways, the story of Mono Lake is a classic example of this.

Some of the people who made an impact in the Mono Basin include a few famous individuals like William Mulholland, John Muir, and David Gaines. Some other individuals are not as well-known, but their contributions exert a powerful influence in the continuing protection of Mono Lake: Elsa Lopez from East Los Angeles helped launch a successful grassroots water conservation effort that became an institutional standard. Bruce Dodge, a veteran lawyer, was the architect of the Mono Lake Public Trust litigation that forever changed California water law. Elden Vestal, a former California Fish & Game biologist, took detailed notes on the condition of Mono Basin streams; his documentation is now used to measure the progress of today’s restoration.



The new exhibit includes a brine shrimp tank, a big map, and panels that highlight the individual people’s stories that contribute to the protection of Mono Lake.

Unfortunately, the exhibit wall is only so long, and the list of individuals, organizations, and agencies that made a difference is greater than 30 feet of wall could ever accommodate. Telling the story of Mono Lake in a small space was quite a challenge!

Committee staff who designed the wall incorporated a variety of media in order to create a visually dynamic exhibit.

Tucked down the hallway facing the brine shrimp tank is an eight-foot-tall mural painted by scientific

illustrator Logan Parsons. The painting shows a late spring day down at Mono Lake with California Gulls, an Osprey, Eared Grebes, and phalaropes. You can see below the surface of Mono Lake and a freshwater stream—a peek at life in two contrasting aquatic worlds.

Parsons was referred to the Mono Lake Committee by another accomplished artist and friend of Mono Lake: Jack Laws. Parsons’ artistic skill and biology background make a striking picture of Mono Lake; her mural



Scientific illustrator Logan Parsons showing Lee Vining Elementary School first graders the process of making the mural.

compliments the human history on the facing wall and reminds us exactly why people are protecting Mono Lake for future generations. Be sure to stop by the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore next time you’re in town to see how you’re a part of the story too. ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee’s Education Director. He recently went to see the Sacramento Kings play the Los Angeles Lakers—his first live professional basketball game.

Outdoor Experiences program for urban youth looks to the future

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Mono Lake has many lessons to teach and the Mono Lake Committee, with decades of Mono Lake knowledge in hand, has always had a goal of sharing those lessons wherever possible.

“Teaching,” Committee founder David Gaines once said, “can be a means of establishing a relationship between a person and the environment that extends to how we live, that defines a right relationship between humans, other living things, and places like Mono Lake.” To that end, the Committee is planning for the future of our successful Outdoor Experiences program.

Outdoor Experiences

The Outdoor Experiences program (OE) is one of the Committee’s standout successes. The program connects Los Angeles youth with the source of their water in the Mono Basin through week-long experiences at the lake that focus on science and hands-on learning.

For many students, the OE week is the first time in their lives they have experienced the top of a Sierra peak, a cold mountain stream, the roaring spray of a waterfall, or the cool green ribbon of life that follows water to Mono Lake. For most, it is their first time learning in an outdoor setting. For all, it is a time of realization about one’s self and the larger web of life of which we are all a part.

Each year the Committee has to turn away groups seeking to participate, and our goal is to expand the program so that more students can take part. For 14 years the program has operated in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) and utilized a small DWP house located at Cain Ranch as a base of operations just south of Lee Vining. However, the facility is stretched to its limits. The program’s core needs are a long-term home base and facility improvement to allow for an extended operating season and larger group sizes.

Site visit from David Nahai

In February DWP General Manager and CEO David Nahai visited the Outdoor Experiences facility at Cain Ranch. Arriving just hours before one of the winter’s biggest snowstorms, Nahai endured cold winds to tour the site, and met with Committee staff to discuss the future of the program.

Nahai and Committee staff talked about how to expand

the OE program in a way that would preserve the unique experiences it provides while serving more young people from Los Angeles. The critical step, all agreed, is establishing a long-term base for the program’s operations.



Geoff McQuilkin, Santiago Escruceria, and David Nahai visiting DWP’s Cain Ranch facility, home base for the OE program.

Nahai also expressed his amazement at how many city youth are unaware of their water sources. He observed that, with water conservation topping the list of how LA will meet its future water needs, it is critical that LA water users understand the connection between the kitchen faucet and the natural source of that water in the Mono Basin.

Planning underway

The house and land used at Cain Ranch for the past 14 years has been leased by the Committee on a year-to-year basis. So far this has worked well, but it limits the Committee’s ability to make improvements on the site. A long-term lease for the site is now in negotiation and will expand the lease arrangement of the past 14 years into a longer, 30-year agreement.

With a completed lease in hand, the Committee will then look for funding to be able to make improvements that increase the quality of the OE program and allow more youth to experience the Mono Basin. And that will allow us to come back around to creating even better relationships between humans and places like Mono Lake. ❖

Restoration flows, facilities, and future needs

by Lisa Cutting

With winter snows melting and streams beginning to flow with renewed vigor, the Mono Lake Committee is gearing up for this year's restoration activities. Working collaboratively with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), appointed stream scientists, and other interested parties, the Committee continues to ensure that restoration directives mandated by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) under Decision 1631 (D1631) are planned properly, scheduled, and implemented.

Following are just a few of the many items that the Committee will be tracking and participating in this year.

Stream Restoration Flows

DWP has forecasted this year's runoff to be 86% of average, which classifies this year as "normal" and requires DWP to release Stream Restoration Flows (SRFs) down Rush and Lee Vining Creeks (see *Streamwatch & Lakewatch* articles on page 12 for details). While DWP is responsible for delivering the required flows, the Committee plays an active role in this process—communicating with DWP daily as the peak flow period advances and the exact timing is carefully identified. During this critical time Committee staff and consultants are vigilantly watching all the contributing variables including snow pack availability, water content of the snow pack, rising nighttime temperatures, and runoff conditions in adjacent watersheds. The timing of the peak flow is not only a technical restoration requirement but also essential to the continued natural recovery of processes such as bedload movement, sediment deposition, regeneration of cottonwoods, and groundwater recharge of the creek floodplains.

Mono Gate One diversion facility upgrade

DWP will begin work this summer to improve the structural integrity and



Lee Vining Creek bottomlands before spring high flows.

operational control of the existing weir structure at the Mono Gate One diversion facility. These improvements will provide increased precision at this facility—enabling the accurate delivery of reliable peak flows to Rush Creek (via the Rush Return Ditch) and allowing for automated flow control of water exports through the Mono Craters Tunnel to the Los Angeles aqueduct—all from DWP's Bishop office. The construction work is scheduled to take two years and annual peak flows will not be affected. The Committee supports the proposed improvements and commends DWP's initiative in pursuing the facility upgrades, as they are not required by any restoration mandate.

Base flow study

All parties involved in restoration activities will return to the Mono Basin in late summer to conduct an intensive instream base flow study on Rush and Lee Vining Creeks. The details of the plan have yet to be finalized but the goal is for stream scientists to collect additional data related to various flow regimes. Ultimately, that data will help

to inform the scientists' specific long term streamflow recommendations, which are anticipated to be released as early as next spring. Stream flows—both base flows and spring SRFs—have proven to be the single most important factor in the recovery of Mono Lake's tributary streams.

Status of Restoration Compliance Report (SORC)

The SORC is an annual report that details the status of DWP's restoration requirements in the Mono Basin as outlined by D1631 and Restoration Orders 98-05 and 98-07. The report was established last year for the first time as a joint, collaborative summary document prepared by DWP and the Committee and submitted to the State Water Board (see *Spring 2007 Newsletter*). The report categorizes every restoration requirement as either ongoing, complete, in progress, incomplete, or deferred. Now, every April DWP shares a draft report with the Committee for input, the draft is finalized, and included in the May Compliance Report.

Continued on page 7

Restoration meetings

DWP convenes two restoration meetings every year, typically in the fall and spring. The meetings are usually held in Sacramento because it's a central location, but this June the spring meeting will be held in the Mono Basin. Having the meeting in the basin provides the added value of a facilities tour and field orientation for new DWP and State

Water Board staff the day before the meeting. Additionally, opportunities to go out in the field with the stream scientists are always invaluable. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. She is making the brave leap into high altitude desert vegetable gardening this summer.

Rush Creek winter low flow variance is over

by Lisa Cutting

On April 1, 2008 the winter flow variance that reduced Rush Creek flows by 28% and had been approved by the State Water Board and in place since November 11, 2007 ended. Rush Creek's flow has been returned to the flow mandated by Decision 1631, the legal mandate by which Mono Basin stream flows are determined. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) had requested the flow variance back in October 2007 as a way to hold back 3,500 acre-feet of water in Grant Lake Reservoir in order to maximize operational flexibility this spring.



Minimal monitoring was done during the variance.

Last fall, the Mono Lake Committee called for additional monitoring in order to take advantage of the unique data set associated with the low-flow situation and to assure no unexpected impacts occurred. The State Water Board agreed. But coordinating all the interested parties and scientists to organize the last-minute plan proved to be tough. The Committee responded quickly to establish responsibilities and formalize the plan for additional monitoring with the parties; unfortunately in the end, minimal information was collected.

While current information suggests no harm came to Rush Creek, the lack of monitoring is a significant concern for the Committee. Certainly, any similar variance proposal in the future will need to do a much better job of including and delivering a monitoring component.

What we know

Even though all the parties have agreed to an adaptive management approach to restoration in the Mono Basin, the Committee discovered that it is becoming increasingly difficult for DWP to add last-minute tasks to an already-established (and approved) work plan. Adding additional monitoring components such as fish studies, groundwater measurements, flow measurements, and field observations was problematic for DWP both from staffing and budgetary perspectives. DWP reported that local field staff were already scheduled for other assignments and the fisheries team was faced with a budget that had run dry and a contract not due to renew until this June.

It's not surprising that the complex DWP budgetary approval process didn't allow for any sort of last-minute request, but by definition that is exactly what adaptive management often requires. The Committee has begun to explore ways to address and minimize this hurdle for the future.

As soon as it was apparent that additional monitoring might not be done, the Committee, US Forest Service, and California Trout quickly rallied and were able to conduct some of the work. Because fish monitoring was a critical component of the low flow variance and it required the expertise of the existing fishery stream scientists, California Trout and the Committee raised the necessary funds to pay for the additional March fish survey.

Unanswered questions

One of the most important questions remains unanswered—how did the trout respond to the lower flow? Stream scientists have hypothesized that a lower winter flow in Rush Creek might actually help the trout do better because they might expend less energy against a reduced streamflow velocity. Anecdotal trout observations from this winter haven't signaled any cause for concern yet but the data from the fish surveys is still being processed and analyzed. In addition, the annual fall fish survey that assesses individual trout and population health factors will be a more definitive measure of the effects of the lower flow on the trout. In short, we have to wait for those results.

Why is all of this important?

Information related to various flow regimes—high, spring stream restoration flows, and base flows—has always been a critical part of restoration and the recovery of streams in the Mono Basin. At the most recent restoration meeting this past February, the stream scientists indicated that they may have final stream flow recommendations as early as spring 2009. As always, the Committee wants as much information as possible in order to evaluate and respond to these flow recommendations since they will guide restoration well into the future.

Policy notes

by the Policy Team

Regional water planning begins for Eastern Sierra

The Mono Lake Committee has recently been involved in launching a regional strategy to address water issues, coordinate projects across jurisdictional boundaries, and attract funding to Eastern Sierra watersheds. As part of efforts by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to create Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs), a non-regulatory process would improve coordination among Mono Basin water managers and make funds available for broadly supported projects.

In general, IRWMPs are intended to promote regional water management to ensure sustainable water uses, reliable water supplies, better water quality, environmental stewardship, efficient urban development, protection of agriculture, and a strong economy. Once IRWMPs are established statewide, DWR hopes they inform the direction of the State Water Plan and become the regional basis for its implementation.

The State is allocating significant resources and funding for IRWMPs—both for the planing and implementation of the resulting projects. Propositions 50 and 84 have already allocated tens of millions of dollars to IRWMPs and \$27 million is reserved for the region including Mono Lake.

Black Point finding reversed; issues outstanding

Late last year, the Internal Board of Land Appeals reversed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2006 decision that the mining claim on Mono Lake's Black Point volcano was not legal (see Fall 2006 *Newsletter*). The owners had previously been granted a stay to continue mining cinders for use on winter roads while this decision has been pending.

The dispute came in determining which of several mining acts from



Black Point and its reflection in Mono Lake as seen from Hwy 395 on a clear winter day.

the early 20th century was effective at the time the Black Point claims were staked. At that time some lands had been withdrawn from potential mining claims in anticipation of their sale to Los Angeles. However, LA never purchased these lands, leaving a confusing situation for mining claims. BLM had decided the lands were closed to claims but the Internal Board of Land Appeals' ruling reverses this.

There are still outstanding issues. The US Forest Service (USFS) acquired these lands from the BLM as part of the Mono Basin Scenic Area legislation in 1984. The USFS is now working with the operators to determine if they had a valid existing right to the claims in 1984, which is needed in order to allow the operation to continue into the future under the USFS.

Another hydropower project in the Mono Basin?

In February 2008, the Committee received notification that KC LLC of Fair Oaks, California had filed a preliminary permit application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a small 500 kW hydropower facility in the Mono Basin.

The proposed "Conway Ranch Hydropower Project" would be located

adjacent to the diversion ditch that transports Virginia Creek water from Conway Summit down to the northwest section of Conway Ranch. The total estimated average annual energy production would be 2.3 gigawatt hours. According to the California Energy Commission, that equals the amount of electricity that 327 average Californians use in a year.

The proposed plan calls for a two-mile-long pipe to be built in order to convey water to a new powerhouse that would be built just west of Highway 395 at the bottom of the Conway grade. The new diversion would continue onward to deliver water to Conway Ranch. Given that the nearby Lundy hydropower relicensing has taken 25 years, there's a long road ahead and much to be learned about this project.

The Committee had an opportunity to meet with the project's organizers regarding a different concept involving reconstruction of a secondary hydro facility on Lee Vining Creek. We shared our concern that removing water from Lee Vining Creek—which has suffered such diversions before—would likely be a substantial setback to the ecological restoration that is underway. At press time, no application had been filed. ❖

The Mono Basin Resource Stewardship Project

Grant from Sierra Nevada Conservancy jumpstarts innovative program

by Emily Prud'homme

The Mono Lake Committee, in partnership with the US Forest Service (USFS) and Friends of the Inyo, has been awarded a two-year, \$96,100 grant for the Mono Basin Resource Stewardship Project from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The goals of the project are twofold: to assist in restoration efforts that will help the riparian and lakeshore ecosystems recover from previous damage, and to maintain healthy land and water resources in light of increased use and visitation in the Mono Basin.

The driving force behind the project is the need to fill in the gaps that have emerged with USFS staff reductions over the past decade. The Resource Stewardship Project will provide a roving ranger presence in places around the Mono Basin other than South Tufa—remote spots that need monitoring and protection. To that end, the partners have hired Justin Hite as the Resource Stewardship Ranger to spearhead the efforts on the ground around the Mono Basin. No stranger to Mono Lake, Hite conducted California Gull research in the Mono Basin from 1999 through 2004.

Ranger Hite's work will focus on projects in support of the goals established to protect the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and its resources—including ongoing restoration work, visitor outreach and education, and water quality monitoring. Ranger Hite will rove in the Mono Basin as well as organize volunteer work projects that take many hands to accomplish.

Volunteers needed for Mono Basin Resource Stewardship Project days

Join Stewardship Ranger Hite for a day of stewardship work around the Mono Basin! Campsite delineation, OHV track restoration, and invasive plant pulling along Mono Basin streams are some examples of the projects we'll work on. Water and snacks will be provided and there will be opportunities for people of all skill levels and abilities to participate.

Stewardship workdays are June 28, July 19, August 16, and September 20. Contact Policy Coordinator Emily Prud'homme (emily@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 for more information.

This project exemplifies the potential for collaboration between government land managers, private organizations, and members of the public to achieve effective land stewardship. The Committee and our partners thank the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for their support of this important work. ❖

Upgraded www.monolake.org to launch this summer ... complete with new and improved WebCams!

by Greg Reis

It has been over a decade since the Mono Lake Committee first installed the Mono Lake WebCam and the Lee Vining WebCam, and upgraded the Mono Lake Website (www.monolake.org) to its current configuration.

Committee staff have spent the last year and a half planning and working on the current upgrade of the Mono Lake Website, due for release this summer. The new and improved site will have a fresh look and feel, feature large striking images of the Mono Basin and the Committee's work, include improved services for members, and present a new organization system for our large number of Webpages, the expansion of which have caused growing pains during the last five years.

In addition, we have an improved Lee Vining WebCam with a high quality image that will be revealed during the summer

launch. We will also unveil a new WebCam, likely located in Mono City with a view of Mill Creek, Mono Lake, and the Mono Craters. These new WebCams are the same high-quality cams used by the Yosemite Association for the Half Dome Cam; visit www.yosemite.org/vryos/AhwahneeMeadowCam.htm to see an example of the camera quality.

WebCam visitors will have to log in to view the cams—a very simple process involving submitting a name and email address. This will enable the Committee to reach a larger constituency of people who care about Mono Lake when we need people to speak out on Mono Lake's behalf.

Look for the new WebCams and Website this summer online at www.monolake.org!

Keeping an eye on climate change

by Emily Prud'homme

In the effort to protect and restore Mono Lake, the Mono Lake Committee continues to investigate the potential effects of a warming climate on the Mono Lake ecosystem. To do this, the Committee is looking to the long history of climate fluctuations recorded at Mono Lake, examining modeled forecasts for future Sierra Nevada snowpack, and is involved with climate research currently underway in the Eastern Sierra.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASSAN BASAGIC

1883: Israel C. Russell documented the extent of the Dana Glacier at the top of Mono Lake's watershed.

Recently, Committee policy staff and representatives from ten other regional non-profit organizations gathered for the quarterly Eastern Sierra Environmental Roundtable to hear a presentation entitled, "Adapting Resource Management to Address Climate Change." Given by staff from the Sierra Nevada Alliance, the program was a reminder of key statistics, including the fact that the Sierra Nevada supplies 65% of California's developed water, much of which is stored as snowpack. The amount of Sierra snowpack is expected to decline in the coming decades, as snow levels rise in elevation and more winter precipitation falls as rain; models predict a 25–40% reduction of snowpack in the next 50 years.

Climate conference in Eastern Sierra

The "Climate, Ecosystems, and Resources of Eastern California" Conference will be held in Bishop November 5–8, 2008 at the 5th White Mountain Research Station Symposium. Focused on the Eastern Sierra, White Mountains, and adjacent regions, this meeting will feature invited talks on climate variability, and physical, ecological, and management responses to climate. For more information, visit www.wmrs.edu/projects/CEREC/.

Determining the effects on Mono Lake

Climate change models are providing a big picture view of future precipitation patterns in the Sierra, but their forecasts are generated on a very large scale. This makes forecasting specific Mono Lake watershed precipitation changes challenging. However, there's no doubt that here in the Mono Basin change is underway, as evidenced by shrinking high country glaciers. Several glaciers in the Mono Basin



2004: A recent photograph of the Dana Glacier shows dramatically decreased ice coverage.

watershed, such as the Mt. Dana glacier pictured here at the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek, have experienced substantial ice loss over the last century.

While there are many questions to be studied, Mono Lake does have a well documented history of rising and falling in response to historic and prehistoric climate fluctuations. Understanding how the lake level has responded to climate changes in the past offers uniquely valuable insight that will help us understand what change could look like in the future.

Using science and precedents

The Committee looks for scientific perspective to the Mono Basin Science Council, a group of independent scientists that focuses specifically on the Mono Basin. The Council is already actively evaluating what research is needed to predict and anticipate the changes ahead—one of the reasons the Committee supports scientific research on many aspects of the ecosystem through the Mono Basin Field Station.

In the face of climate change, the Mono Lake Committee believes strongly in the precedent set by the solutions already forged at Mono Lake. Conservation is a powerful and essential tool that can help balance the needs of humans with those of the environment. The Committee is committed to looking at the big picture in order to make the best decisions for both people and Mono Lake. ❖

Statewide water droplets

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

A call for 20% conservation

Earlier this year Governor Schwarzenegger called for a 20% reduction in urban water use by 2020. This substantial, and achievable, goal has been broadly embraced as a method for addressing supply limitations and environmental needs for water.

It might also sound familiar! Indeed, urban water conservation is the approach the Mono Lake Committee took 30 years ago to solve the problem of excessive water diversions from the Mono Basin—reduce demand in Los Angeles through conservation and recycling in order to provide the water Mono Lake needs to remain healthy.

The Committee's goal was to find a solution for Mono Lake that avoided transferring our environmental problem somewhere else in the state—most likely the San Francisco Bay Delta. Now the concept is coming full circle: the water conservation goal set by Schwarzenegger is expected to be a key strategy for fixing water shortages in the Delta without transferring the problem to other water sources like Mono Lake.

Even after the successful efforts of recent decades, water conservation remains a tremendous opportunity for California. According to the California Water Plan, urban conservation has the potential to produce between one and three million acre-feet of water per year. Water recycling has the potential to conserve another one million acre-feet per year or more. For perspective, one acre-foot of water supplies two families of four for one year. Los Angeles has found tremendous benefits from implementing conservation programs, many with funds and support generated by the Mono Lake Committee.

To implement the Governor's call for conservation, legislation is needed. The Committee is supporting Assembly Bill 2175, which calls for the 20% urban conservation goal as well as setting targets for agricultural conservation.

Public Trust in the Bay Delta

The California Delta, where the state's major rivers converge before emptying into San Francisco Bay, remains in crisis. Although winter storms ended up supplying average snowpack in the Sierra, exports of Delta water for agriculture and urban supply have been cut sharply this year due to past failures to protect the Delta environment and recent concurring court decisions. As a result, talk of water shortages has been in the news frequently this year.

Conservation programs (see above) are a key ingredient for a successful solution. Interestingly, another key ingredient has deep roots at Mono Lake: the Public Trust.

In 1983 the California Supreme Court reinvigorated the state's Public Trust Doctrine in its landmark ruling on Mono Lake. The Public Trust, the court wrote, "is an affirmation of the duty of the state to protect the people's common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands and tidelands."

Now this duty to protect the common heritage of the people is being discussed in regard to the Delta, including a call from the Governor's Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force to use it as a foundational policy-making principle. The Public Trust has been a critical concept at Mono Lake; the Committee expects it can help solve the challenges of the Delta as well.

Water and power

Recent studies have brought to light surprising statistics about the linkage between water and power in California. Much of the state's water is moved great distances and pipes, pumps, and treatment facilities use a lot of electricity. Estimates are that 20% of the state's electricity is used to move and treat water. As a result, conserving water often also conserves a great deal of power, reducing electrical demand and power plant emissions. In an era of

climate change, that's one more reason to conserve water.

Clothes washer water efficiency

California generally leads the nation in water conservation programs. However, in the case of clothes washers, the state is having a tough time. Federal officials have refused to provide a necessary waiver that would have allowed California to phase in tight water efficiency requirements for washers starting last year, as required by state legislation supported by the Mono Lake Committee. The state, with broad support from water conservation advocates, is appealing the federal decision in court. ❖

Mono Lake on public radio

You may recently have heard the sounds of Mono Lake—and the Mono Lake Committee—on your local public radio station, thanks to an excellent documentary called "Saving the Sierra: Grassroots Solutions for Sustaining Rural Communities." The hour-long program, produced by Catherine Stifter and Jesikah Maria Ross, investigates the threats to and protections of three Sierra locations and features Mono Lake in an extensive 20-minute segment of the program. Particularly noteworthy is the depth to which the documentary reveals the current, post-water-conflict relationship between Mono Lake, youth education, and water conservation in Los Angeles.

The program has been heard in various regions of California and hopefully will air nationally later this year. But don't wait! You can hear it online by following the link at the Mono Lake Website (www.monolake.org).

Streamwatch

Normal Runoff Year streamflows to test aqueduct facilities to limit

by Greg Reis

The State Water Resources Control Board defines a “Normal” Runoff Year as a year when the runoff forecast falls between 82.5% and 107% of average. This year’s runoff is forecasted to be 86% of average.

In a Normal Runoff Year, the requirement for Stream Restoration Flows (SRFs) is to allow the peak flow to pass through diversion dams on Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker Creeks. On Rush Creek, 380 cubic feet per second (cfs) must be released for 5 days followed by 300 cfs for 7 days.

380 cfs is the capacity of the Mono Gate One Return Ditch—the mile-long path that water takes from Grant Lake Reservoir to Rush Creek—and this year, it will be tested to its limit for 5

days for the first time (although it did run at a slightly lower 350 cfs for 8 days in 2005).

In 2004, about a year after the ditch reconstruction was completed, it was fully tested at the insistence of the Mono Lake Committee. During the one-day test, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) patrolled the ditch often, monitoring leaks and seepage—if the ditch were to fail, there would be no way to get water to Rush Creek below the dam. The gate at the head of the ditch is also barely able to handle this high flow, but is scheduled for reconstruction during the next two years.

In wetter years, Grant Lake Reservoir spill—or augmentation from Lee Vining

Creek—must be used to meet the even higher SRF requirement. Up to 150 cfs of water could be required from Lee Vining Creek in an Extreme Wet Year; however, this augmentation procedure has only been tested up to 120 cfs. If the water is available this year, DWP will test the augmentation as well.

As early as next year, the State Water Board-appointed stream scientists will make their streamflow recommendations based upon the past decade of stream monitoring. They must include their evaluation of the 150 cfs augmentation. They must also report on the need for a new Grant Lake Reservoir outlet. This year could be the last year for testing and monitoring prior to that recommendation. ❖

Lakewatch

97% of average snowpack will cause Mono Lake level to decline

by Greg Reis

Peak snowpack in the Mono Basin occurs on average around April 1 each year. Each year within a few days of April 1, six snow surveys are conducted in the Mono Basin. In 2008 these surveys calculated 97% of average snow water content, ranging from 85% at Agnew Pass to 110% at Gem Pass.

In early April, DWP issued a preliminary runoff forecast for the April 1, 2008–March 31, 2009 Runoff Year: 86% of average.

While snowpack and runoff forecasts are often similar, they are rarely identical. The difference depends upon many factors, among them: whether or not a previous dry year will cause the soil to soak up snowmelt instead of allowing it to run off; how the snow water

content is averaged and extrapolated between watersheds of varying sizes and characteristics; and whether or not representative snow survey data is available for all areas.

The snowpack is not uniform, and this year, lake-effect snow and especially windy storms complicated typical snow deposition patterns.

After the runoff forecast is finalized, forecasts are then issued for streamflows and reservoir and Mono Lake levels. The methodology is simple: find a previous year with similar runoff and plug those streamflows into the model. In the chart at right, 2003 actual runoff was very close to this year’s runoff forecast, so 2003 inputs were chosen for the 2008 streamflow and lake level models.

Based on 2003 hydrology, Mono Lake could drop from its current 6383.1’ elevation by as much as half a foot by the end of September. It would then rise next winter, ending up at about 6383.0’ by the end of the Runoff Year on March 31. ❖

Year	Snow water content (April 1)	Forecasted Runoff (April–March)	Actual Runoff (April–March)
1998	149%	134%	141%
1999	108%	94%	92%
2000	97%	94%	93%
2001	74%	74%	77%
2002	84%	82%	74%
2003	80%	74%	87%
2004	87%	80%	73%
2005	129%	132%	149%
2006	154%	147%	154%
2007	46%	52%	45% (est.)
2008	97%	86%	

Mono Basin snow water content, forecasted runoff, and actual runoff 1998 to present.

Greg Reis is the Committee’s Information Specialist. He and Lisa Cutting spotted a mink during the Committee’s Lee Vining Creek Trail spring cleanup day.

6417’

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6391’

Target lake level

6383.1’

Current lake level

6372’

Historic low, 1982

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



ARNA DEGENHARDT

Some events in the Basin are seen by many people, yet remain cryptic. In a modern day twist of technology, one of those events has taken place this spring on the Lee Vining WebCam. To those of us in town the story has been obvious. But to those distant viewers of the WebCam, there's been a mystery because these events unfolded almost entirely off-screen—but with just enough activity to give clues.

Typically the WebCam shows cars passing by, visitors parking, sunrise and nightfall, winter snow and summer foliage, all with Mono Lake in the background. But then trucks started appearing in the leftmost eighth of the picture. People with blueprints occasionally popped into view. Dirt was moved and the ground flattened. Large steel beams and

shipping boxes arrived. Pieces were lifted and hoisted. Clearly, something was being built—but what?

It was a Mono Basin infrastructure mystery until May 1, when a series of familiar yellow panels went up, signaling what we locally had been able to see all along: a new pump island and canopy over at Shelly's gas station. Shelly, by the way, promises that his friendly folks will still be out pumping gas as always, another of the rare experiences that can be found here near Mono Lake. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He's looking forward to swimming in Mono Lake with his daughters Caelen and Ellery this summer.

Benchmarks



ARCHIVE PHOTO

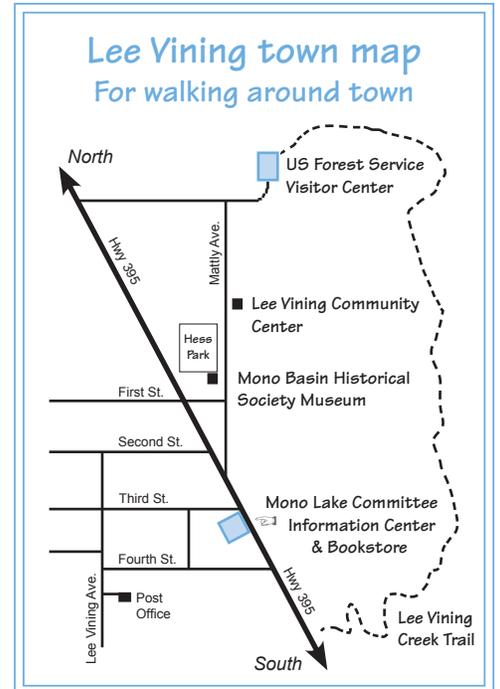
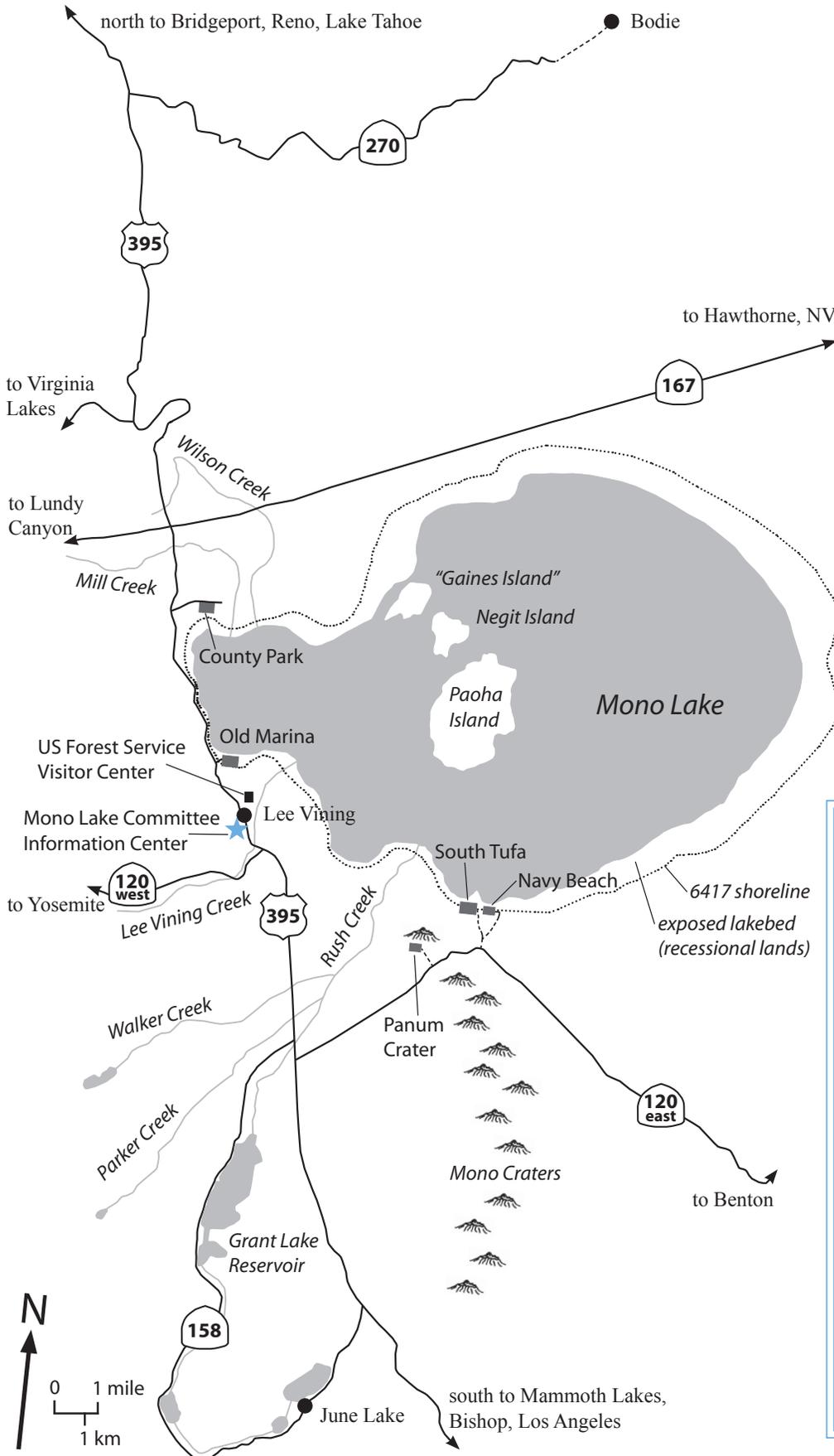
In 1982 Mono Lake's shoreline was visible in the distance behind the benchmark tufa towers. Lake level: 6372.8 feet above sea level.



ARNA DEGENHARDT

By 2008 willows obscure the original benchmark tufa view, but the dramatic rise in lake level can still be seen in the background. Lake level: 6383.3 feet above sea level.

Mono Lake and vicinity map



How far is it?

Remember to check for road closures before you travel!
1-800-GAS-ROAD

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

There is a lot to do in the Mono Basin! Stop by the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore when you're in town and our knowledgeable staff can help you plan your visit.

- **South Tufa tours** are an excellent introduction to Mono Lake. 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 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 Saturday and Sunday mornings in summer at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00AM, and last for about one hour. \$22 per person. Reservations are required; call (760) 647-6595.

- **Bird walks** take place Fridays and Sundays at 8:00AM throughout the summer. Meet at the Mono Lake County Park with binoculars and a bird book (not required). Tours last 1½–2 hours and are open to all levels of birders. Committee staff can also suggest good birding areas around the Mono Basin.

Visitor Centers

- **The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore**, located in the heart of Lee Vining, offers a free video, educational exhibits, a fine art exhibit, and activity schedules. The bookstore offers an excellent selection of regional books, maps, T-shirts, local crafts, and environmentally minded 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. The Mono Lake Committee is open from 8:00AM–9:00PM 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 expansive view of Mono Lake, interpretive displays, and natural history trails. A dramatic film on Mono Lake shows regularly in the theater, and during the summer rangers give patio presentations daily. Open Sundays–Thursdays from 8:00AM to 5:00PM, and Fridays–Saturdays from 8:00AM to 7:00PM; contact the Visitor Center at (760) 647-3044 for more information.

- **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! Open Thursdays–Mondays from 10:00AM to 5:00PM and Sundays 12:00 to 5:00PM. There is a \$1 charge but children under the age of 13 are free. Contact the museum at (760) 647-6461 for more information. ❖

Regional travel resources

- Mono Lake Committee Information Center
(760) 647-6595 www.monolake.org
- Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce
(760) 647-6629 www.leevining.com
- US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center
(760) 647-3044 www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/about
- Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve
(760) 647-6331 www.cal-parks.ca.gov
- Bodie State Historic Park
(760) 647-6445 www.cal-parks.ca.gov
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
(760) 924-5500 www.visitmammoth.com
- June Lake Chamber of Commerce
(760) 648-7584 www.junelakechamber.org
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce
(760) 932-7500 www.bridgeportcalifornia.com
- Devils Postpile (760) 934-2289 www.nps.gov/depo
- 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 (801) 559-5000
Wilderness Permit Reservations (209) 372-0740
- White Mountain Ranger District–Bishop (760) 873-2500
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center (760) 876-6222
- Manzanar National Historic Site and Interpretive Center
(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

The Mono Lake story

Nestled at the edge of the arid Great Basin and the snowy Sierra Nevada mountains, Mono Lake is an ancient saline lake that covers over 70 square miles and supports a unique and productive ecosystem. The lake has no fish; instead it is home to trillions of brine shrimp and alkali flies. Freshwater streams feed Mono Lake, supporting lush riparian forests of cottonwood and willow along their banks. Along the lakeshore, scenic limestone formations known as tufa towers rise from the water's surface. Millions of migratory birds visit the lake each year.

A story of hope

In 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) began excessive water diversions from Mono Basin streams. Mono Lake dropped 45 vertical feet, lost half its volume, and doubled in salinity.

The Mono Lake Committee was founded by David and Sally Gaines in 1978 in response to the threat of inevitable collapse of the Mono Basin ecosystem. The early Committee bought an old dance hall in Lee Vining to use as headquarters (which still houses the Information Center today), and went to work spreading the word about Mono Lake. The Committee took the City of Los Angeles to court in 1979, arguing that DWP had violated the Public Trust Doctrine, which states: "The public trust ... is an affirmation of the duty of the state to protect the people's common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands and tidelands...." – Supreme Court of California, 1983

During the winter of 1988, David Gaines was killed in a car accident in a snowstorm. He never got to see the lake he

loved begin to rise, but his energy and inspiration still carry on through the work of Committee staff.

Mono Lake's recovery depends upon water conservation in Los Angeles, and the Committee has created solutions to the demand for water by implementing conservation programs in LA that have saved more than enough water to share with Mono Lake. Over the last 15 years, LA has become one of the most water-conscious cities in the United States, and the Committee works statewide to promote wise water use for people and the environment.

In 1994, after over a decade of litigation, the California Water Resources Control Board ordered DWP to raise Mono Lake to a healthy level of 6392 feet above sea level—twenty feet above its historic low. DWP has reduced its Mono Basin water exports by over 80%, and Mono Lake is on the rise! This is truly an environmental victory. See below for more on what the Committee is doing today.

16,000 members

Mono Lake has a great success story, and you can be a part of it. Add your voice to the 16,000 members who are committed to the protection and restoration of Mono Lake. Your support as a Committee member will be put to hard work for Mono Lake!

Check out Mono Lake on the web at www.monolake.org for action alerts, letter-writing campaigns, WebCam images of the area, and fun activities happening year-round. By staying connected to Mono Lake, you ensure its protection for generations to come. ❖

What is the Committee doing today?

Protecting Mono Lake. The Committee serves as a voice for Mono Lake in the face of land development threats and recreation pressures. Working with agencies like DWP, California State Parks, and the US Forest Service, the Committee is successfully balancing the water needs of both humans and natural ecosystems.

Restoring Mono Lake. Restoration work at Mono Lake focuses on re-

establishing natural processes along damaged streams. As water flows down the creeks and into the lake, vegetation and wildlife return and the lake rises, helping to bring back a healthy ecosystem.

Educating the next generation. Each year the Committee partners with Los Angeles community and school groups, bringing inner-city youth to the Mono Basin to learn about the source

of their water. For kids who may have never left LA, these are life-changing trips filled with hiking, canoeing, helping with restoration work, and learning to be at home outdoors.

Find news, updates, and lots of great information at www.monolake.org.



Boating on Mono Lake

A boat trip on Mono Lake can reward you with spectacular views, exciting wildlife, and a sense of the grandeur of this unique ecosystem. However, *always use extra caution and be safe while you boat on Mono Lake*. Dangerous high winds pick up quickly each afternoon at Mono Lake—never begin a trip when the wind is blowing, and plan to be off the lake by noon. People have drowned on Mono Lake. Always wear a life jacket, and carry overnight gear, food, and water in case you have to spend the night away from your launch site.

Launching and landing

Navy Beach: there is no vehicle access to the water at this site; you must carry your canoe or kayak approximately 30 yards from the parking lot to the shore. Navy Beach is located one half-mile east of South Tufa.



Navy Beach is a good place to launch canoes or kayaks.

Lee Vining Creek boat launch: an unimproved public boat ramp allows vehicle access for boats on trailers, canoes, and kayaks. Check at the visitor centers in Lee Vining for directions to this site.

If you launch from anywhere else around the lake, drive and park only on established roads and parking areas. This means you may need to carry your boat a considerable distance to the water. When entering or exiting Mono Lake at any time, try to pick sandy beaches, which can sustain greater foot traffic than silty or vegetated shoreline.

Island closure

From April 1 through August 1, lands and waters within a mile of the islands are closed to protect the nesting California Gull

population. Plan your visit to the islands outside of the closure period. Be sure to obtain required camping authorization at the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center if you plan to stay overnight on the islands or on the mainland shore.

Tufa

It is illegal to damage tufa in any way, because it is one of the most productive and fragile life zones in and around the lake. Do not hit tufa with boats or paddles. Hitting a tufa tower just under the water could damage the tufa and your boat, and endanger your life; steer away from all tufa towers.

Osprey

Mono Lake supports several nesting pairs of Osprey—look for their large stick pile nests on top of the tufa towers. Please stay at least 150 yards away from Osprey nests at all times in order to avoid disturbing the birds, some of which may be raising chicks. Be sure to bring your binoculars so you can see these magnificent birds from a safe distance without disrupting them!

Deltas

Several streams flow into Mono Lake, creating deltas where the fresh water meets the salty lake water. Many birds gather at the deltas to wash salt from their plumage and digestive tracts and to seek refuge. Please do not approach creek deltas when birds are present.

Migratory birds

Mono Lake hosts migratory birds that gather from thousands of miles away; please be observant and stay at least 100 yards away from congregations of birds on the lake. If the birds suddenly rise in flight at your approach, they have already been disturbed, and you should immediately find an alternative route.

By following these guidelines you can have a safe and enjoyable boat trip on Mono Lake! ❖



Boating on Mono Lake is a great way to see this unique ecosystem.

New trail to Mono Lake

by Emily Prud'homme

One of the best ways to experience Mono Lake is to walk along the shoreline, where you can smell the briny water, hear the chattering of gulls, and feel the breeze on your face. There will soon be a new way to do this, with trail construction beginning this summer between the Scenic Area Visitor Center and the Old Marina area on the western shore of Mono Lake.

The new trail will provide a scenic, 1.3-mile route winding down from the Visitor Center to the lake. The trail will pass an ice-age tufa formation known locally as Ice House Tufa, cross old lakeshores, link with the David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk, and end up at Old Marina.

California State Parks and the US Forest Service are the primary agencies developing the trail, which also crosses Los Angeles Department of Water & Power land. The Mono Lake Committee has supported the trail concept and is working closely with the agencies to assure that design and construction of the trail are done in the best manner possible for Mono Lake.

Trail construction

The trail construction will include the closing of several adjacent portions of dirt road. The closed sections will be mechanically re-graded to conform with the surrounding landscape, and it is expected to take several years for these areas to fully revegetate. Crews will chip all the brush removed during construction, combine it with native seed mix, and sow the rehabilitated roadbeds.

Concerns about the wetland bird habitat in the area to the east of Old Marina have been addressed through changes in the route of the trail. The existence of an established trail combined with new interpretive panels should minimize the creation of additional user-trails in this sensitive area.

ADA accessibility

With State Parks funding, a portion of the route will be an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible trail. The trail will variously use boardwalk and crushed gravel to create a surface sturdy enough for wheelchairs. The ADA improvements will begin at Old Marina and extend past the Gaines Boardwalk, which will also be upgraded.

One of the design issues the Committee is addressing with the agencies is the relationship between this new trail segment and the rising lake. While the Gaines Boardwalk will be rebuilt to allow easy removal of sections as the lake rises, it is important that the entire near-lake section of trail include such planning to avoid future inundation.



Committee staff ground-checking plans for the new trail.

ARNA DEGENHARDT

Trail timeline and volunteer opportunities

Construction will start in late June and continue into the fall and the trail should be fully open for public use in late fall 2008. During construction, these areas will still be accessible by foot, as long as crews are not active in the area. Volunteers can help—please join us on a restoration project this summer or fall! Contact Policy Coordinator Emily Prud'homme (emily@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ❖

Emily Prud'homme is the Committee's Policy Coordinator. She recently visited the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge where she discovered a newfound love for pupfish.

Old Marina renovation

In 2004, State Parks completed planning work for a comprehensive renovation of the Old Marina visitor site, including significant improvements to accommodate the rising lake and revamped interpretive materials. In 2007 funds were secured for the project, but unfortunately they have not yet been allocated, which has held up the project. This year, however, State Parks will coordinate with the trail construction and make some of the planned improvements. New interpretive materials will also be completed, and a new, ADA accessible restroom will be installed. The Mono Lake Committee is working with State Parks to procure funds to ensure that the full Old Marina rehabilitation eventually takes place, including the much-needed redesign of the parking area in anticipation of Mono Lake's rising level.

2008 Field Seminars



EIN LJUNG

Great Basin Wildflowers, Plants, & Habitats

June 14–15

Mark Bagley

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

Despite its proximity to the Sierra Nevada mountains, the Mono Basin itself lies in the arid Great Basin desert. This field seminar will focus on plants in the Great Basin sagebrush scrub, unique pumice flat habitats, piñon-juniper woodland, Jeffrey pine forest, and wetland habitats found in the lower elevations of the Basin. During short walks in the different desert habitats, we will identify wildflowers, trees, and shrubs; observe plant communities; and see and discuss plants' relationships with their environment. This seminar is for beginners as well as for dedicated wildflower enthusiasts. Mark Bagley is an independent botanical consultant in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert and a long-time trip leader for the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society. He has lived in the Owens Valley for the past 22 years and has taught plant and natural history seminars for the Mono Lake Committee since 1988.

The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

June 27–29

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members
limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. Classroom instruction, demonstrations, and individual coaching in the field will help take your photography to the next level. Evenings will be spent discussing and providing feedback on participants' fieldwork as well as prior work. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. He provides fine art prints and stock images for the advertising, corporate, editorial, and home décor markets. His first photography

Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars fill quickly every year—
call (760) 647-6595 or register online at www.monolake.org/seminars

book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews. He is currently working on several other photography books.

Fly Fishing in the Mono Basin

July 11–13

Peter Pumphrey & Roberta Lagomarsini

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

Learn the basics of fly fishing in the Mono Basin's beautiful landscape! This introductory seminar will begin by covering the equipment involved, the varieties of flies and their uses, and basic casting technique. The class will then move to one of the Basin's many streams to consider trout habitat and habits, characteristics of a healthy stream environment, reading the water, fly presentation, and catch and release. On Sunday the class will move to another streamside location to work on refining the techniques from the day before. There will be time spent at high altitude (over 9,000 feet above sea level), and most of Saturday and Sunday will be spent on foot. Equipment is available for those who are not already engaged in the sport. Peter Pumphrey and Roberta Lagomarsini are guides licensed by the State of California and have been teaching basic fly fishing for over ten years. They will demystify fly fishing and provide a relaxed atmosphere in which to begin what can be a lifelong adventure in the outdoors.

The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

July 18–20

David Gubernick

\$250 per person / \$225 for members
limited to 8 participants

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the warm and supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. Classroom instruction, demonstrations, and individual coaching in the field will help take your photography to the next level. Evenings will be spent discussing and providing feedback on participants' fieldwork as well as prior work. David J. Gubernick, Ph.D., is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader. He provides fine art prints and stock images for the advertising, corporate, editorial, and home décor markets. His first photography book, *Wildflowers of Monterey County*, has been a best-seller, garnering rave reviews. He is currently working on several other photography books.

Summer Birds of the Mono Basin

July 25–27

David Wimpfheimer

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds that breed in the Mono Basin and others that stop at Mono Lake during the summer. In sagebrush meadows and riparian and montane forests, the class will explore a number of sites intensively, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion—taking time to learn about birds by watching them closely. Woodpeckers, corvids, flycatchers, warblers, and other passerines display varied behaviors, but a major focus will be Mono Lake and other special wetlands. These are unique areas for Wilson's Phalaropes, White-faced Ibis, and other waterbirds. David Wimpfheimer has been educating and interpreting birds and the natural history of California for over 20 years, and has a strong connection to Mono Lake. His seasoned focus and knowledge will make for an enjoyable and educational outing!

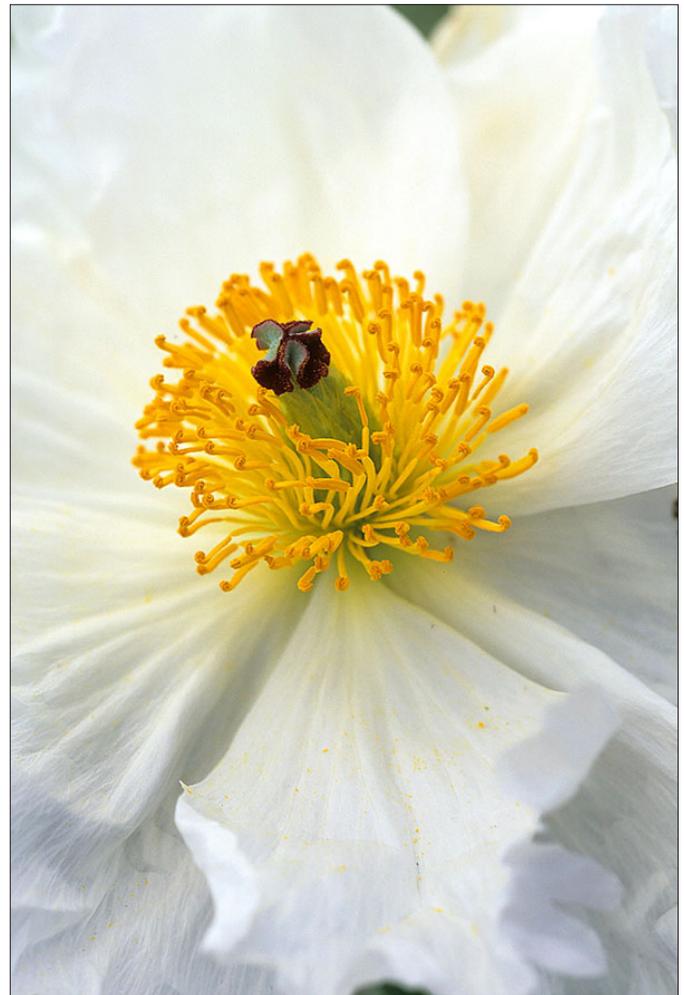


PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID GUBERNICK

Up close with a prickly poppy.

Capturing the Sageland in Pastel

July 26–27

Ane Carla Rovetta

\$165 per person / \$145 for members
limited to 12 participants

The sparkling light and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. Add a set of brilliant pastel chalks and your own unique imagination, and you have an incredible weekend of color exploration and art. Landscape painter Ane Carla Rovetta is known for her realistic depiction of our golden western lands. She will guide students through a value system she modeled after Ansel Adams' work that will help organize the overwhelming hues of the summer terrain. Using materials she has carefully selected, the group will paint on location to create impressions of this majestic basin. Each participant will go home with at least one small finished painting and several sketches, color studies, and value experiments that will fuel future artistic endeavors. All materials are provided by the instructor. This is the Committee's newest seminar, so sign up quickly to reserve your spot!



GREG REIS

Planting Jeffrey pines helps restore Mono Basin streams.

Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 8–10

Ann Howald

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats found in the Eastern Sierra high country—flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, lodgepole pine forests, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery



EMILIJONG

A male blue copper butterfly.

rock gardens. Sight identification of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers will be emphasized, as well as the many ways that plants, birds, insects, and other wildlife interact in high country habitats. Any chance encounters with wildlife will lead to impromptu talks about Clark's Nutcracker, long-tailed weasel, Yosemite

toad, pika, Caspian Tern, and other critters that may cross our path. The class begins Friday evening with a slideshow preview of the habitats and some of the plants and wildlife likely to be seen during field trips. Saturday and Sunday walks will be at 9,000- to 10,000-foot elevations, over moderate terrain, and are fairly slow-paced. Ann Howald is a consulting botanist who has taught plant classes in the Eastern Sierra for many years.

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

August 9

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Join Mono Lake Committee Information Specialist Greg Reis for an investigation of the north end of the aqueduct system. Visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin, and learn about the aqueduct's effects on Mono Lake, its tributary streams, the Upper Owens River, and land management in the area. The group will also discuss the history of water diversions, the effort to save Mono Lake, and where habitat restoration is headed in the future. Greg is the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex and fascinating plumbing—he has over a dozen years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and keeps close track of Mono Basin water management.

Mono Basin Restoration

August 10

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

Get your hands in the dirt learning about ecosystem restoration! "Restoration" is a fuzzy word that has different meanings to different people. Instructor Greg Reis will

explain what restoration means in the Mono Basin and discuss how different philosophies have resulted in the various projects that have been implemented over time. See the effects of restoration projects as well as areas that still need to be restored during a driving and walking tour of the Mono Basin—with Greg’s knowledge to fill in the history at each site. The afternoon will be spent helping with a current revegetation project by watering recent pine plantings. Greg is the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin’s complex and fascinating restoration story—he has over a dozen years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 15–17

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$185 per person / \$170 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

During this three-day seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a Miwok-Paiute burden basket out of California red bud, tule, and willow. Burden baskets were used for gathering pinenuts and acorns. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels, beginning through advanced. You are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendant of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, and Kayasha Pomo Peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker 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 who wove in the early 20th century.



Julia Parker weaving a seedbeater basket out of tule and willow.

Fall Bird Migration

August 23–24

Dave Shuford

\$140 per person / \$125 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 land birds, shorebirds, and water birds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Lake reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for 20 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!

Living on the Edge: Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep in the Mono Basin

September 6–7

John Wehausen

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

The US Fish & Wildlife Service listed the Sierra bighorn sheep as Federally Endangered in 2000. This field seminar will involve discussions of the fascinating biology of these



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN WINGER

A Yellow-headed Blackbird among cattails.

animals, their relationship with other mammals (including mountain lions and humans), and the conservation of these animals in the field. Past participants saw bighorn six out of the last seven years—while there is a very good chance of seeing Sierra bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, there is no guarantee. John Wehausen is a research scientist at White Mountain Research Station in Bishop who 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. Some of the proceeds from this seminar will benefit the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation. *Please be aware that this seminar involves very strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.*

Mono Basin Geology: A Trek Through Time

September 13–14

Angela Jayko

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

The Mono Basin is a dramatic landscape with both eye-catching views and subtle nuances that remind even casual observers of changes brought on by the long passage of time. This seminar will concern the Mono Basin's recent geologic history east of the Sierra Nevada crest. There are many well-known geomorphic features beloved by all in this region, land forms that tell tall tales about both the paleoclimate and the neotectonics (the active crustal processes at the surface of the earth). During the seminar we'll select several prominent landscape features on which to focus our discussion about the processes and the evolution of the area. Angela Jayko is a geologist based at the White Mountain Research Station who has worked in the Eastern Sierra region between Death Valley and Mono Basin for several years. She has worked on a variety of projects that concern the history of the Owens River System and local basin evolution, and she is a member of the Mono Basin Science Council.

Visions of the Past: Bodie, Masonic, Aurora

September 20–21

Terri Geissinger

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

This guided tour is for folks who love history, enjoy the outdoors, and think miles of dirt roads can be lots of fun. In the beautiful Bodie Hills, all within 20 miles, lie three ghost towns. Their stories are filled with pioneer families, prospectors, muleskinners, heroes, and gunslingers. As you tour the town and the cemetery of Bodie, once the second-largest city in California, you will hear the fascinating stories of those

who lived here and the ones who never left. Today Bodie is the largest unrestored ghost town in the west with over 170 buildings remaining. Next visit the rock cabins and foundations of Masonic, where nearly 500 people resided in a beautiful canyon, mining gold with great hope and eventually producing \$600,000. The last stop is Aurora, once a bustling town of 8,000 souls in the 1860s, which now rests forever in peace amongst the sagebrush and piñon pine. Your guide Terri Geissinger is a Bodie State Historic Park Interpreter and Guide. She is active in the Mono Basin Historical Society, and has a talent for making history come alive.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD KNEPP

Bodie's general store provides abundant photographic opportunities.

Mono-Bodie Fall Photography

October 3–5

Richard Knepp

\$275 per person / \$255 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 fifth year, the class will spend Saturday at Bodie, inside

some of the buildings—a very special treat! Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and the old ghost town of Bodie. Beyond his photographic expertise, Rick is intimately familiar with the Eastern Sierra and Mono Lake locale. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This photographic seminar is offered for the 14th year in a row, with the Bodie adventure continued for 2008!

Capturing Autumn on Canvas: Fall Painting in the Mono Basin

October 10–12

John Hewitt

\$160 per person / \$145 for members

The golden aspens, drying grasses, and bright blue skies of fall in the Mono Basin provide a myriad of opportunities for artists to capture the season on canvas. This weekend seminar will explore some of the best fall color locations around Mono Lake, and is designed for beginning through advanced painters who work with watercolors, oils, pastels, or acrylics. The class will spend Saturday painting in the field at locations like Lee Vining Canyon, Lundy Canyon, and County Park, with John offering technique tips and critiques of each individual's work.



Instructor John Hewitt's example painting guides participants in pursuing their own artistic visions.

The group will share work in the evening and convene on Sunday morning for more fieldwork. Instructor John Hewitt is a nationally-acclaimed watercolorist and former Lee Vining resident who has taught classes and workshops for over 20 years in locations as far afield as the Italian Alps. John is a signature member of many watercolor societies, but he welcomes any medium in his classes.

Field Seminar Registration Information

To register for a field seminar, please call the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595 and ask for the seminar desk, or register online at www.monolake.org/seminars.

More extensive seminar descriptions are available upon request or online at www.monolake.org/seminars.

We accept VISA, MasterCard, or Discover only. Sorry, we cannot accept personal checks or registration by mail or email. Seminars are limited to fifteen people except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants (with some exceptions) the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance, and full refunds will be issued. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$15 processing fee). Unfortunately there are no refunds possible after that date, but tuition can be applied to another seminar in 2008.

Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars operate under a permit from the Inyo National Forest.

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

Proceeds from 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.

Staff migrations

by Erika Obedzinski

Here's the roundup of summer migrations to the office, which we're pleased includes four returning seasonal staff!

The Mono Lake Committee intern team for this year includes **Katherine Getts** from Scripps College, **Lara Hamburger**, who joins us for her second summer from Macalester College, **Morgan Lindsay** from Mount Holyoke College, **Nora Livingston** from Whitman College, and **Claire Skinner** of University of Virginia.

Canoe Coordinator **Forrest English** joins us from Ashland, Oregon where he's been working on wetland and riparian restoration projects. Our Information Center & Bookstore Assistants are **Michelle Bowling** of Joshua Tree, **Jessi DeLong** of Bishop (whom you may remember as one of last year's interns), **Alayne Meeks**, who will once again take a summer break from her honey business in Soquel to work at Mono Lake, and Lee Vining High School graduating senior **Bessie Vargas**.

The Outdoor Education Instructor positions are held by **Caron Kotalik**, who joins us from Prescott, Arizona, and **Rebecca Clough** from Santa Cruz. We are fortunate that super-volunteer **Nick Holt** will be returning to work part time in the office and his sister **Natalie Holt** will be volunteering for the first time this summer as well!

Brett Pyle moves on

We bid a fond farewell to Brett Pyle, who has served in several positions at the Committee over the past eight years. When the news made its way around the office that Brett and his wife Shannon and kids Sabine and Casey would be moving to Salida, Colorado, it was bittersweet. Brett and Shannon made the tough decision to move from this place they love for many good reasons including being closer to their family.



Shannon and Brett choosing Free Drawing tickets at the Mono Lake Committee in 2000.

Brett has a long history with the Committee and many members may recognize Brett's name from his three years spent as Membership Coordinator, or more recently his five years spent running the Information Center & Bookstore, where you may have talked with him at the front counter. Around the office, we know Brett for his diligent and dedicated work, his patience and kindness to all stopping at the bookstore, his love of the Eastern Sierra, and certainly for always making us laugh! Brett's creative sense of humor has resulted in many "top ten" lists at our weekly staff meetings, detailing the things he did not choose to buy for the Committee Bookstore at the gift shows he attended (such as sequined bowling ball bags). Brett's Frank Sinatra fashion and music sense will also be missed as will our opportunities to tease him when we found him at his desk eating one of his favorite meals: Fritos and Pop Tarts!

Brett, we wish you the best and look forward to seeing you, Shannon, Sabine, and Casey back in the Mono Basin for frequent visits! ❖

Sale of Mono City home could benefit Mono Lake Committee

Long time Mono Basin residents and Mono Lake Committee staffers Brett Pyle and Shannon Nelson are making the move to Salida, Colorado, and even as they move, they're supporting the Mono Lake Committee! They have offered to donate \$5,000 from the sale of their house to the Mono Lake Committee if the buyer mentions that they heard about the house through the *Mono Lake Newsletter*.

Located just north of Lee Vining at 1082 East Mono Lake Drive in Mono City, the 2 bedroom, 1¾ bath, 1,500-square-foot house with garage



Shannon and Brett's house for sale in Mono City.

was built in 2001 and has a loft, concrete slab radiant floor heating, wood burning stove, and lots of windows with views of the Sierra. A vintage claw-foot tub, butcher block kitchen countertops, wooden doors salvaged from a 1940's era Mono Basin cabin, and wildflower garden make this house a home.

For details on the house visit www.rainbowridgerealty.com or contact Connie Lear (connie@rainbowridgerealty.com) at (760) 648-7811 and be sure to mention that you saw it in the *Mono Lake Newsletter*!



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

As I write this, it's early spring in the Mono Basin. The ice is gone from the lakes, and the snow has retreated to shady hillsides and mountain ridges. The willows are starting to leaf out and the aspens are budding. The landscape is gradually changing from brown to green, with splashes of pink where the desert peach is beginning to bloom. The cheerful sound of bird song and the warmth of the afternoon sun are welcome changes after a cold and quiet winter.

Thank you to all of you who sent contributions in memory or in honor of your friends and loved ones. We appreciate these gifts that help us carry on the work that will keep Mono Lake a special place for many generations.

In memory

Beatrice Beyer of Mammoth Lakes gave a gift in memory of **Raoul Kann**, USFS Project Engineer for the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center in Lee Vining. **John Callen** of Rancho Santa Margarita made donations in memory of **Thomas Callen**. **Bryan Flaig** of Berkeley sent a gift in memory of his grandmother, **Adeline Flaig**. **Vicki Groff** of Modesto made a contribution in memory of **Donna Durham**.

In honor

Robert & Maye McEliece of Bellevue, WA made a donation in honor of **Grace de Laet's** birthday, and her love of and devotion to Mono Lake over the

years. **Karen Weber** made a donation in honor of **Michael & Frances Weber** through www.networkforgood.com.

Thank you Rudders!

Paul & Kathleen Rudder are the former owners of the King's Inn in Lee Vining, now known as the Mono Lake Committee Annex and Mono Basin Field Station. They made us a very generous offer in 2007: pay off the remainder of the mortgage by year's end, and they would reduce the mortgage by \$30,000. This offer became the theme of our year-end campaign, and our members responded with their usual wonderful generosity. Thanks to the outpouring of donations we were able to make that final mortgage payment, and thanks to the Rudders we were able to channel the "extra" \$30,000 into our protection, restoration and education efforts. Thank you Paul and Kathleen!

Wish list

Dreaming big is commonplace in the non-profit world, where slim budgets are also a reality. With 16,000 members supporting the work of the Mono Lake Committee, we thought it couldn't hurt to ask if any members have connections to these items, or would be interested in a direct donation of one. Please contact Ellen King (ellen@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 if you can grant a wish!

- Two six-foot Trex picnic tables for the garden area in front of the Information Center & Bookstore
- A pilot with a plane willing to help with fall Eared Grebe surveys
- A friend in the recycled paper business to help us secure the most environmentally friendly paper options for our publications

Anniversary from page 3

at the Information Center & Bookstore and you'll find friendly staff eager to discuss the Committee's programs as well as 30th anniversary mugs, hats, T-shirts, and more.

Celebrating the Committee's anniversary, though, is really about celebrating Mono Lake with as many people as possible. We're doing that in three big ways throughout the year. First, Mono Lake has been featured—complete with faux tufa and gulls overhead—as a model solution to water conflict in a major six-month exhibit on water at the American Museum of Natural History in

New York City. Watch for Mono Lake (and the exhibit) in San Diego for the second half of 2008.

Second, the Mono Lake story, the new relationship the lake's protection has created with Los Angeles, and the Mono Lake Committee's education program are being featured in a hour-long public radio special called "Saving the Sierra," which is already airing across California and, later in the year, nationwide (visit www.monolake.org for links).

And third, we'll be celebrating the 30th by unveiling a redesigned and

improved Mono Lake Website. See the article on page 9 for the exciting details.

Still, the greatest celebration of our 30-year anniversary is here on the eastern escarpment of the Sierra: the rising blue waters of Mono Lake, the rejuvenated streams, the phalaropes skimming over lakeshore tufa, the Los Angeles youth learning why water conservation matters, the scientists studying the issues that will be our future work. We hope to see you walking the lakeshore—and celebrating—this summer. ❖

the seventh annual

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua

June 20–22, 2008



www.birdchautauqua.org

coming soon to California:
the American Museum of Natural History's exhibit

H₂O = Life

July to November 2008
at the San Diego Museum of Natural History

featuring Mesopotamia, the Mississippi delta,
and Mono Lake as examples of "regeneration"

www.amnh.org/exhibitions/water/

sign up soon for Greg Reis' summer Field Seminars:

**Los Angeles
Aqueduct Tour**
August 9

**Mono Basin
Restoration**
August 10

reserve your space now!
(760) 647-6595



visit the Committee gallery to see
work by two local artists

fine photography by
Rick Kattelmann

and original watercolors by
Doug Jung

all proceeds benefit the Mono Lake Committee



**MONO LAKE
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