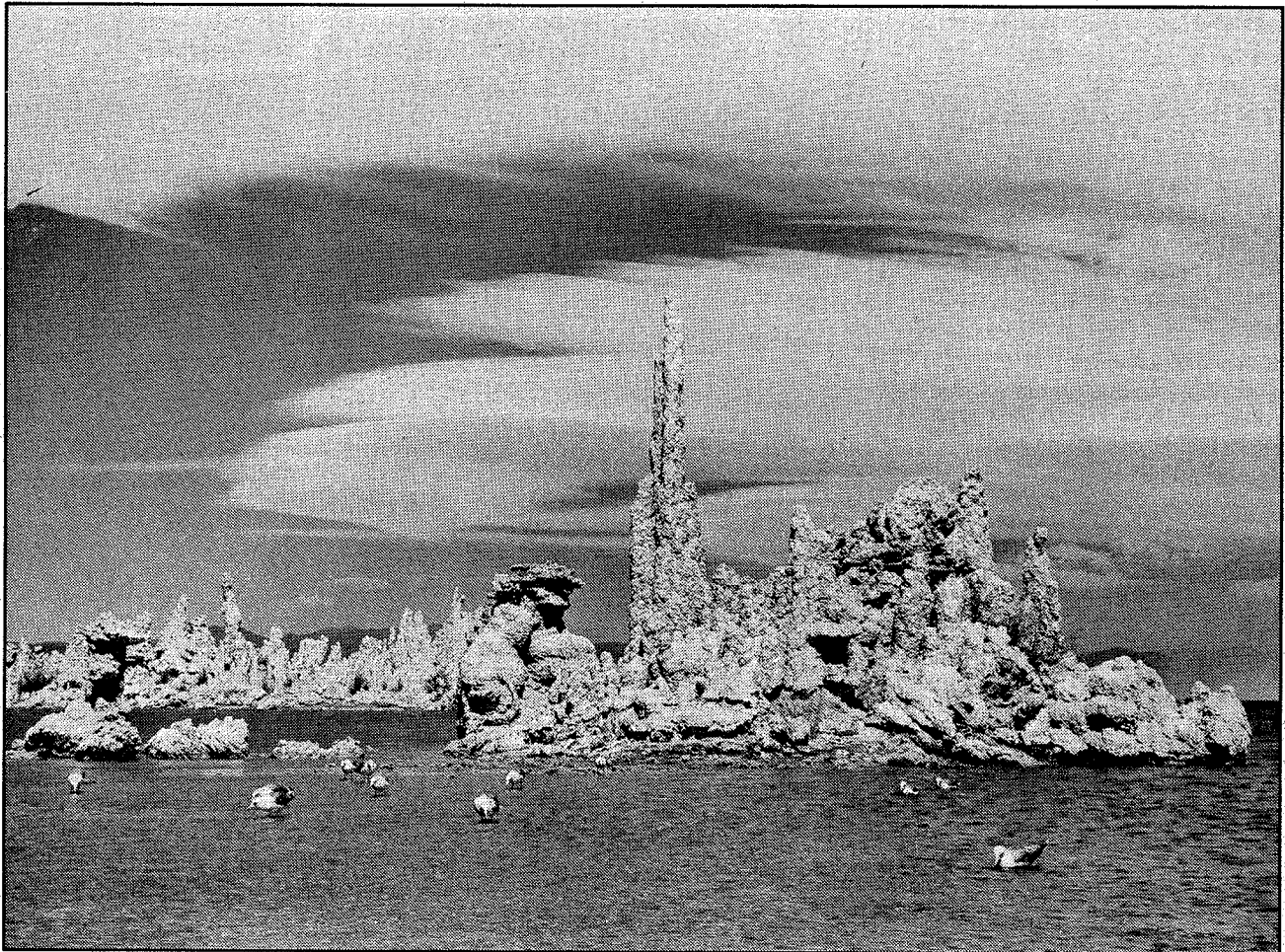


Summer 1990

Vol. 13, No. 1

MONO ^{the} LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R



Rose Certini

State Lands Commission Supports Mono Lake
Electric Fence Built to Protect Gulls
Los Angeles Reacts to the Drought

Summer Activities at Mono Lake and Vicinity

Summer has arrived at Mono Lake! We welcome new visitors and old friends to this special place. There are many interpretive activities to help you explore the area.

If this is your first visit to Mono Lake, touring South Tufa is a good place to start. There you'll see spectacular tufa towers, and some of the lake's unusual aquatic creatures. To get there, take Hwy. 395 south to Hwy. 120 east and follow the signs to South Tufa.

Canoe trips on the lake were a great pleasure for David Gaines, the Mono Lake Committee's founder. You too can glide among the tufa spires and watch the bubbling plumes of brine shrimp on a one-hour canoe tour.

After seeing the lake, you may want to visit Bodie. Once a rip-roaring mining town, Bodie is now a quiet (and uncommercialized) ghost town. Drive north from Lee Vining on Hwy. 395 to Hwy. 270. The last three miles into Bodie are unpaved.

These are just the highlights of a visit to Mono Lake. More details are included below.

Mono Lake Committee Activities:

Sunset Walks at South Tufa

Daily 6:00 pm

Meet at the South Tufa parking lot.

Canoe Tours

Weekends through Labor Day

Adults \$9 Kids \$5

Sorry, no kids under 4 years

Reservations recommended.

For information, please ask the Mono Lake Committee Visitor Center or call (619) 647-6595.

Mono Lake Workshops

Weekend Field Seminars in natural history and photography.

Please call (619) 647-6496 between 7:30 am and 7:30 pm for more information.

Mono Lake Committee Visitor Center

Open 9 am to 9 pm daily

Ask at desk for free slide program.

Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area & Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve Activities:

South Tufa Tours

Daily 10:00 am & 2:00 pm

Meet at the South Tufa parking lot.

For more information about star talks, children's tours, Panum Crater tours, and campfire programs, please call (619) 647-6525 or 647-6331.

Bodie State Historic Park Activities:

Hours: 9 am to 7 pm daily

Park hours strictly enforced.

Stamp Mill Tours, weekends & holidays

11:00 am & 2:00

Limited to 20 people.

History talks, weekends & holidays

3:00 pm

Meet at the church.

Museum, hours 9 am to 5 pm daily.

Please call (619) 647-6445 for park information.

THE MONO LAKE COMMITTEE is a non-profit citizen's group dedicated to saving Mono Lake from the excessive diversion of water from its tributary streams. We seek a compromise that will meet the real water needs of Los Angeles and leave our children a living, healthy, and beautiful lake.

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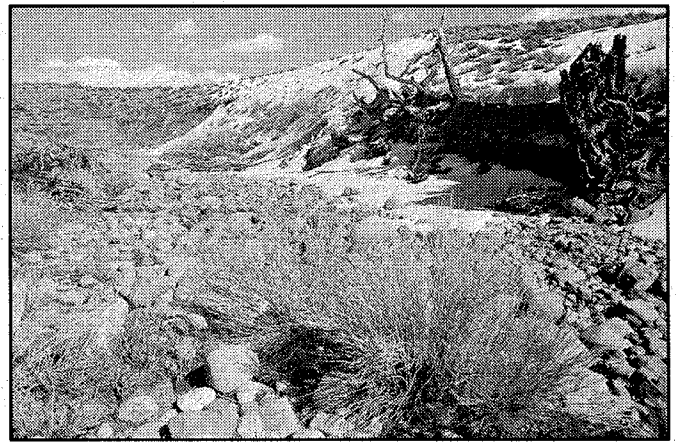
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Saunters By Mono Lake

*"...holding in trust the full potential of the ecosystem,
not just the bare bones."*

*Eldon Vestal,
from an interview,
January 24, 1990.*



I hadn't realized it, but I've been picking over bones. Creek bones. I've been poking among the dry skeletons of cottonwood and willow lining the upper banks of Rush Creek; scavenging through piles of dead tree trunks bleached silver by the sun. In the main channel, verdant plants with their feet in the flow, belie what's just beyond the thin thread of rushing water.

The corpses bear witness to the vigor of Rush Creek's past. Before Los Angeles's diversions of the creek began, the channel was much wider and heavily forested. I didn't realize the extent of the loss until, sitting in a crowded courtroom, I heard Eldon Vestal's testimony. He spoke during recent hearings to set interim flows for Mono Basin creeks. Eldon had been the Mono Basin fisheries biologist for the Department of Fish and Game during the construction of the aqueduct. His field notes, photographs, and memories reveal a view of the creeks that I'd never even imagined. Looking at his photographs of Rush Creek from the 1940s, I'm startled. They seem to show another place, not just another time. Only the familiar contours of the Sierra scarp in the background confirm the location. These are pictures of home but a home so lush I have trouble envisioning it.

At the county road crossing, about a mile upstream from where Rush Creek enters Mono Lake, the stream runs through a large culvert buried in a 30-foot-deep gorge. The gorge is actually a badly eroded wash filled with bowling ball-size boulders and barely established willow. Nearby are the remains of the Clover Ranch—its outbuildings falling into the gorge as the stream bank erodes. Gray trunks of dead willow lie like pick-up sticks near the ranch. The area is hardly beautiful, yet it represents such a common sight in the Basin that I make nothing of its ugliness. The road crossing is just a place I pass through on my way to somewhere else. Yet, Eldon, when he described this spot in his testimony of Rush Creek as it once was, simply said, "I was not prepared to see the destruction..."

Before entering Mono Lake, Rush Creek had wandered through gently sloping grassy banks sprinkled

with willow and cottonwood. When DWP diverted all the Rush Creek water in the 1940s, most of the trees and streamside plants died of thirst. When DWP released sudden torrents of water during years of heavy runoff, the dead vegetation could no longer hold the stream banks and Rush Creek cut itself into the deep, raw gorge. Eldon said that when he returned to the creek after several years absence, the change was dramatic and tragic.

I can imagine how beautiful Rush Creek could be with grassy banks lining its sides, rather than inaccessible cliffs. I can imagine the aesthetic difference. But people like Eldon can see the change in terms of the health of the ecosystem. Gone, in his words, were the "magnificent spawning gravels" that made Rush Creek a premier trout stream. Gone are the watercress beds, fed by now-vanished springs, that produced the stream bottom foods fish depended on. The whole aquatic support system had been unraveled. Those of us who were born later have never known the "full potential of the ecosystem."

It's a strange feeling to realize that what I know of the Mono Basin is a greatly impoverished view of what the older people describe as a paradise. Their words convey the details of what is gone but their voices reveal the depth of the loss. Their tone is full of longing and disbelief that any place so beautiful and productive could be willingly destroyed. This strikes sorely at our inner trust in the goodness of humankind.

And yet, at the court hearing, there were elements of hope. The whole reason we'd come together—the judge, attorneys, witnesses and observers—was to determine how best to restore and maintain the historic fisheries. Rush Creek won't regain its gentle meander to the lakeshore in our lifetimes. But while the attorneys argue, the seed-bearing cotton from the cottonwood trees is floating on warm breezes and riding on the creek surface. The puffs drift downstream to recolonize old ground. Gradually new growth is covering the fallen trunks. Perhaps the bones belong to the past.

Lauren Davis

Legal Update

The Uphill Struggle to Send Water Downstream

Soon fish will be jumping again in Mono Basin streams if the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) can be made to comply with state law. In February, the Third District Court of Appeals directed Judge Finney, of El Dorado Superior Court, to order the State Water Resources Control Board to insert new language into DWP's water diversion licenses. As of April 4th, the licenses require the utility to release sufficient water into Mono's creeks to "reestablish and maintain the fisheries which existed in them prior to its diversion of water." The affected creeks are Rush, Lee Vining, Parker and Walker.

The Third District Court of Appeals set a hearing before Judge Finney to determine interim releases for the four creeks while the State Board completes its stream studies, a process which is slated to take several years. The hearing, in early May, involved over two weeks of testimony from both sides and included a field trip to the Mono Basin to assess the creek situation. At the time of the hearing, DWP was releasing water down Walker and Parker creeks only to let it flow out over their sheep pastures at Cain Ranch. DWP then argued in court that irrigation of Cain Ranch represented a restoration of historic flows to the two creeks. Mono Lake Committee attorneys Bruce Dodge, Patrick Flinn and Brian Wilson regarded DWP's testimony concerning past irrigation practices to be irrelevant to a hearing which was called specifically to set interim creek flows to "reestablish and maintain the fisheries which existed in them prior to its diversion of water."

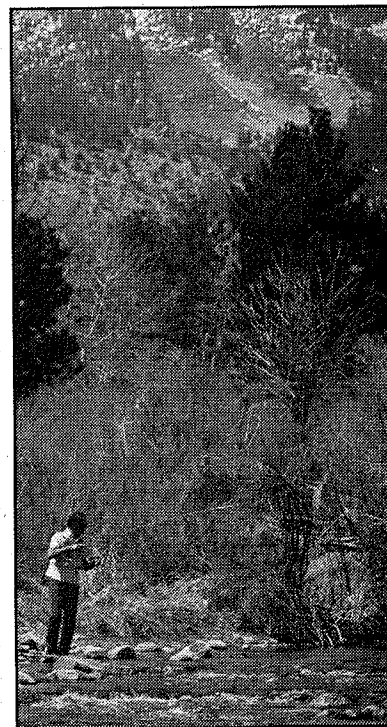
During the hearing, Department of Fish and Game officials recommended interim flows for the four creeks which amounted to 108-112 cubic feet per second (cfs) — essentially all the available water for this runoff year. As of mid-May, Judge Finney had not released his decision regarding interim flows.

Judge Finney also plans to preside over a seven-week-long evidentiary hearing on the existing preliminary injunction for Mono Lake. This hearing is scheduled to begin on May 29. During the hearing, the judge will take testimony from witnesses and water officials regarding the issues at Mono Lake. The current preliminary injunction required DWP to raise and maintain the lake at 6377 feet by this spring. Unfortunately, a third of the year's runoff was diverted to Los Angeles before the injunction took effect and there has not been enough remaining runoff to attain this level. The National Audubon Society and Mono Lake Committee have asked for an extension of the injunction into the next water year.

The evidentiary hearing was requested initially by DWP. The Department plans to present testimony from a number of its biologists who will argue that the existing lake level does not pose any threat to the ecosystem.

Audubon and the Committee, however, will demonstrate that if the lake is not maintained above 6377 feet, irreparable harm will occur to Mono's ecosystem. According to Martha Davis, MLC executive director, "The significance of 6377 feet is that it marks the unraveling of the ecosystem. From here on down, Mono Lake's problems intensify."

Lauren Davis



Susana Cox Fousekis

State Lands Commission Comes to Mono's Defense

The State Lands Commission, a government agency responsible for the state's public trust resources, has joined forces with the National Audubon Society and the Mono Lake Committee. State Lands Commission members Gray Davis, State Controller; Leo McCarthy, Lieutenant Governor; and Lafenus Stancell, a representative from the governor's office; agreed to file a brief supporting the preliminary injunction on Mono Lake.

Since the State owns the lakebed and some of the exposed shoreline around Mono Lake, the Commission recognized its obligation to act as chief steward of California's interests at the lake. In announcing the Commission's decision Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy said, "Mono Lake is home to a unique and fragile ecosystem that now teeters on the edge of collapse. Our obligation is to ensure that the lake level is adequately maintained to protect and restore its wildlife and recreational resources."

The commission's stand is an historic one as it represents the first time a major state agency has taken sides in the Mono Lake controversy.

Los Angeles' Response to the Drought

As California enters its fourth straight year of drought, cities and counties throughout the state are responding in various ways. The Metropolitan Water District (MWD), wholesale supplier to water agencies in Southern California, has called upon its member agencies to cut consumption or face the possibility of mandatory rationing. Mayor Tom Bradley again called upon LA residents, as he did two years ago, to reduce their consumption by at least 10 percent.

In a March 30th press conference, the Mayor explained, "Heightening public understanding of the drought and the need to conserve water is the responsibility of all public officials in the city, but the duty primarily falls on the DWP's [Department of Water and Power] shoulders." He then requested the DWP Commission to report back to him in 30 days on the effectiveness of the City's voluntary water conservation measures and to review Phase II of the city's conservation ordinance, namely, water rationing.

The Mayor went on to point out, "We should use economic[s]... to enforce the mandatory 10 percent cut-back. The surcharge penalties should be high enough so that customers will see it as being in their best economic interest to comply immediately. At the same time, we should make sure that customers who have voluntarily conserved at least 10 percent consistently during the past two years will not receive unfair treatment." (The Mono Lake Committee has always advocated an increasing block rate for water utility customers. Under this rate structure, those who conserve water would pay much lower rates than profligate water users.)

Not content to stop at these measures, Mayor Bradley has begun to push for new, innovative solutions to the city's water problems. The Mayor stressed a variety of programs: home audits; stricter requirements for installing ultra-low flush toilets; landscape water-use audits; rebates for replacement of grass landscaping with water-saving plants; rebates for installation of drip irrigation systems; and increasing overall promotion of residential, industrial, commercial, and landscaping water conservation techniques to save customers money in the near future.

Not long after the Mayor pressed for an all-out effort on water conservation, the *Los Angeles Times* revealed that the LA city government is LA's biggest water user. While water consumption in Los Angeles has dropped 4-8 percent, city government is consuming more than ever. Two major city departments are even violating the emergency water conservation ordinance adopted two years ago. According to the *Times*, "Even the DWP's own water division — which posted a 29 percent increase in its water consumption during the past 3 years — is unsure how to cut its use."

Two years ago, the Mayor and City Council ordered the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to design a program to ascertain how much water each city facility uses. The project is not yet complete. Mayor Bradley has re-

quested the CAO to make completion of the project a top priority. Without it, say the city's facilities managers, they cannot gauge their water consumption or savings.

On a more positive note, the DWP recently launched its toilet rebate program. DWP's residential customers who purchase a city-approved ultra-low flush toilet will receive a \$100 rebate. For more information on the program, customers are asked to call 1-800-722-1122. In another move which heralds a more aggressive water conservation campaign in Los Angeles, the DWP Commission assigned its two new members Dorothy Green, environmental activist, and Mike Gage, former Los Angeles deputy mayor, to the Commission's water conservation and public outreach committees.

Last minute update: On May 8th, the Los Angeles City Council committee in charge of water issues, began hearings on Mayor Bradley's mandatory water conservation proposal. Deputy Mayor Mark Fabiani explained that voluntary conservation efforts had not achieved the needed 10 percent savings. While Los Angeles has sufficient water supplies this year, the City could face serious water problems next year if the drought continues. To prevent shortages next year, Fabiani called for "banking" any water savings in the city's underground aquifers.

Despite repeated questioning at the hearing by City Councilmembers Joan Milke Flores and Ruth Galanter, DWP General Manager Norm Nichols would not answer whether or not the Department believed mandatory conservation measures were warranted. On the other hand, representatives from environmental groups, including the Mono Lake Committee, supported the Mayor's call for mandatory conservation, explaining that "water conservation is nothing more than water efficiency. A 10 percent cutback in water use is not only sensible, it is easily achievable."

Betsy Reifsnider

Lake Level Watch

Mono Lake rose slightly this spring. The lake elevation stood at 6376 feet in mid-May. The lake is near its annual peak and will soon slowly decline.

Under natural conditions, Mono Lake rises with the snowmelt, reaching its peak between May and early August. Then, with higher summer temperatures and naturally decreasing streamflows, evaporation causes the lake to decline through the summer and fall. Despite court-ordered stream releases, the lake peaked early this year due to continuing dry conditions. In the Mono Basin watershed, the water content of the snowmelt runoff is predicted to be 50 percent of normal.

Peggy Nicholson

Closing The Coyote Cafe

Electric Fence Built Across Negit Landbridge

A few Mono Basin coyotes may find that fast food is a little harder to come by these days—at least if the U.S. Forest Service's efforts are successful.

In an urgent attempt to protect the Negit Island gull rookery from a second round of coyote predation, the U.S. Forest Service built an electric fence across the landbridge to Negit Island on March 24. The decision to build the fence came after several weeks of debate among concerned agencies about how best to provide temporary protection for the gull colony.

The Forest Service organized 20 volunteers from the local community, the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, the Mono Lake Committee, and the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve to build the half-mile long structure.

"Our goal in this emergency action is to attempt to protect the Negit Island gull rookery until the water level rises high enough to provide a natural barrier for the protection of the nesting gulls," explained District Ranger Bill Bramlette.

Nancy Upham, Forest Service Scenic Area manager, emphasized that the fence is experimental. "The only truly effective barrier is to have the water barrier."

California gulls return to Negit Island each year in the early spring to nest. At normal lake levels, their nesting grounds are separated from the mainland by a substantial channel. However, in 1979, the lake fell so low that coyotes disrupted 33,000 nesting gulls and preyed on eggs and chicks. The gulls did not return to nest on Negit until 1985, after a series of extremely wet winters. At the current lake level, coyotes can easily walk and swim to the island.

"Even though the courts have mandated the release of water into Mono Lake and the lake is rising, the decision came too late in the year. We're in our fourth year of drought. The lake is coming up, but it's not coming up fast enough. We have evidence that coyotes have already been on Negit Island," Bramlette continued.

On February 8 of this year, Forest Service staff saw coyote tracks on Negit Island. The tracks appeared to be from two days to one week old. The channel between Negit and the lake's shore was $\frac{3}{8}$ of a mile long, and twelve to thirty inches deep.

According to Mead Hargis, Associate Eastern Sierra Representative for the Mono Lake Committee, the Committee "supports the U.S. Forest Service decision to help protect the gulls, and extended every effort to help."

Hargis himself got involved in a very personal way. "We were trying to make sure the fence would work, and finally decided to test it. We turned it on and I walked up and touched it. It knocked my socks off. It worked quite well."

However, Hargis emphasized that the electric fence was "part of the most humane strategy for gull protection." The Forest Service hopes that a human maintenance patrol, combined with the fence and the existing shallow channel, will deter even the most determined coyote.

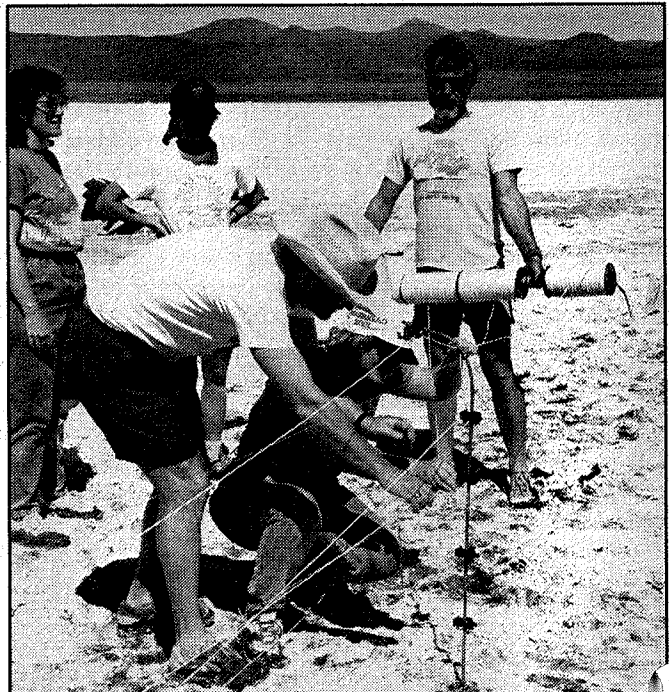
The fence poses no danger for birds or animals because it is highly visible, and utilizes high voltage-low amperage electricity. A 12-volt car battery, charged by a solar panel, will power the fence for a month.

"Birds cannot be shocked when landing on it because they are not grounded," Hargis explained. "An animal just gets zapped on the nose and will usually avoid the fence after that. Humans can see the signs."

According to Larry Ford, Forest Service interpretive naturalist, the fence has been partially effective. What was once almost a trail out to the island has vanished, but it does appear that a coyote has been in the nesting area. Tracks indicate that one wily coyote even made it *through* the fence.

Peggy Nicholson

Just who would volunteer to spend a day in the mud building a fence? Dedicated folks from the local community, the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve, and the Mono Lake Committee who wanted to help protect Negit Island's gull rookery. A special thanks to all who pitched (or slid) in.



Forest Service staff and volunteers building electric fence across landbridge. Photo by Paul Kohlberg.



Negit Island (dark land on right) and the exposed landbridge (light-colored land mass on left) as seen from a plane at 15,000 feet on March 26, 1990. All land which appears white in this photograph has been exposed as Mono's water level has dropped. Photo by Paul Kohlberg.

An Aerial Perspective

One of our devoted members sent us this recent letter he wrote to his senator. We thought it an eloquent statement from an elevated point of view!

Dear Senator Doolittle,

Please take a moment to read this—it's important. I'm captain for United Air Lines and therefore have the opportunity to view year after year many of the scenic wonders of our state and nation.

Nearly thirty years ago when I was learning to fly I made a number of flights across the Sierra and was so impressed by the natural beauty I took many photos which are in an album I still hold in high regard. Among my favorites are the pictures of Mono Lake with its dark blue water, like a mirror, reflecting a perfect image of the snow-covered Sierra. I'm certain the early explorers and settlers also marveled at its beauty in stark contrast to the volcanic landscape nearby. No doubt the Native Americans had an eye for beauty and also admired this ancient landmark.

Over the years I have pointed out this California landmark to thousands of passengers, via the plane's P.A. system. Unfortunately, I have also observed Mono Lake become smaller and smaller. It's obvious that the pilots who follow me will not be making an announcement over Mono Lake. Dry lakes are not worth mentioning!

It doesn't seem right that a natural work of art that has been enjoyed and handed down through the centuries for our enjoyment is being destroyed by us; its pleasure is being stolen from our children. I encourage you to support the effort to preserve this state asset. Please tell me how you feel about this effort.

Sincerely yours,
m Owens
Shingle Springs

Scenic Area Plan Released

The Forest Service released its Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area on March 16. Over 2,500 comments were received on the draft Plan and EIS. Recreation, water (including lake level), wildlife, and grazing were the most frequently mentioned topics in the comments. Thanks to strong support by the public and public officials, the Forest Service maintained its position regarding a lake level management range. The final plan also calls for a decreased emphasis on developed recreation and an increased emphasis on ecological restoration of the Mono Basin to "a healthy ecosystem."

Lake Level

The Forest Service remains firm in recommending a lake level management range midway between 6377' - 6390' above sea level. The plan makes clear the federal government's right to take a stand on the lake level issue—a stand which the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has repeatedly contested. The Forest Service has also added an action item to amend the management plan if the lake level falls below the range defined in the plan, only after "all options including legal and administrative resources to achieve that range have been exhausted." The Forest Service has expressed its willingness to join the litigation battle to protect Mono Lake, if need be.

Recreation/Interpretation Development

The \$4.3 million Scenic Area Visitor Center will be the focus for interpretation. No new recreational sites will be developed, except for a moderate-sized campground in the Jeffrey pine forest near the Mono Craters. An atmosphere of self-discovery will be promoted.

Restoration

The plan calls for restoration of degraded habitats; reintroduction of pronghorn antelope and sage grouse, which were once native to the Mono Basin; restoration of riparian vegetation; encouragement of research that will facilitate restoration; and cultivation of outside funding for restoration and wildlife enhancement projects.

Range Management

After much deliberation, the Forest Service has decided that the original legislation which created the Scenic Area will not allow it to eliminate grazing immediately. Rather, the plan calls for the long-term goal of phasing out grazing by modifying individual allotments as they come up for renewal. The plan proposes to eliminate grazing first on 4,878 acres of sensitive lands.

Access

During the planning process, groups comprised of Off Road Vehicle/Over Snow Vehicle users, environmentalists, and Forest Service staff met to discuss the road and snowmobile issues and try to achieve some "common ground." The groups reached consensus on closing a

number of routes which posed resource problems. They also agreed to continue meeting as necessary to deal with future issues. At this time 10 percent of all the roads in the Scenic Area will be closed and snowmobiling will still be allowed in the Mono Craters.

The Final Plan/EIS for the Scenic Area appears to be a thorough and well-written document. It is evident that the Forest Service listened to the concerns of the public, especially with regard to developed recreation, and the restoration and maintenance of a "healthy ecosystem" in the Mono Basin. We all wish to thank the planning team for a project well done.

As the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has challenged the legal authority of the Federal Government regarding water rights in the Mono Basin throughout the planning process, it may appeal the Final Plan/EIS. The Department has until June 14 to postmark an appeal.

Sally Miller and Lauren Davis

Scenic Area Visitor Center Ground Breaking

U.S. Representative Richard Lehman (D-Sanger) visited Mono Lake on March 17 to break ground for the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center. Lehman, who sponsored legislation to create the Scenic Area in 1984, was instrumental in gaining \$4.3 million to build the visitor center.

Lehman recalled his first visit to Mono Lake, when he met David Gaines. "I will never forget the time we spent together walking the shoreline, talking and dreaming. I agreed I would make Mono Lake a priority." After eight

years of successful work to protect Mono Lake, Lehman declared, "No one was more instrumental in this effort than David was... I truly believe we're living his dream today."

Officials from the U.S. Forest Service, the Mono Lake Committee, Mono County, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, as well as long-time Mono Basin resident and Mono Lake Foundation Board member Don Banta spoke during the ground-breaking ceremonies.

"We're not just celebrating the beginning of a building, we're celebrating the fulfillment of a vision," said MLC Executive Director Martha Davis. "We (the MLC) imagined a time when Mono Lake would be protected along with the Mono Basin...when people from across the country and around the world would come to the Mono Basin, and look in awe at the splendor of Mono Lake. When they would visit an interpretive center to learn about the special ecosystem and the connection between the protection, and the health, of our environment."

Don Banta stressed that it is "our responsibility, all of us, to study problems and judge with unselfishness, and offer our input to those who will be managing the Scenic Area. I urge you to ask your children to do the same thing...they will be making the decisions. We want them to...do what they must to keep this fine, fine area the way it is, and make it better as time goes by."

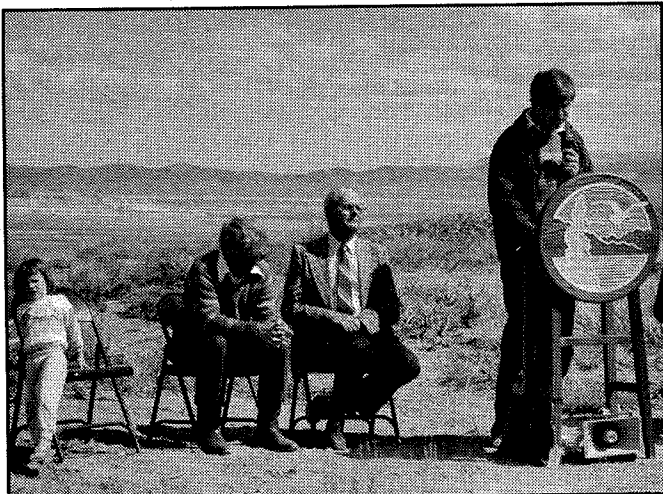
The visitor center, scheduled for completion in April 1991, will have a spectacular view of Black Point and the islands. Visitors will learn about the Mono Basin's unique ecology, geology, and history in the center's exhibit hall and theater. There will also be a gift shop run by the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association.

Peggy Nicholson

Mono County Groundwater Ordinance

Residents of Chalfant, Hammil and Benton valleys, fearing plans to export groundwater, succeeded in creating the Tri-Valley Groundwater Management district with the help of county and state officials. The bill forming the district was signed by the governor last fall and became effective January 1. Tri-Valley board members were elected in January. Anyone proposing the export of groundwater must obtain a Tri-Valley permit, which will be issued only if there is proof that the export will not overdraft the groundwater basin and will not harm existing water rights. The permit can be revoked or altered if there is sign of potential overdraft. The permit process is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act, which means that an Environmental Impact Statement or Report would be required on any proposed exports.

(Adapted from the Inyo County Water Reporter, February 1990.)



Representative Richard Lehman delivers address during the ground breaking ceremonies for the Scenic Area Visitor Center while future generations, (Laurel Hargis, age 3) help themselves to Lehman's seat. Mono County Supervisor Don Rake (left) and long-time Lee Vining resident, businessman, and Mono Lake Foundation Board member, Don Banta (right) look on.

Mono Basin News In Brief

Come, Sweet Reserve

Mono Lake, seasonal home to over 100,000 shorebirds, is being considered for membership in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The network, a voluntary organization of government and private groups, protects critical shorebird habitat by creating international habitat preserves.

This is important because critical shorebird habitat stretches from Arctic breeding areas to wintering grounds at the tip of South America. The Reserve network seeks to keep this migration corridor intact by giving habitat areas international recognition, and supporting local conservation efforts and wetlands management.

If certified as an International Reserve, Mono Lake would be designated, along with Utah's Great Salt Lake and Laguna Mar Chiquita in Argentina, because of its importance to migrating phalaropes. The certification process is expected to go smoothly.

Bodie Back In The News

After many seemingly quiet months, the ghost town of Bodie is once again the focus of controversy. Lands directly adjacent to Bodie State Historic Park, fourteen miles from Mono Lake, are being explored for a possible large mining operation by Galactic Resources of Canada. The company has obtained mining claims on 550 acres of private land and over 47 square miles of public lands in the Bodie Hills.

Galactic completed a drilling program on the private land next to the park last fall and has resumed drilling on public lands. It has not announced specific plans. Mark Whitehead, the project's chief geologist, said he is optimistic that they can start production without harming Bodie and not at the expense of the environment.

Save Bodie!, a committee of the State Park Rangers Association, says that such an operation nearby could threaten the ghost town. Legislation introduced to help protect the town passed in the State Senate on April 19, going next to the Assembly for concurrence. Senate Joint Resolution 60 asks the Bureau of Land (BLM) Management to consider withdrawing portions of the public land near Bodie from mining.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has expressed concerns about the possible mining operation, but has not taken a position. DPR officials toured the site on a fact-finding tour April 27.

The BLM is currently working on the Bishop Resource Area's management plan, which includes the Bodie Hills. Public input on minerals policy is being considered. Contact Michael Ferguson, Bureau of Land Management, 787 North Main St., Ste. P, Bishop, CA 93514-2498, (619) 872-4881.

For more information, contact *Save Bodie!*, P.O. Box 28366, Sacramento, CA 95828-0366, (916) 383-2530 or Galactic Resources, Ltd., 935 Marine Bldg., 355 Burrard St., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6C2G8.

Conway Ranch Approved

After eight hours of public testimony in a packed hearing room, the Mono County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 on March 13 to approve the Conway Ranch project. The majority of those testifying opposed, or identified serious concerns about, the proposed destination resort northwest of Mono Lake. Despite the testimony, the supervisors stated that the project's financial benefits to the county would outweigh the significant impacts to the local landscape.

In response to this decision, the state Attorney General's office filed a lawsuit against Mono County on behalf of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). The suit claims that Mono County did not specifically respond to comments submitted by the DFG as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, nor did they adequately address environmental problems identified by the department. The DFG stated concerns about the project's adverse affects on deer habitat and migratory routes, as well as wetlands.

Final build-out plans for the project call for 690 units of lodges, townhouses and single-family residences on the historic Conway Ranch homestead and wetlands area. Developers would also build a golf course, lake, and recreational facilities for 1,800 people.

East Walker River Update

Opening day anglers were surprised to find that the Plymouth Land and Livestock Company of Nevada had posted "No Trespassing" signs along a three-quarter mile stretch of the East Walker River immediately downstream from the Bridgeport Reservoir.

Fishermen generally view this posting, which began just two days before opening day, as retaliation for the recent conviction of the Walker River Irrigation District on Fish and Game code violations. This conviction, stemming from the 1988 dewatering of the Bridgeport Reservoir, is being appealed by the Irrigation District.

"I don't think they were worried about a fly fisherman hooking a cow," remarked Jim Edmondson, regional manager for California Trout Incorporated.

Neither the Mono County Sheriffs Department or the California Department of Fish and Game received any trespassing complaints during opening weekend. The Sheriff's Department believes that, for now, the posting is advisory. The Livestock Company is reserving the right to restrict access to its six miles of river-front property immediately downstream from the dam.

On April 26, California Trout declared that they regret "the vengeful flavor of this surprise last-minute attempt to exclude fishermen from their favorite fishing holes on Opening Day. California Trout is prepared to seek establishment of these public rights in court, if necessary, and we heartily invite the California Department of Fish and Game and Mono County to join us in that effort."

Peggy Nicholson, Gary J. Nelson and Nancy Zapotocki

Hope For The Los Angeles River

*"Don't it always seem to go,
that you don't know what you got 'til it's gone,
they pave paradise, put up a parking lot."
Joni Mitchell*

Los Angeles River. Somehow these words just don't look right together. Rams, yes; Lakers, yes; Freeways, yes; River, no. Even Los Angeles natives find it hard to believe there's a Los Angeles River. Others only know it as the concrete channel where the Rapid Transit District teaches its new bus drivers how to drive.

Actually, before Los Angeles reached north to appropriate the waters of the Eastern Sierra, the city relied on the Los Angeles River for its very existence. This artery brought water to the city from the San Gabriel mountains to the east. Its periodic cycles of flood and drought reflected the heartbeat of the natural world.

But the coming of the twentieth century (and the Army Corps of Engineers), hardened this artery. Giant concrete walls now isolate the river from the industry and development surrounding it for over ninety percent of its length. Seven hundred storm drains serve as toxic capillaries, flushing pollutants, ranging from road oil to poisonous byproducts of small, unregulated industries, into the river. The once-sparkling stream became an open sewer gurgling its way through a fenced-off concrete canyon towards its rendezvous with the Pacific at Long Beach.

Since the river's natural flow ceased during the summer and fall, the river became especially noxious during these seasons. Then, in 1985, the Los Angeles River received help from two seemingly unlikely sources. The Tillman and Los Angeles-Glendale Water Reclamation Plants began pumping reclaimed waste water into the river. This water, treated through three separate processes, is relatively clean and suitable for irrigation and outdoor watering. However, it is not clean enough to be introduced into the city's regular water distribution system. This limits the number of users to those who have large outdoor watering needs, such as Forest Lawn Cemetery, near Griffith Park. Thus, most of the water from the two plants goes into the river (currently sixty million gallons per day), diluting pollutants and allowing the river to flow to the sea on a year-round basis for the first time since the last glacial epoch.

The clean, nutrient-rich water from the reclamation plants has brought life back to the three living sections of the Los Angeles River not totally enclosed by concrete. Cottonwoods, sycamores, and oaks have begun growing next to the river. American Egrets and Great Blue Heron can be seen pursuing crawdads. Carp and Mosquito Fish swim in the river just north of the busy downtown section of Los Angeles.

Now that so many natural features have vanished under the rising tide of development, the people of Los Angeles are beginning to realize the river's value. Friends of the Los Angeles River was founded in 1988 at

the river's confluence with the Arroyo Seco. Among their goals are reforesting the Los Angeles River's San Gabriel Mountains watershed, and replacing concrete walls with gabions (rock-filled wire baskets) which would serve the function of retaining walls while allowing plants to grow on the embankments. They also hope to create a Los Angeles River Authority to oversee creation of a Los Angeles River Park.

In January 1990, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley announced the first steps toward revitalizing the Los Angeles River. He detailed proposals to turn the river into a recreational, community, and environmental asset. He hopes to create a Los Angeles River Citizen Advisory Committee, organize a Los Angeles River Task Force, and support a Southern California Institute of Architecture conference that will focus on the past, present, and future of the Los Angeles River.

In February, State Senator Art Torres announced that he would co-sponsor a bill to fund water, botanical, and wildlife studies of the Los Angeles River. Torres feels that these studies are the first steps toward achieving his goal of returning the river to its natural state. He hopes to create a fifty-mile river park winding through Los Angeles.

The first Los Angeles River Conference is scheduled for June 16. Proposals for the river's future, ranging from bicycle trails to a three-lane freeway, will be considered.

In spite of the considerable political hurdles involved in its resurrection, the fact that the Los Angeles River has a growing number of friends gives hope for its plight. Its friends, in attempting to retrofit a natural order onto a river that was paved and left for dead decades ago, have a formidable task ahead of them. However, in this era of environmental awareness, it is possible that the concrete barrier of the Los Angeles River can be transformed into a conduit of life uniting the city.

Those wishing to help restore the Los Angeles River can contact: Friends of the Los Angeles River, P.O. Box 292134, Los Angeles, CA 90029, 213-663-7331.

Gary J. Nelson



Mallard ducks swimming on a healthy stretch of the Los Angeles River.

Kids for Mono Lake: Wise Water Ways



HI KIDS! Saving water, or water conservation, is important. If we don't waste water, we will have more to share with other animals and plants. They need it, too! Can you think of a water conservation word that rhymes with each of the drawings below?



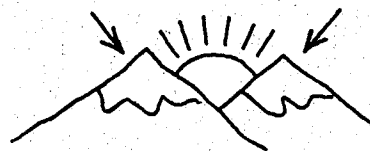
Fix a _____.



_____ water.

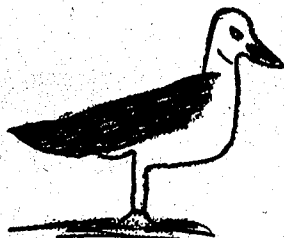


Turn off the _____
when brushing your teeth.



Check for _____.

Saving water can be fun ! Write something about how you save water at home, or draw a picture, or write a poem. Send it to the *Kids' Page*, *The Mono Lake Committee*, P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541. We'll send you a free Mono Lake sticker. We may even put your work up on our Visitor Center bulletin board. This will let our visitors know how you save water and how they can, too!



Use a broom instead of water
to clean the sidewalk or driveway.

Don't stay in the shower
longer than you need to.



your friend
Fallace Morrison

Only run the dishwasher
when it is full.

This page and the Kids' Page in our Spring issue were written and designed by MLC staffer Nancy Zapotocki.

MLC News and Activities

The Fifth Annual Wine Cellar Drawing

The Committee's fifth annual Fine Wine Cellar Drawing raised over \$23,000 to help save Mono Lake. The event was held on May 5 at the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco.

State Assemblymen Bill Baker and Phil Isenberg were honored for authoring AB 444 and AB 1442, the Environmental Water Act of 1989. Speaking at the event, Baker commended the work of his colleague Isenberg, and gave an update on their continuing work on wetlands.

Rick Battson and Mark Watts, of the Assemblymen's staff, were also recognized for their important roles in helping pass the two pieces of legislation.

Long-time Mono Lake supporters Herbert Cerwin and Gerald Asher were honored for their commitment to the Wine Cellar Drawing. Mr. Cerwin and Mr. Asher, along with honorary chairs Grace and Rick de Laet, selected the four winning tickets. The winners were Al Pollack of Fresno, Mary Lou Slagter of Palos Verdes Estates, and Jane Cook of Corte Madera. Hans Ernst of Los Gatos won the Sonoma County Gold Cellar.

We express our sincere thanks to Herb McGrew, Herbert Cerwin, Larry Wagner, and Robert and Jean Harrison for generously donating the four wine cellars. Special thanks go to Guy Kay of Beringer Winery for donating the wine for the reception. Thanks also to Genevieve Armstrong and Wally Marinko for providing lovely music.

Earth Day Appreciation

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered for Earth Day events. In LA, Paul, Jo, Michael, and Matthew Wilson, John Dolan, Al Sheahan, John and Janesse Lewey, Steve and Michelle Sands, Ralph Sanders, Bob Schlichting, Robert Gregory, Lauren Zittle, and Liz Fishman staffed our exhibits. Stacy Brown, Robert Gregory, and Paul Kohlberg produced our professional-looking displays. Conner Everts presented the Mono Lake slide show as part of Earth Week festivities. A big thank you goes to Betsy Reifsnider, who made our participation in the Southern California Earth Day celebration possible.

The MLC also had a display at Reno's New World Expo, thanks to Cari Lockett and everyone at Lockett, Inc., who organized the event. Paul Kohlberg and Peggy Nicholson staffed our Reno exhibit. Jean Dale gave out MLC information at a Ventura County Earth Day celebration. Because of our hard-working volunteers and staff, the MLC seemed to be everywhere during Earth Week.

Wilson's Eastside Sports in Bishop donated part of their Earth Day sales. Larry Kocher and his students at Menlo-Atherton High School made an Earth Day gift.

Visitor Center Funds

We did it! We raised enough money to pay off the loan for purchasing the Visitor Center building in Lee Vining. So far, over \$19,000 has been donated for Visitor Center acquisition. We commend MLC board members Genny Smith and Grace de Laet for their leadership roles in this fundraising effort. Heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to give the Mono Lake Committee a permanent home in the Eastern Sierra.

Raffi and Barbara Bedayn

Reid Bennet

Dawne Bernhardt

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Bloxam

Mrs. James Boswell

Joe & Gayle Brower

Charles Candiotti

Saul Chaiken

Grace & Rick de Laet

Anne & Paul Ehrlich

Mr. & Mrs. Robert B. Harrison

Vance Huckins

Mary Lou & Vern Judy

Richard M. & Doris Leonard

Mr. & Mrs. T. Bruce Mitchell

George Peyton, Jr.

Marsh Pitman

Capt. Lance Pruitt, U.S.N. Ret.

Lois W. Rosebrook

Genny & Ward Smith

Dwight Steele

John S. Warriner

James Wiley

Frances & Robert Youngblood

Avian Almanac

Saturday, June 16. Mono Lake Spring Breeding Bird Count. Groups will survey Lundy and Lee Vining canyons, and Mono's western shores.

Saturday & Sunday, August 25-26. Mono Lake Fall Shorebird Count. Birders needed to census Mono Lake shorebirds. Need not be present both days.

For more information, please contact Emilie Strauss at (415) 843-6024.

Mono Basin Bird Records Needed

Unusual bird sightings are being compiled to update *Birds of Yosemite and the East Slope*. Quarterly reports are also sent to *American Birds*. Please send your sightings to: Emilie Strauss, 1468 Grizzly Peak Boulevard, Berkeley, CA 94708.

Mono Lake Committee Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 1, 1990

*Join us for a day of celebration and affirmation!
Watch your mail for further details.*

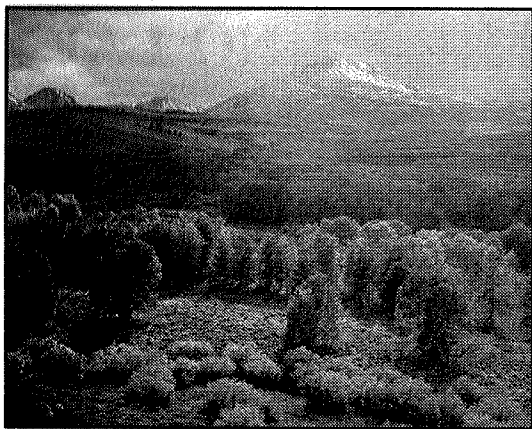


Photo by Vern Clevenger

Thanks To TPL

Travelers from the north first catch sight of Mono Lake from Conway Summit on Highway 395. The Mono Lake Committee would like to thank Bennett Johnston and the Trust For Public Land (TPL) for protecting Conway Summit's scenic beauty and wildlife habitat. Thanks to the Trust, 1,032 acres of land was transferred to Bureau of Land Management ownership.

"All of us at the Trust for Public Land knew of the great beauty and vistas of Conway Summit, but it wasn't until we got involved in this project that we learned of its critical importance as a wildlife habitat area for the Mono sin's deer herds and mountain beaver," said Johnston, who arranged the transfer. "It's also a pretty damn good place to fish."

Staff Hellos

Another baby for Mono Lake! We welcome Jeremy Backlar, son of Shelly Backlar, our Development Director, and her husband Roger. Jeremy weighed in at 7 lbs., 5 oz. Mom and baby are doing fine.

Lauren Zittle has joined our LA staff as administrative aide. Lauren is a recent graduate of UCSB, and has just returned from traveling in Asia. She has long had an interest in the environment, but became even more concerned after seeing environmental problems in Asia.

Intern Paul Kohlberg is now a member of our permanent staff in Lee Vining. A volunteer since last fall, Paul has done fine work building and designing displays, doing graphics and photography, and remodeling our offices. We are glad that he will continue to use his talents as one of our new staff assistants.

A hearty welcome back to Shannon Nelson, who has also joined our Lee Vining office as a staff assistant. Born and raised in Oklahoma, Shannon has worked two summers for us as a volunteer intern. She has a degree in wildlife ecology and radio-tracked wolves in northern Minnesota as part of her education. It's great to have her back on a permanent basis.

Accolades

We appreciate our new LA Speakers Bureau speakers! John Dolan, Al Sheahan, and Diana Shepherd have already delivered Mono Lake slide programs. The Speakers Bureau is always looking for volunteers. Please call the LA office for information.

Thank you to Sally Hackel for assembling our water conservation brochures. Pat Flynn of Mammoth's Swiss Chalet was the first hotelier to give these to her guests. Barbara Campbell and Jeff Irons of the Mammoth Lakes Town Council also deserve our gratitude for distributing brochures to other hotels.

Many thanks to Chris and Joy Lombardo, who publish the *Eastside Journal*. They donate a portion of their subscription revenues. Pete Douty of the Chalfant Press gave us invaluable research assistance. Bob Schlichting, we appreciate your help in the LA office.

We are grateful for gifts of special equipment. Stephen Davies donated a video camera and portable recorder and Dorothy Babington donated a VCR for our educational programs. John Reardon of Canon, USA, donated software which has enhanced our public outreach program. Ronald Sachs of Minaret Framemakers and the Warehouse Gallery in Mammoth Lakes donated a custom picture frame. We'll stay organized with a file cabinet from John Otter.

In Memory

We are grateful for donations made in behalf of Juergen Roesler by his DDS crew, and by his many Madison Complex friends. These gifts were made in loving memory of his wife Christa. Thank you to the Kazebee Family Trust for the generous gift in memory of Diane Kazebee. Cecelia Lance made a donation in loving memory of Sid Lance. A gift was made in memory of George Nickel by Evelyn Smith. Thank you to Denis Deluchi for the gift in memory of Helga Oberth, a great outdoorswoman. Anne Fortner made a donation in memory of Robert Fortner.

Peacemonger

"Peace is...a dynamic, ever-changing process of dialogue, accommodation and balance..." so says *The Peacemonger*, a new publication created by MLC member Nathan Koren. Nathan, age 13, with the help of his tutor, Eric Greening, and his younger brother, Henry, hopes to be a part of this process. Most articles will cover environmental and social issues in San Luis Obispo County, but he hopes to include news and perspectives from around the world. For a year's subscription or to contribute an article, send \$8 to: *The Peacemonger*, 7365 Valle Avenue, Atascadero, CA 93422.

*Membership Problems?
Let Your Label Work For You!*

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...and check the appropriate boxes below:

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- ☐ **Missed Issues** – If you've missed issues of the Mono Lake Newsletter, attach a brief note to indicate which issues. The newsletter is published quarterly. Please note: The Postal Service will not forward magazines or third-class mail unless informed to do so on a Change of Address Card.
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Mail to:
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(aka Sally Miller)
Mono Lake Committee
P.O. Box 29
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Thanks to *Wilderness* magazine for this helpful form.

Oops!

Our apologies to the Golden Chopsticks Restaurant, whose phone number inadvertently appeared in the Speaker's Bureau notice in our spring issue. Thanks for graciously fielding our calls! We also hope that we did not cause our readers too much inconvenience.

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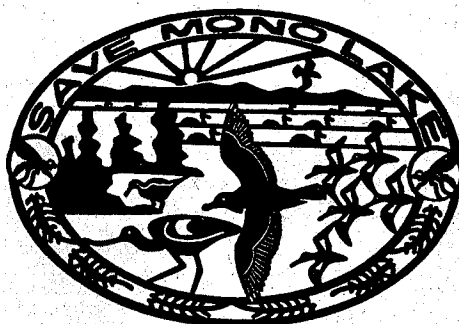
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Summer Catalog Additions

New for 1990, Wild Bryde's Mike Warner designed this striking pin and earrings for us.
This delicately crafted jewelry captures the beauty of Mono Lake and its inhabitants.
When ordering, please indicate your choice of gold plate or silver plate.



*Mono Lake Silhouette
with Brine Shrimp
Earring. \$18.00*



Mono Lake Sunrise Pin. \$24.00



*Grebe with Tufa Earring.
\$16.00*



*Brine Shrimp
Earrings.
\$10.00*

Conservation Kits

Become a "Mono Lake Saver!" Saving water has become especially vital during our fourth year of drought. Save water for Mono Lake, and save \$\$ on your water, energy, and sewage bills. Buy the *Mono Lake Saver Kit* at \$25.00 and save \$5.30. Each piece may also be purchased separately.

💧 *Water Saver Showerhead \$14.95*
Cuts consumption by almost 50%.

💧 *Water Saver Kitchen Faucet Aerator \$6.95*
Saves 2-3 times more than most aerators.

💧 *Water Saver Bathroom Tap Aerator \$1.95*
Use half the water!

💧 *Water Saver Toilet Dams \$5.95*
Saves 2 gallons per flush.

💧 *"I Save Water For Mono Lake" Bumpersticker*

Two Mono Lake Postcards

Order Information

Name _____
Address _____

Zip Code _____ Phone # (____) _____

MC or Visa # _____

Expiration date _____

Quantity	Item	Color	Price
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Subtotal _____

CA Residents Add Tax _____

Shipping (see below) _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Shipping rates: Up to \$10.00 — \$2.50, \$10.00 to \$25.00 — \$3.00, \$25.00 to \$50.00 — \$4.00.

Please mail your order to the Mono Lake Committee,
P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541, or call (619) 647-6595.

Announcing the
11th Annual

Los Angeles to Mono Lake Bike-A-Thon

August 27 through September 1

Join up to 100 riders on a cycling adventure to benefit Mono Lake. The journey starts at the downtown headquarters of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. There we fill vials with water from the Department's reflecting pools, strap them on our bicycles, and begin the six-day, 350-mile trek.

Following the path of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, cyclists cover some of the most scenic and challenging terrain in California to return the water to its rightful destination—Mono Lake. The event concludes with a rehydration ceremony and celebration at the lake's shore.

The Bike-a-thon is one of the Committee's most visible ways to educate the public about Mono Lake's plight. It is also a vital fundraising effort. Thanks to the dedication and commitment of the riders and sponsors, the 1989 event raised over \$90,000. This year, our goal is to raise \$110,000.

To participate, cyclists must raise and turn in a minimum of \$250 by August 3, 1990. Upon registration, we provide each rider with a kit to make the fundraising



process as easy as possible. The money raised enables the Mono Lake Committee to continue its efforts to protect the scenic, natural, recreation, and scientific values of Mono Lake.

This year's Bike-a-thon offers cyclists a chance to ride to help Mono Lake and gives them an opportunity to discover the wonders that lie between Los Angeles and Lee Vining. At informal gatherings each evening, we will bring insights to the next day's terrain by highlighting some of the hidden treasures along the route. Topics will include the flora and fauna, geology, and history of each region. Riders will not only finish the Bike-a-thon with personal satisfaction,

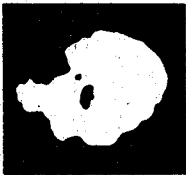
but will also gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the areas through which they have cycled.

Plan to join us on this inspiring tour. If you would like more information about riding or volunteering to help, please call Liz Fishman at (213) 477-8229.

Photo by Pete Smith/Viewfinders.

Join Us!

Still not a Mono Lake Committee member? Join us, and increase our strength and effectiveness. We will keep you informed, through our quarterly newsletter and action alerts, of what's happening and how you can help. Regular membership is \$20/year, or \$30 Sponsor, \$50 Supporting Member, \$100 Monophile, \$250 Defense Trust Member, \$500 Monomaniac, \$8 "I Can't Afford More." Checks should be payable to the Mono Lake Committee, and are not tax-deductible. If you would like your contribution to be tax-deductible, please endorse your check to the Mono Lake Foundation.



**THE
MONO LAKE
COMMITTEE**

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