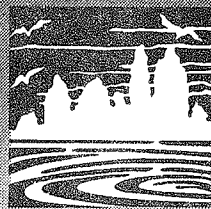


Spring

1996

MONO



LAKE

NEWSLETTER

Draft Restoration
Plan Analysis

1996 Field
Seminars

Mill Creek
Profile

Mono Lake Newsletter

Spring 1996

Volume 18, Number 4

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IN THIS ISSUE



As this issue's cover shows, snow still lingers in the Mono Basin. The weather played a remarkable game of catch-up this year as several storms brought significant snowfalls to the Eastern Sierra in January and February. What looked like a dry year turned out to be average or better, so watch for the lake to rise as we go into summer.

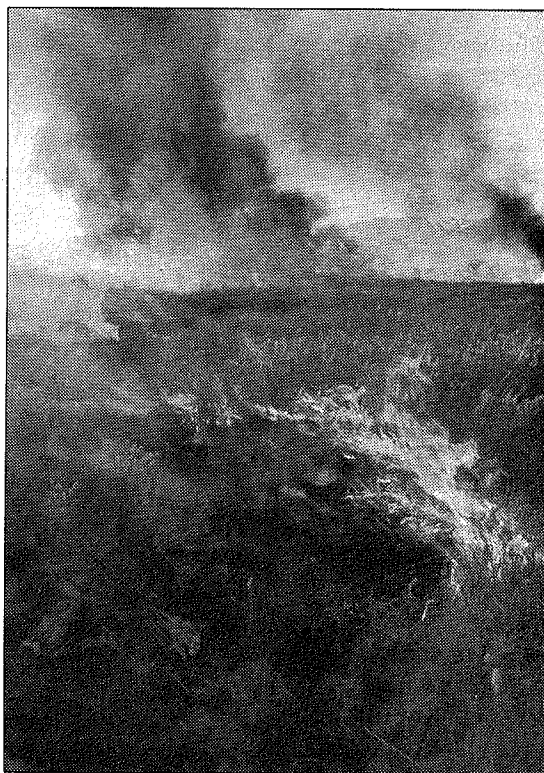
DWP released its draft restoration plans in December and you'll find an analysis on pages 4-7 of this issue. Final proposals are due to the Water Board as this goes to press, so there will be more news in the summer issue.

Mill Creek, Mono's north shore tributary, finally gets its due with a profile on pages 8-9. Restoration of Mill Creek is a developing issue, and the summer Newsletter will carry the profile's second part.

Every spring we publish information on the Committee's Field Seminars (formerly the Foundation workshops), and this year's expanded roster of classes requires full use of pages 12-15. Make your plans now!

Don't miss news of the new book on the fight for Mono Lake, reviewed on page 21. Author John Hart has successfully captured the complexities and emotion of the Mono Lake struggle in a book truly worth reading!

—Geoff McQuilkin



Fire was reintroduced to Mono Lake's east shore in late fall with several controlled burns.

Mission of the Mono Lake Committee

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

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The meanings of Mono

by Martha Davis

In anticipation of leaving the Committee, I am virtuously straightening out files. The white drifts yield unexpected treasures: one is a letter written two years ago to John Hart, author of Storm over Mono (see the review on page 21). He had asked me what I thought the meaning of the Mono Lake story was. Here are some excerpts from that letter.

¶
Mono Lake poses the "resources" dilemma facing our society in the starkest of terms. In effect, it says to us all: Choose. Decide. How will we allocate our water supplies? What will be the consequences of those decisions: for Mono Lake? for Los Angeles? for the Bay Delta? for California and the arid west?

This resources dilemma is often described as the politics of scarcity, and it's true that we are now finally coping with the realization that water is a scarce resource. But the resources dilemma is held hostage by the politics of trade-off that dominate our society.

In finding that water is scarce, the questions that have been posed for handling scarcity have been "either-or." They are: Will we have water for Urbans or water for the Environment? Is it water for Agriculture or for Urbans? Agriculture or the Environment?

Beyond these simplistic arguments lies the physical reality of the dilemma. The last half-century has been dominated by rapid, resource-consuming growth. Water policy, in particular, was one-sided during this period: highest and best use favored urban and agricultural activities over the environment. We built dams and we diverted, and diverted, and diverted...

So now we are faced with real environmental and economic consequences of those diversions. They were essential to the creation of the economy and society we enjoy in California (and elsewhere); they also robbed California (and elsewhere) of the natural resources we

thought we would always enjoy.

It is ironic that the political process frames the answer to this resource dilemma as one of trade-off. With few exceptions, the public will say that, of course, they want both a protected environment and the economic benefits of water diversions.

The operative question, then, is "can we have both?" The answer is "well, maybe." It depends on the terms.

¶
If the Mono Lake story is a mirror in which we can see the full array of our resource dilemmas reflected, it is also a medium which delivers a clear, principled answer for how to (try to) resolve this dilemma: take responsibility for the broadest definition of the problem for society and develop real solutions. Reject the politics of trade-off. Work to find options that respond to the real needs of all the parties.

Some answers were painfully obvious to the Committee. Efficient use of water—whatever the sector—is a must. Waste cannot be tolerated, not when the price tag is the loss of an ecosystem like Mono Lake (and there's a "Mono Lake" at the end of all our taps).

Some answers explored by MLC lead to interesting insights into the other problems facing our society. If wastewater recycling makes sense as an efficient way to use water (and is a solution for Mono Lake), it also helps to reduce pollution to our ocean, creates a drought-proof water supply for our businesses, and even generates jobs at a time when they are urgently needed. The effect of one action (the construction of the recycling plant) ripples through our society creating multiple consequences—in this case, beneficial ones.

Through the Mono Lake story we glimpse a new landscape in the California water picture. Nothing except tradition and short-sightedness forces us to think about solutions to California's water

problems in isolation from the rest of our policy dilemmas. The terrain of the future is comprised of the linkages between water and other issues and the implied opportunities for united problem solving.

¶
Finally, what was the magic that made Mono Lake so successful? This land captures people's hearts and minds and the fight over Mono has been uniquely personal. Rarely does a place so thoroughly captivate. People were drawn to the struggle.

As usual, David Gaines said it best. In his last newsletter essay, Dave wrote that "dreams and visions are the counterpoint to laws and lawsuits. Without them, nothing will ever change."


At Mono Lake we dreamed an impossible dream. And we made it come true.

Water has re-filled the dry creek beds and life is returning to the streams. In the years to come, Mono Lake will rise to a higher, healthier water level and our children will witness the rebirth of an entire ecosystem.

Equally important, Los Angeles, our state's largest, most powerful city, has chosen at last to respect the beauty and ecological well-being of this distant watershed. The city will develop the water supplies it needs through conservation and water recycling. These water supply options will be a vital part of bringing other social and economic benefits to our Los Angeles community.

And for California, we averted the substitution of one form of environmental harm for another. No other region will be impacted by Mono Lake's protection. Instead, we demonstrated a new way to address the State's water problems.

In the end, the real meaning of Mono is hope. Hope that we can make the changes we need to secure the future we want. Hope that we can make those changes in time.

Martha Davis is the Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee. 

Draft restoration plans from DWP flawed

In December the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) released a flawed set of draft plans for the restoration of Mono Basin streams and waterfowl habitat, and for the management of water resources in the Basin. There's hope, though: the Mono Lake Committee submitted extensive comments on the draft plans and DWP has a chance to improve the documents before presenting them to the State Water Resources Control Board.

The restoration planning process dates back to September 1994 when the Water Board ordered DWP to prepare and submit plans for the restoration of streams and waterfowl habitat damaged by its water diversions. DWP was also ordered to prepare plans for managing its Mono Basin aqueduct facilities to accommodate restoration and raise the level of Mono Lake to the 6,392-foot level.

As ordered by the Water Board, DWP worked with the Committee and others to choose two panels of scientists to make recommendations for the plans, one for streams and the other for waterfowl habitat. The scientists' recommendations, released in November of last year, were excellent. DWP, unfortunately, chose to make selective and noncommittal use of the recommendations in its draft plans.

DWP's stream plan unworkable

The Committee strongly supports the scientist team's proposed stream restoration plan, which emphasizes natural restoration processes achieved through higher peak stream flows. DWP, in its plan, also chose to emphasize "natural stream processes and functions, and [to] thereby accelerate both short-term and long-term recovery of the riparian and aquatic systems," but it disregarded the higher peak flows needed to make such an approach actually work.

The result: an unworkable plan. As

MLC Eastern Sierra Representative Sally Miller noted, "DWP's restoration plan will not result in the restoration of pre-diversion processes or conditions." The Committee made extensive comments in support of the scientists' plan and DWP is in the process of revising its draft.

Minimal commitment to waterfowl plan

The Mono Lake Committee also strongly supports the waterfowl habitat restoration plan produced by the waterfowl habitat scientist team. Happily, DWP incorporated the bulk of the scientists' proposals into its draft waterfowl habitat plan. However, DWP noted that many of the restoration activities would be undertaken only if other agencies, such as Caltrans and the US Forest Service, helped fund the work.

The Committee does not support this approach to financing restoration. While third party assistance is certainly welcome, it should not be a condition of doing restoration work. As noted in the Committee's comments, "in principle the responsibility for restoration is DWP's and DWP's alone." DWP should fund restoration because DWP has received—and will receive—the benefit of water taken from the Mono Basin. In producing its final waterfowl habitat plan, DWP has an opportunity to remove the financial conditions which, most likely, would limit greatly the amount of actual waterfowl habitat restoration accomplished.

Grant plan lacks detail

The development of a draft Grant Lake Operations and Management Plan has been primarily DWP's responsibility, although the Committee has been involved in setting goals for the plan and technical review. Despite weighing in at over four pounds, the Grant Plan lacks the detail needed to assess DWP's management plans. Most significantly, the

proposals as written cannot deliver the peak flows called for by the scientists.

Important first step on Mill Creek

The waterfowl scientists identified rewatering Mill Creek (see page 8) as the highest priority for habitat restoration after raising the lake. DWP made an important first step toward this goal by proposing to commit its Mill Creek water right to the creek. Unfortunately, DWP's water right alone is not enough to return Mill Creek to even minimal year-round existence, and more needs to be done to assure Mill Creek is restored.

Interim restoration uncertain

Given the current schedule for Water Board approval of restoration plans—and the fact that all Mono Basin restoration work requires several months of permit gathering from federal agencies—it is unlikely that restoration work will happen in 1996 without a separate commitment from DWP. The Committee is actively seeking assurance that the '96 restoration season won't be lost, but DWP so far has made no commitments.

Still time to improve

There's still time to fix the problems with DWP's draft restoration plans. A solid set of recommendations from the scientists exists—and is backed by the Committee. If DWP's final proposal more closely resembles the scientists' recommendations, there will be little need for debate before the Water Board.

On the other hand, the Committee is ready to return to Sacramento to make the case for proper and effective restoration of Mono's damaged resources before the Water Board. What will happen? We'll know by summer.

The draft plans are discussed in more detail on the following three pages.



STREAMS

RESTORING MONO LAKE'S TRIBUTARIES

Project: Stream Restoration Plan.

Water Board order: The Department of Water and Power (DWP) must prepare a stream restoration plan to "restore, preserve, and protect the streams and fisheries" of Rush, Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks.

Deadline: Final proposal due to the Water Board March 1, 1996.

How will years of desiccation be repaired? How can Mono's streams be returned to their pre-diversion conditions? These are the central questions of the stream restoration planning process occurring under order from the State Water Resources Control Board. With varying degrees of success, a slew of planning documents released over the last six months have tried to capture the answer. Unfortunately the latest, DWP's draft restoration plan, falls far short of a workable solution.

The Stream Team report

The three scientific experts chosen by DWP, the Mono Lake Committee, and others released their restoration recommendations last fall. Impressed by the effects of the high spring runoff in 1995, the team recommended that natural processes largely be allowed to guide restoration—and they recommended the peak flows necessary to make it happen. Rather than conduct extensive hands-on habitat enhancement and channel modification, the team concluded, the stream should

to do the bulk of the work itself. High channel maintenance flows scour pools, disperse seeds, move sediment, and help build habitat. Some intervention would still be needed, such as reopening plugged side channels, but the natural forces of the stream would be the main method of rebuilding historical conditions.

High peak flows are the keystone of the stream team proposal. Minimum flows keep the stream alive year round, but peak flows do the work of shaping the stream every spring. The peak flows specified by the Water Board, are not high enough to accomplish restoration, the scientists concluded. So they recommended larger peak flows.

The DWP draft plan

DWP took the stream team plan under consideration and released its draft restoration plan in December. The draft heartily advocates the minimal work (low cost) approach to restoration, but it dismisses out of hand the peak flows called for by the scientists. The result: a plan which promises restoration it can't deliver.

In comments on the draft plan, the Committee concluded: "DWP has failed to demonstrate how its plan, a disingenuous combination of D1631 [Water Board] channel maintenance flows plus very modest additions of water ... and an *a la carte* selection of certain of the scientists' recommended measures, will result in the long-term restoration of Mono Basin streams."

One of the stream scientists put it even more bluntly in a letter to DWP. "DWP dismisses our recommended flows and adopts flows that are woefully inadequate," he wrote, "to do the work that needs to be done to create and maintain instream and riparian habitat."

DWP's draft is also vague on other

important points. It fails to propose an alternate stream plan which might achieve restoration of historical conditions with its own lower stream flows. Revegetation work, DWP proposed, should be put off for five years to see whether it is necessary (Rush and Lee Vining creeks, the Committee points out, have been rewatered for over ten years and extensive data on natural revegetation have already been collected.) And certain plan components required by the Water Board—fish and sediment bypass facilities at diversion points, for example—are missing.

A new release facility

Significantly absent in the draft plan is a discussion of how the peak flows recommended by the scientists might be met. Most likely, a second release facility would be required at Grant Dam, but DWP dismissed discussion on the issue after raising the specter of a \$10 million price tag (see page 7).

The upshot

The stream team made a strong set of recommendations centered on the need for higher peak flows in Mono's tributaries. DWP's draft plan omits the channel maintenance flows needed on Rush Creek but uses many of the team's other suggestions, resulting in a plan with little real substance. DWP now has the opportunity to address these failings in its final proposal, due out in March. Watch for an analysis in the summer issue of this newsletter.

The Mono Lake Committee's work on stream restoration is funded in part by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



WATERFOWL HABITAT

RESTORING ONE OF MONO LAKE'S LOST RESOURCES

Project: Waterfowl Habitat Restoration Plan.

Water Board order: The Department of Water and Power (DWP) must prepare a plan to restore the waterfowl habitat lost at Mono Lake due to diversions.

Deadline: Final proposal due to the Water Board March 1, 1996.

Recognizing the impacts of Mono Lake's decline on waterfowl habitat, the Water Board, in its 1994 decision, ordered DWP to restore waterfowl habitat to partially compensate for the damage caused by water diversions. A recent set of reports examines how to bring back some of this lost habitat. Unfortunately, the most recent document—DWP's draft restoration plan—lacks firm commitment to restoration measures.

The Waterfowl Team report

Three scientific experts were chosen by DWP, the Mono Lake Committee, and others to develop recommendations on waterfowl habitat restoration. The Waterfowl Team plan was released last fall and identifies a list of recommended restoration measures.

The most important way to restore waterfowl habitat, the team concluded, is to raise the level of Mono Lake. Under the Water Board order, the lake is already rising to a level of 6,392 feet. At a minimum, the scientists concluded, a level of 6,405 feet is needed to fully restore habitat. Given the limitation on lake level, though, the team proposed additional measures to restore habitat.

After raising the level of Mono Lake, the team concluded the most important restoration action is "rewatering Mill Creek, including important distributaries, and raising the water table in the floodplain to restore riparian, marsh, spring, wet meadow, and open water ponds and sloughs, and to recreate a hypopycnal environment off the mouth of the stream." Mill Creek (see article on page 8), was not diverted into the Los Angeles aqueduct but has been dewatered by irrigation and hydropower diversions. Its bottomland and delta areas offer the greatest restoration opportunities of any of Mono's tributaries.

The team made several additional recommendations. The first is to rewater important side channels in the Rush Creek bottomlands, a relatively flat, formerly vegetated area of the creek historically known for abundant waterfowl. Rewatering channels, the team concluded, "will increase groundwater across the floodplain, reduce water velocities, increase silt deposition, and enhance the development of depressional wetlands, riparian and aquatic vegetation, ... marshes and seasonal wet meadows."

The second is to develop a habitat complex at the County Ponds area on Mono's north shore. Building on the DeChambeau enhancement project already in place (see Newsletter, Winter 1996), flooding of the (now dry) County Ponds and adjacent areas could create up to 45 acres of seasonal freshwater wetlands and 22 acres of wet seasonal meadow. Unlike Mill Creek restoration, this project would require ongoing annual operations and maintenance work.

The third suggestion is prescribed burning on federal and state lands bordering Mono Lake to enhance lake-fringing

marsh and seasonal wet meadow habitats. Prescribed burns would reintroduce fire to the ecosystem, and a pilot burn made last fall on the lake's east shore showed the promise of such a program.

The DWP draft plan

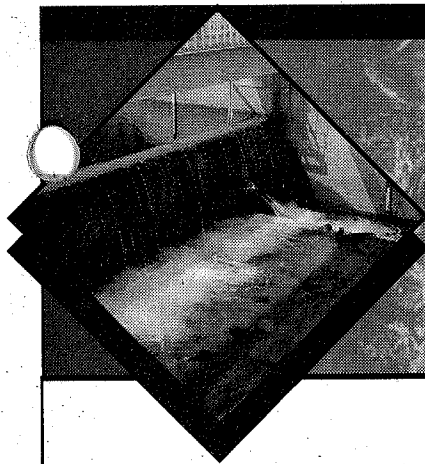
Commendably, DWP proposes in its draft to commit its Mill Creek water right toward restoring Mill Creek. However, this water alone is not enough to create year-round flows and DWP did not discuss ways of accomplishing the full rewatering and restoration recommended by the waterfowl team. The Committee's comments on the draft emphasized the critical need to identify actions which will actually restore Mill Creek.

While it supported the scientists' other restoration items, DWP did not propose to pay for them. The Committee believes the costs of restoration are DWP's responsibility.

The upshot

The DWP draft plan incorporates most of the waterfowl team's recommendations, but fails to create a feasible scenario for accomplishing them, in the case of Mill Creek, and fails to make a commitment of DWP funds to the projects. The end result of the current draft could well be no waterfowl habitat restoration. DWP now has the opportunity to address these failings in its final proposal, due out in March. Watch for an analysis in the summer issue of the Mono Lake Newsletter.

The Mono Lake Committee's work on waterfowl habitat restoration is funded in part by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



WATER MANAGEMENT

CREATING AN AQUEDUCT AND GRANT RESERVOIR PLAN

Project:

Grant Lake Management Plan.

Water Board order: The Department of Water and Power (DWP) must create a plan for the efficient operation of Grant Lake reservoir and other diversion facilities in the Mono Basin. The plan should consider the needs of the stream and waterfowl habitat restoration programs and address local concerns.

Deadline: Final proposal due to the Water Board March 1, 1996.

As with the stream and waterfowl habitat plans, DWP developed a draft Grant Lake Operations and Management Plan (GLOMP) under order from the State Water Board. A thorough plan is critical to the success of both the stream and waterfowl habitat restoration efforts, since the plan will define how water is delivered for restoration.

Unfortunately, the draft plan released by DWP does not deliver the channel maintenance flows needed to accomplish restoration in Rush Creek as recommended by the stream scientists.

The current structure

The key to delivering water to Rush Creek is Grant Lake Reservoir, which is located on Rush Creek and is the point of diversion for the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Currently a structure called the return ditch carries water from the reservoir via a circuitous path to Rush Creek. The return ditch has two problems: first, it bypasses the first 2800 feet of the creek below the dam (known

as Reach 1), leaving that stretch dry; and second, its current capacity is 160 cubic feet per second (cfs), significantly short of the *minimum* peak flows of 450–600 cfs called for by the scientists in years of above normal precipitation.

Several options are available for delivering those peak flows, the best of which is constructing a new outlet structure at Grant Dam. This would not only allow achievement of peak flows but also the release of water into Rush Creek just below the dam, setting the stage for the restoration of this still-dry section of the creek.

The DWP draft plan

DWP's draft plan takes a cursory look at constructing a release facility, prices it at \$10 million, and dismisses it as too expensive. (For technical and financial reasons; other alternatives such as siphons and pumping were also rejected.) Instead, DWP opts to rehabilitate the return ditch and increase its capacity to 350 cfs. Additional flows would be achieved by allowing Grant Lake to overflow down its spillway.

The subcommittee review

A subcommittee including the three stream scientists and DWP's own stream consultant reviewed DWP's proposed method of delivering water to Rush Creek. Their conclusion: "Reliance on spills from Grant Lake is considered to be too unpredictable, even if the capacity of [the return ditch] were increased to 350–380 cfs, to consider [this] to be a reliable alternative for providing the flows recommended by the Stream Scientists ..."

The subcommittee's preferred alternative is construction of a new release facility. "This alternative," they wrote, "is considered to be the most reliable in

terms of providing the volumes, timing, magnitude, and duration of water needed ... to restore and maintain the stream habitat, including Reach 1, of Rush Creek below Grant Lake Reservoir."

A third alternative involving diversion of Lee Vining Creek water to supplement Rush Creek flows was also considered, but it failed to deliver enough water to restore the upper sections of Rush Creek.

Committee brings in expert

The Committee supports construction of a new outlet structure and has retained an expert on dam construction to review the situation and assess DWP's \$10 million price tag. "We've hired a dam engineering expert to help us create a solution to this problem which, if unresolved, threatens the restoration of Rush Creek," says MLC Executive Director Martha Davis.

The upshot

DWP's draft plan cannot provide the higher peak flows needed for stream restoration and the Committee is bringing in an expert to review the options for constructing a new bypass facility. DWP's final proposal is due to the Water Board in March and if it doesn't propose delivery of the needed peak flows, the entire restoration process could be jeopardized. DWP now has the opportunity to address these failings. Watch for an analysis in the summer issue of the Mono Lake Newsletter.

The Committee's work on GLOMP is funded in part by a Switzer Environmental Leadership Grant through the San Francisco Foundation.

First in a series

Mill Creek: The once and future stream

by Dr. Scott Stine

Editor's note: Interest in restoring Mill Creek is developing quickly, yet Mill is the least known of Mono's tributaries. Dr. Stine has agreed to write several articles profiling Mill Creek for the Newsletter. This is the first of those articles.

With a length of 14 miles and an average annual discharge of 22,000 acre feet, Mill Creek is the third largest stream in the Mono Basin. It heads in cirques at an elevation of 11,400 feet in the immediate lee of the Sierran crest, then cascades eastwardly down frost-shattered cataracts to the bedrock floor of Lundy Canyon, a steep, deep, recessed rent in the east-Sierran front. In its middle reaches the stream stalls briefly at Lundy Lake, then resumes its hyperkinetic descent. At an elevation of 7,200 feet, with three-quarters of its length and four-fifths of its fall behind, Mill Creek debouches from Lundy Canyon and enters a narrow defile cut into glacial, alluvial, and lacustrine sediments. This terraced trench, trending to the east along most of its length, swings abruptly southward at "Big Bend" (elevation. 6600 ft.), then guides Mill Creek its final 2 miles to the northwest shore of Mono Lake.

Like its perennial sister streams Rush and Lee Vining, Mill Creek has constructed a delta at its mouth. And like all deltas, this deposit of Mill Creek alluvium consists of two parts: a conspicuous, fan-shaped "outer delta" that protrudes into the lake, and an elongate "inner delta" that extends upstream tongue-like into the trench. Inner deltas, often overlooked as delta components, owe their existence to the

physics of stream deposition. Simply put, as a stream "progrades" (makes itself longer) by building its outer delta lakeward, it must also "agrade" (build its bed higher through deposition) in order to maintain a gradient for flowing water. This aggradation results in backfilling to progressively greater distances upstream. Just as the Mississippi River Delta extends upstream above Cairo, Illinois; just as the Nile River Delta extends upstream half the length of Egypt; just as the Lee Vining Creek Delta extends

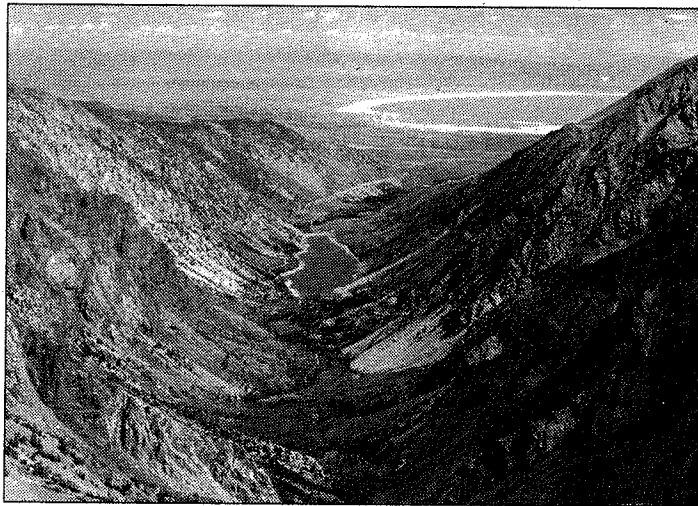
phreatophytes hug the channel sides, composing just a thin riparian strand. Where the creek meets its interior delta, in contrast, the trench floor flares abruptly into a broad valley bottom many hundreds of feet across, and the stream branches into multiple "distributary channels" that disperse the flow laterally. The result is a "bottomlands environment" which, under natural conditions, comprises a mosaic of dense riparian forest, wooded wetland, high water table, marsh, and backwater morass, all

intertwined with narrow, root-bound distributaries of sluggishly to vigorously flowing water.

The size, complexity, and continuity of natural deltaic bottomlands, coupled with their proximity to lakes, make them arguably the most biologically diverse type of environment in all of the Great Basin. In a region dominated by desert and steppe, deltaic bottomlands constitute congregational oases for mammals, fishes, birds, amphibians, and a multitude of other life forms.

Even during the late summer, fall, and early winter, when streams and seeps shrink and wither, deltaic bottomlands, drenched by groundwater, remain a wetted refuge for wildlife. The Mill Creek bottomland was one of these teeming oases. But it, like other Great Basin bottomlands, is a past landscape, a casualty of our propensity for diverting water and desiccating streams.

Urban and agricultural development in the American West, driven by the manipulation of water, has come at the expense of natural environments. In the Great Basin, few environments have been hit harder or reduced more by this



The view down Mill Creek and Lundy Canyon to Mono Lake.

upstream to immediately below town; and just as the Rush Creek Delta extends upstream clear to "The Narrows"; so too does the Mill Creek Delta reach upstream all the way to above Big Bend, a distance of over 2 miles.

Look down upon one of the three large Mono Basin streams from the brink of a trench cliff and the overriding geomorphological and ecological importance of interior deltas becomes readily apparent. Upstream of the interior delta, the creek typically occupies a single channel that traverses the narrow bottom of a V-shaped trench. Dryland shrubs impinge closely on the watercourse, while

Photo by Scott Stine.

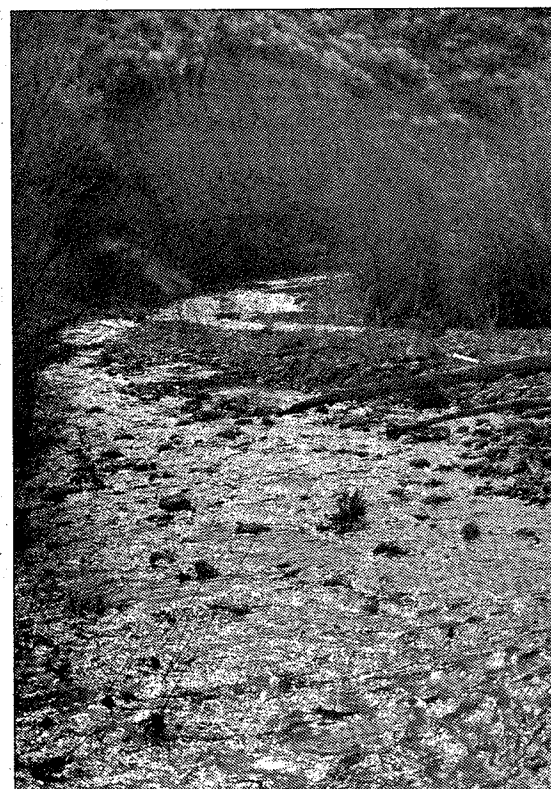
manipulation than deltaic bottomlands. Coming at the terminus of their rivers, and dependent on high flows to nourish and disperse phreatophytes, recharge groundwater reservoirs, and water distributary channels, bottomlands suffer the impact of diversions from any- and everywhere along their streams, even miles above the delta. Whether it be the Walker River above Walker Lake, the Owens River above Owens Lake, the Truckee River above Pyramid Lake, or Rush, Lee Vining, and Mill creeks above Mono Lake, Great Basin streams are claimed and diverted, a few miners-inches from this reach, a few CFS from the next, until no water remains. So bottomlands desiccate and degrade.

The sequence of events that leads to this degradation is almost always the same: Diversions eliminate flow through the bottomland for a period of years or decades. Water tables fall. Riparian vegetation dies. The walls of the distributary channels, no longer bound by root systems, become frail and susceptible to erosion. Then, during a spring of abnormally high snowpack and rapid melt, when runoff greatly exceeds the capacity of the diversion facilities, a torrent is unleashed down the stream. Under natural conditions such high flow would do little more than invigorate a bottomland. But denuded and degenerate, the land is ravaged. The floodwaters enter all the distributary channels, stripping back the weakened banks. A single distributary—perhaps the largest and/or straightest of the group—widens faster than the others, and so pirates an increasing proportion of the flow. This causes an even greater widening of the dominant distributary, allowing it to capture a yet larger portion of the flood. Quickly, perhaps in a matter of hours, this single channel, now widened to a wash, carries the entire flow of the stream. The other distributaries, cut off from the flow and plugged with sediment at their heads, stand abandoned. Future flows, large or small, follow the wash. The bottomland is destroyed.

The destruction of the Mill Creek bottomland came early, decades before the City


of Los Angeles began diverting water from the Mono Basin. By the 1870s a crude canal shunted Mill Creek water southward to the Thompson pastures, and by the end of the century numerous ditches diverged north- and eastward, irrigating hundreds of acres on the piedmont of the Bodie Hills. Aerial photographs from 1929 show a desiccated Mill Creek bottomland, with abandoned distributaries, a single wash, and derelict vegetation. Subsequent photos document a further widening of the wash. A walk up the abandoned channels of the interior delta today reveals the long-dead remnants of cottonwoods and willows, testimony to lost verdance. Thus, while the wholesale destruction of the bottomlands on Rush and Lee Vining creeks was awaiting diversions by the City of Los Angeles, the Mill Creek bottomland fell to an earlier, too often ignored, exploitation of Mono Basin lands.

If the mid- to late 19th century marks the onset of environmental degradation in the western Great Basin, the late 20th century may yet bring an era of landscape restoration. Already, as part of the stream revitalization ordered by Judge Finney of the Eldorado County Superior Court, many of the abandoned distributaries in the Lee Vining Creek bottomland, and one of the important distributaries in the bottomland of Rush Creek, have been unplugged and rewatered. Furthermore, Decision 1631 of the California State Water Resources Control Board not only raises Mono Lake and insures that the streams diverted by DWP will never again run dry, but also provides a basis for further bottomland restoration on Rush and Lee Vining creeks. Neither the Court nor the Board, however, has addressed the past and continuing degradation of Mill Creek. Draining an ignored corner of the Mono Basin, destroyed prior to even the oldest living memory, lacking an easily



Mill Creek passing through the bottomlands.

definable culprit, and until recently without champions, Mill Creek is the basin's forgotten stream. If only for the sake of restoring bottomlands—these rarest, most degraded, and most biologically diverse of Great Basin environments—rewatering Mill Creek should be considered an exceptionally high environmental priority. But as we will discuss in the next issue, the reasons for rewatering Mill Creek go well beyond bottomlands.

Dr. Stine is a geomorphologist and paleoclimatologist in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at CalState Hayward. Most recently he has been researching historical droughts, and his articles have appeared in Nature, Earth and Planetary Science Letters, Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta, and Paleo-cubed. After presenting hundreds of pages of information, he is an expert at testifying before the State Water Resources Control Board. 

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of less-political events at Mono Lake


by Geoffrey McQuilkin

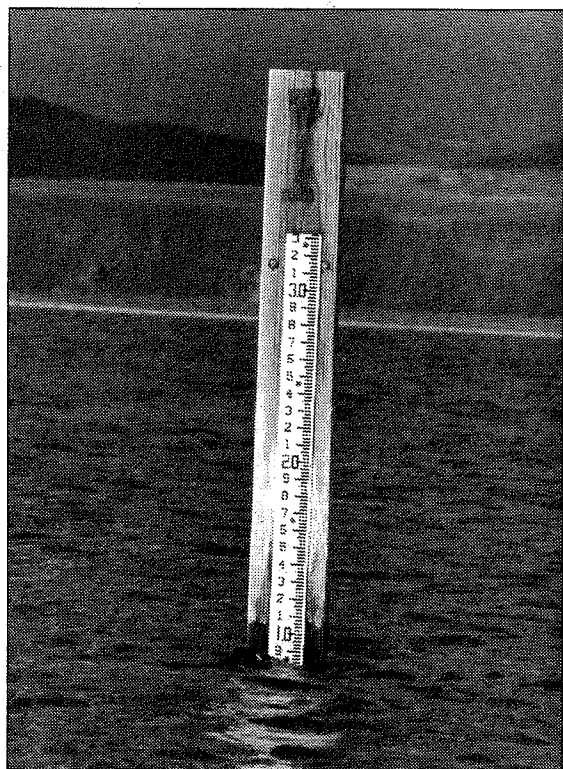
This time of year awakens the great steel beasts in town. Late at night you can hear their roar, catch a glimpse of flickering yellow reflected in a window. Then a backup signal or two. Walk past Nicely's and there they are: Under the orange street lights the loaders scurry about, pushing snow off the road into the twelve-foot maw of the blower. Snow arcs up and out, over two lanes of traffic, over the edge of the hill, and down toward Lee Vining Creek. More water for the lake.

I walked through the snow the other day, watching Negit Island thinly appear through the clouds down on the lake. Under the eaves of a building were the remains of



last spring's swallow nests: most broken and crumbling, a few valiantly holding their mud walls together. And in each was a little drift of snow, gently placed by the cold, fast wind.

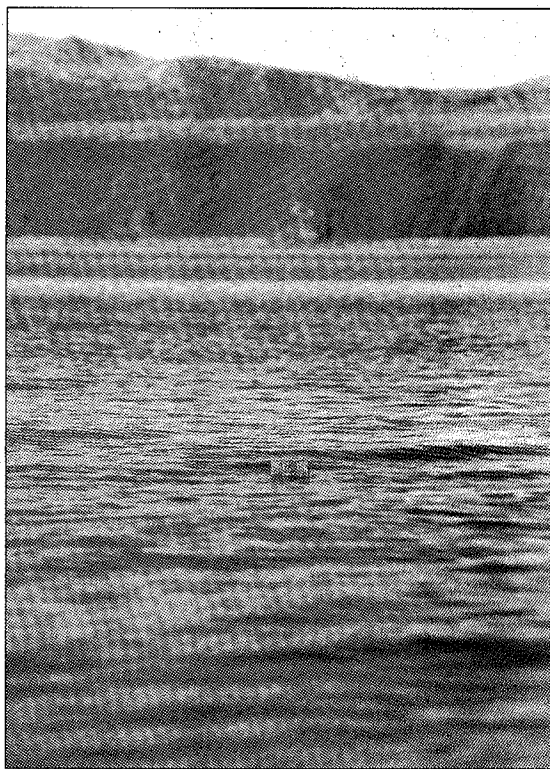
Despite the snow and the cold (so cold, it turns out, that the fire siren froze in place), there are tentative signs of approaching spring. In the mornings the red-winged blackbirds let out their liquid calls, asking for warmer days, life at the lakeshore, the smell of brine in the air. Soon, we too will head down to the lake, soaking in the summer's heat, wondering how the basin could have ever been so snow-covered as it is now. 



Spring, 1994: Mono Lake was at an elevation of 6375.5 feet.

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Late February, 1996: The lake has risen to 6378.8 feet.





One quarter of the way to 6392'

by Greg Reis

In the Winter issue of the Mono Lake Newsletter, which went to press in October of last year, the surface elevation of Mono Lake was reported to be at 6378.8 feet above sea level. Five months later, at the beginning of March, 1996, the lake is over a foot higher and still rising.

Winter had a late start, with very warm temperatures in November and just traces of precipitation in Lee Vining. In fact, our Information Center's daily weather log shows 0.05 inches of rain on November 26, to the delight of the staff member who recorded the weather that day and wrote "Yeah!" in the adjacent column. It wasn't until mid-December that we really had cause to celebrate, however, when a series of storms dropped the winter's first significant snow and rain in Mono Basin.

We were still worried in early January, however, when snow sensors revealed that the Gem Pass snowpack in the Rush Creek watershed was only 54% of normal, but we were encouraged when it reached 74% of normal by January 26th. The March snow survey found the snowpack to be over 100% of average for this time of year.

This is a remarkable turnaround in snowpack. Historical data indicate that winters which start as dry as this one have less than a 10% chance of turning out to be in the normal range. 1995-96 will come in at "normal" (in the Water Board's terms) and, with a few well-developed storms, could even attain official "above normal" status.

The graph at the right shows Mono Lake's surface elevation since De-

cember, 1994. The first large rise is last year's impressive 3.5 foot leap, and the more recent rise is the beginning of this year's increase. Mono Lake should surpass 6380 feet this year, and it may go even higher, depending on this winter's remaining precipitation.

It has only been a year and a half since the Water Board Decision, and Mono Lake is already one-quarter of the way to its stabilization level of 6392 feet. But don't expect the pace to continue: future winters probably won't be as wet as last year, Mono's rise will slow, and the lake may even decline in elevation. But this is a good start!

Meromixis

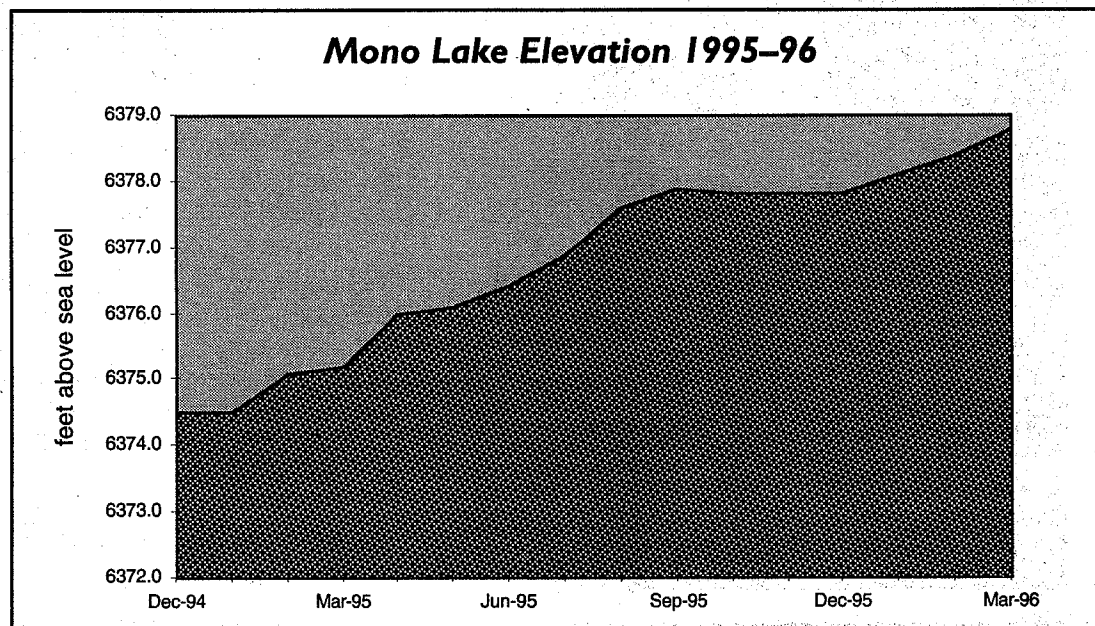
Last fall this column discussed the return of meromixis. This condition occurs when large freshwater inflows prevent the lake from mixing completely in the fall and winter, as it normally would, and cause a fresher layer of water to float on top of a more saline layer. We had hoped that these flows would allow a portion of Mono Lake to freeze this winter, but the upper water layer is still

twice as saline as the ocean making it difficult to freeze.

There are times during most winters, however, when there are ice patches around springs on the western shore. When portions of the lake freeze, according to Dr. Bob Jellison of UC Santa Barbara, the cause is "a slight winter thaw and calm wind followed by colder temperatures." The result of the thaw is hypopycnal stratification (a thin layer of fresh water floating on lake water) in localized areas, that freezes before it has a chance to mix with the lake water. If snow falls on this frozen layer, it will perpetuate the condition.

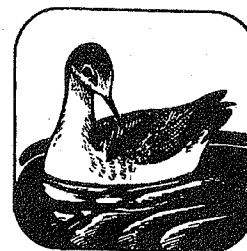
This year's meromixis is not as pronounced as that which occurred from 1983 to 1988, the only other time it has been recorded at Mono Lake. Now that there are continuous large freshwater inflows to the lake, however, the current condition of moderate meromixis could persist for a long period of time.

Greg Reis is the Committee's Research Assistant. He's working on ways to extend his stay at the lake indefinitely. 🐸





1996 Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars



In the next four pages the Mono Lake Committee offers an expanded selection of field seminars in the Mono Basin. Previously run by the Mono Lake Foundation, the seminars have been operated by the Mono Lake Committee since the two organizations merged last year.

The offerings are plentiful. Pick your topic and join us for a weekend of learning and fun at Mono Lake!

BIRDS OF THE MONO BASIN

*Dave Shuford; June 8-9
\$90 per person (\$75)*

Beginners, as well as experts, will enjoy this intimate introduction to Mono's bird life. The class will learn to identify approximately 70 species by plumage and song, and will discuss the role of each in our environment. Dave Shuford of Point Reyes Bird Observatory is a master birder and patient instructor.

GEOLOGY OF THE MONO BASIN

*Tim Tierney; June 15-16
\$90 per person (\$75)*

Few places offer more varied geology than the Mono Basin. Created by the tectonic forces that continue to shape the continent, it is a place where both glaciers and volcanoes have left their mark. The first day will be spent gaining an overview of this varied landscape by car and by foot. Day two will focus on more thorough exploration of a few special points of interest. Tim is the author of the Mono Lake Committee's field guide titled *Geology of the Mono Basin*.

LISTENING TO CREEKS: WET FEET HYDROLOGY

*Eric Larson; July 20
\$45 per person (\$35)*

If one listens to and looks closely at a stream, layers of patterns reveal themselves. Use your eyes, ears, hands and feet to discover the inherent structure of a watershed. This course will introduce students to some of the age-old ways of understanding the nature of creeks and their restoration. Eric Larson is a specialist on restoration in the Mono Basin and has led seminars through UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and the Teton Science School.

RESTORATION IN THE MONO BASIN: WHAT CAN BE BROUGHT BACK?

*Greg Reis; July 21
\$45 per person (\$35)*

Travel the backroads of the Mono Basin with MLC staff member Greg Reis. Find out first-hand what "restoration" really means at Mono Lake, why it is necessary, and how the Mono Lake Committee is involved. This class complements "Listening to Creeks" listed above, and if you wish to take both, take \$10 off your total course fee.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

*Don Jackson; July 5-7
Class will meet Friday night
\$110 per person (\$90)*

Photograph the flora, fauna, and scenic wonders of the Mono Basin. In interactive and non-competitive classroom and field sessions, the class will explore and apply techniques of photographing the natural world. This class is designed for intermediate-level photographers who use fully-adjustable cameras (all formats welcome). Don was selected *Outdoor California* magazine's 1993 "Photographer of the Year," and his images have appeared in the Mono Lake Calendar and *Storm Over Mono*.

(Prices in parentheses are for new and renewing Committee members)

Help us protect and restore Mono Lake!

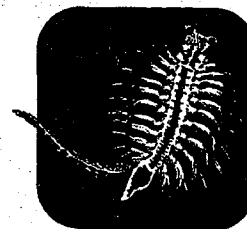
WEEKEND CANOE TOURS

One-hour tours every Saturday and Sunday at 8 A.M., 9:30 A.M., and 11 A.M.

June 15 through September 8

Adults \$15, kids \$6 (Sorry, no kids under 4)

Join your expert guides for natural history from a unique perspective: the lake itself. Starting at Navy Beach (near South Tufa), you will canoe among tufa spires along Mono's shoreline and learn about this ancient, life-productive lake. Special group tours can be arranged. All participants must wear the life jackets provided and obey safety rules. Please arrive 20 minutes before departure time. *Reservations are strongly recommended for these popular tours: call (619) 647-6595 (9 A.M. to 5 P.M. daily) and ask for canoe reservations.*



NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE & BASKETRY

Lucy Parker; July 6-7

\$90 per person (\$75); \$25 materials fee

In the tradition of the regional Paiute, learn to make a small coiled basket from seasoned willow with a design in split redbud, and collect fresh willow for a twine, Pomo-style fast basket used for gathering nuts and berries. Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kuzedika, and Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother, a master basket weaver, and will pass on some of her knowledge in this two-day seminar.

MONO BASIN WILDFLOWERS

Ann Howald; July 13-14

\$90 per person (\$75)

The Mono Basin is the place to see wildflowers — fuzzy desert lupines, delicate streamside orchids, golden Mule's ears, prickly-stemmed "fried egg flower," scarlet gilia, skunk monkeyflower, and many more. Learn where they grow, what they are called, and who their friends are by joining Ann, biology instructor and experienced Mono Basin flower finder, for an exploration of the basin's botanical treasures.

MONO-BODIE PHOTOGRAPHY

Clinton Smith; August 2-4

\$225 per person (\$200)

The workshop begins with an exploration of the mysterious ghost town of Bodie through sunset and into darkness, entering buildings not normally open to the public. On the second and third days, visit tufa groves both on land and from a canoe; aspen-lined canyons; volcanoes; and other unique features of the Mono Basin. Clinton, a renowned advocate of photography as an art form, gears his classes to stimulate thinking and sensitivity. This class is loosely structured and open to all levels of expertise. A fully adjustable camera is suggested.

FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY AT MONO LAKE

Janet and Dave Carle; August 10

\$15 kids under 12, \$20 adults

This day-long workshop, specially tailored for families, will explore the Mono Basin with a focus on fun! Find aquatic insects in Lee Vining Creek, look for hidden animal homes, try some tracking, go on a botany scavenger hunt, and take a dip in salty Mono Lake. The day concludes with a star show at Navy Beach. Workshop leaders Janet and Dave Carle have been Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve Rangers for 14 years. Children should be able to walk short distances or be comfortably carried.

HIGH COUNTRY WILDFLOWERS

Mark Bagley; August 10-11

\$90 per person (\$75)

The headwaters of Lee Vining Creek, near Tioga Pass and Saddlebag Lake, feature some of the best and most accessible locations for studying the magnificent flower displays of the High Sierra. After reviewing the basics of plant structure in the classroom, the workshop will journey through subalpine forests, across meadows and fell fields, along cascading creeks, and around jewel-like lakes identifying up to 150 species of flowers, trees and shrubs. Mark, an Eastern Sierra consulting biologist, will lead the workshop's easily paced 2-4 mile hikes at the 10,000-foot elevation, making many stops to look at the flowers.

FALL BIRD MIGRATION

Dave Shuford; August 17-18

\$90 per person (\$75)

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, early autumn is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Reservoir. Dave Shuford is an expert on birds and well acquainted with where to find them in the Eastern Sierra.

CONTINUED ➤

Research Opportunity on Mono Lake's Islands: The California Gulls Need Your Help

Will the 1994 State Water Resource Control Board's order for a substantial rise in Mono Lake's elevation translate into increased nesting success for Mono's California Gull population? How will the widening channel between Negit Island and the landbridge deter coyotes' access to the gulls? Find out by joining a research team led by biologists from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory as they continue monitoring the state's largest California Gull breeding colony, located at Mono Lake.

The Mono Lake Committee is seeking support for the annual California Gull nesting study. Your contribution (\$120 per day per person, and your time) will allow biologists to continue 13 years of research on Mono's islands, and provide you with a field expedition opportunity and an educational adventure you will not soon forget! Collect data on the Mono Lake gull colony and gain hands-on experience in field survey techniques. You'll enjoy the rare adventure of visiting Mono Lake's spectacular Negit Islets, and have breathtaking views of the Sierra Nevada escarpment while contributing to this important research effort.

Sign up for one to five days in late May or early July. You'll camp on Krakatoa Islet, inside the 1950s movie set volcano from "Fair Wind to Java." You can expect **very rugged** (but enjoyable) field conditions, long hours in hot sun or cold wind, hearty meals, and the hue and din of 30,000 nesting gulls. You bring your gear, curiosity and energy; we provide training, food, fresh water, boat transportation and the opportunity of a lifetime!

GULL RESEARCH ON MONO'S ISLANDS

May 20-24, July 1-4

\$120 per person per day

Overnight; meals included

Join a research team led by biologists from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory to continue the long-term monitoring of the California Gull population at Mono Lake. On two different monitoring trips during the summer (described at the right) field workers will collect data which is used to determine the relationship between changing lake levels and the population size and reproductive success of the California Gull at Mono Lake. Stay for one to five days and camp on Mono's Krakatoa Island. Boat transportation, nighttime shelter, freshwater, and food are provided.

NEST COUNT

May 20, 21, 22, 23, or 24

The size of the gull population will be estimated by counting nests over a five-day period on Negit Island and all the Negit Islets. Field workers count nests and mark nearby rocks with a dab of spray paint to avoid duplicative counts.

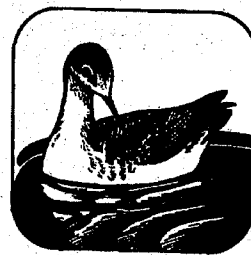
CHICK BANDING

July 1, 2, 3, or 4

The reproductive success of the gull colony will be estimated by counting and banding all gull chicks found in eight study plots. Banding aids in making final survivorship calculations, and data from the study plots is extrapolated to form an overall picture of the gull population.



1996 Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars



USEFUL PLANTS OF THE MONO BASIN

Ann Howald; September 1

\$45 per person (\$35)

The Mono Basin contains a storehouse of medicinal plants, edible plants, dye plants, plants useful for basketry and construction, poisonous plants, and plants important for wildlife. Join biology instructor Ann Howald for a day of exploration to learn their names, their secrets, and where to find them.

NATURALIST-LED KAYAK TOUR

Stuart Wilkinson; September 14

\$60 per person (\$50)

Paddle among Mono's spectacular tufa towers and, wind and weather permitting, visit Paoha Island for a picnic lunch! Stuart is well versed in Mono Lake ecology, history and politics, and this natural history kayak tour will cover a wide range of topics relating to this unique high desert lake. The tour lasts four to five hours and kayak experience is helpful but not required.

MONO BASIN FALL PHOTOGRAPHY

Rick Knepp; October 13-15

\$110 (\$90)

The Mono Basin in autumn 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. Join accomplished photographer Rick Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, and fall color in nearby canyons. Subjects for discussion include composition, exposure techniques, filtration, basic theory of the Zone System and developing a personal vision. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a *fully adjustable* camera of any size or format is suggested.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Classes are limited to fifteen people. Participants must sign a liability release form. If a class receives less than six participants, we cancel the class two weeks in advance — you will receive a full refund. We accept VISA, MasterCard, Discover or personal checks payable to the Mono Lake Committee. If you cancel three weeks or more before the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$10 processing fee). No refunds after that date, but tuition can be applied to another class in 1996. The Field Seminars operate under permit from the Inyo National Forest.

REGISTER BY PHONE

Call the Mono Lake Committee at 619-647-6595 to register. Ask for the seminar desk. A more complete class description is available upon request. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept registration by mail.

DISCOUNTS

Join the Mono Lake Committee or renew your membership when you register and pay a lower price (noted in parentheses) for your seminar. Your annual membership of \$25 is not tax-deductible if the discount is taken.

1995 Mono Lake Defense Trust members

The Mono Lake Defense Trust was established to assure that, wherever the fight for Mono Lake might lead, financial resources would always be available. Members of the Trust made single gifts of \$250 or more in 1995. We'd like to thank the Defense Trust Members for their exceptional commitment to Mono Lake's protection, restoration, and rising future.

Foundation Grants

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
The Strong Foundation
The Switzer Foundation, through the San Francisco Foundation
World Wildlife Fund

Corporate Contributions

Central Basin Municipal Water District
Chevron Companies
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Recreational Equipment, Inc.
Southern California Gas Company
West Basin Municipal Water District
Water Replenishment District of Southern California

Defense Trust Members

Conejo Valley Audubon Society
Fresno Audubon Society
J. B. Bostick Co.
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Susan Adelman and Claudio Llanos
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Rich and Erin Atwater
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Cameron and Katie Barrows

Kathleen Barry
Doron and Lucinda Ben-Avi
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Milus Scruggs
Shirley C. Seagren
Jeremy Sherman



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Rocco and Marion Siciliano
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Wendy L. Youngren
Dave Winkler

Supplementing the support of the Defense Trust are the Mono Lake enthusiasts listed below who were kind enough to give at the 250-dollar level and higher through multiple gifts in 1995.

Ethel B. Ahrens
Howard and Harriet Allen
Walter Allen
Bryan Andrews
James R. Arnold
John and Marlene Arnold
Ken A. Avak
Virginia R. Bacher
Richard Barrell
Joyce Bartlett
R. A. Baumgartner
Susan K. Beard
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Clara T. Link
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Karl Marhenke
David and Terre Mathiasmeier
Howard McAloney
Dave McCoy
William McCullough
H. D. McKay
Michael Mellon
Peter and Carlene Mennen
Albert and Lilli Miller
John W. Mishler
Russell E. Molari
John Mottmann
Patrick Mulcahy
Elizabeth H. Nelson
John S. Nelson
Richard and Gloria Newhouse

Francis and Kay Odell
Charles Parker
Philip E. Persons
Cristin Pescosolido
J. V. and Elizabeth Ralston
Wes and Willie Reynolds
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Beatrice M. Robinson
David Rorick
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Wilbur Sawyer
Steven A. Schafer
Joyce Schnobrich
Michael J. Seaman
C. Blaine Shull
Douglas J. Smith
Michael Sogard
Harry J. Sommer
Roger Stewart
Tim Strohane
Roderick E. Sutliff
Joe Tabbi
Glenn and Patricia Tabor
John Thorne
Fred T. Tirrell
Mary Turner
Victor and Norma Waithman
W. H. Ware
T. A. Westphal
Dale L. Wierman
W. H. Williams
Don Yellen
The Zeff Family

New challenges, new programs

by Alan Magree

Last year was a challenging and exciting year for the Mono Lake Committee's Fundraising department. Thanks to the State Water Board's decision in late 1994 (and I do mean *thanks*) the Committee was at a crossroads between pursuing an updated mission and gauging member support for that mission.

We anticipated that a few of our supporters would believe that the Committee's work was over and decide not to renew their memberships. This turned out to be true, and our fundraising efforts at the beginning of 1995 fell significantly (more than 20%) below our already conservative projections.

Renewed renewals

In order to stem the tide of lapsed renewals, the Committee decided to embark on an experimental renewal campaign. We contacted an organization that was able to help us reinstate more than 1,000 lapsed members to our active rolls via telefundraising. Now, before you change your phone number and cancel your MLC membership you should know that the Committee has a policy of never calling active members for dona-

tions. All of the members that we called had not donated to the Committee for more than 18 months. If you received this newsletter through the mail, you're an active member and it is our policy not to call you for money—period.

NFWF matching grant success

There was good news for the Committee in the spring of 1995. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) awarded us a matching grant of \$25,000 to help develop restoration plans for Mono Lake's streams and waterfowl habitat. To receive the funds, the Committee was required to raise \$40,000.

Being our first matching grant, we weren't sure how members would react. So this past fall we sent a grant request to all of our members, asking for help in meeting the NFWF challenge. We quickly found out that members believe wholeheartedly in the restoration process. We received an overwhelming response, easily made the \$40,000, and then surpassed that total by 50%.

Bike-A-Thon raises funds

Last summer we were forced to go

back to court in order to defend interim restoration activity (see below) and we asked for your help in funding this new round of litigation through our annual Bike-A-Thon appeal. Your response was generous. The Bike-A-Thon appeal, combined with pledges from riders, raised more than \$107,000 and was our most successful fundraiser in three years.

Guardians of the Lake

We started 1996 with a new program called Guardians of the Lake. Guardians pledge a monthly gift to the Committee and in return receive monthly updates on MLC activities, including the current Mono Lake level. Best of all, Guardians receive fewer gift requests and are not sent membership renewals.

We ended 1995 in the black thanks to your support. But it's important to remember that our work is far from over and we must stay together to see Mono Basin restoration achieved.

Alan Magree, the MLC's Development Director, departed this spring. We wish him the best and hope he continues to enjoy being tall. 🐉

Courtroom update: Still waiting for a decision

The Mono Lake Committee went back to court in January to argue an issue that has received court time far out of proportion with its significance. The Committee restated its points of opposition against the State Water Board's motion to terminate court jurisdiction over restoration, but a final ruling from judge Terrence Finney is still forthcoming.

Mono Lake supporters may recall that the Committee's court visit was actually for debate over the meaning of

Judge Finney's July ruling on the jurisdiction issue. In July, both the Water Board and the Committee claimed victory in the judge's ruling, so a return was required to resolve what the ruling actually meant.

The issue began last year when the Water Board made a motion to close a portion of the lengthy Mono Lake litigation covering stream restoration. The case—and the court's jurisdiction over restoration—was over, the Water board argued, because of its 1994

decision. The Committee disagreed: while the 1994 order requires development of a restoration plan, it requires no specific restoration measures. Until the Water Board approves and orders a restoration plan—as it is expected to do this summer—the court still has jurisdiction, the Committee argued.

It may turn out that the Water Board reviews and approves restoration plans before the court issues its ruling, making the entire issue moot. Watch for the final word—perhaps—in the next issue.

Outdoor Experiences seeking 1996 sponsors

by Stacey Simon

"Help our children save our water."

— Robert Rios, fifth grade student and Outdoor Experiences participant

Work has begun on the 1996 Outdoor Experiences season. As this newsletter lands in mailboxes, the Mono Lake Committee—together with the Mothers of East Los Angeles Santa Isabel, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Tree Musketeers, First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Korean Youth and Community Center, ExPERT: The Executive Partnership for Environmental Resources Training, and the Boys and Girls Club of Reseda—is preparing for summer camping trips to Mono Lake by giving a variety of pre-trip workshops and fieldtrips in Los Angeles.

For young people who have never been outside of the city (some never even outside their immediate neighborhoods), preparation includes an introduction to Los Angeles' water supply and its connection to our state's natural environment; a visit to West Basin Municipal

Water District's newly opened water recycling facility in El Segundo to see what happens to water after we use it; a stop at the Tree People compound on Mulholland Drive to get a taste of nature in the city; and a visit to a local park to practice setting up tents, rolling sleeping bags, and maybe even washing dishes outside. All the preparation leads to a trip to Mono Lake in June, July, or August.

The youth and community-based organizations listed above are working hard to raise funds for their trips by approaching local grocery stores and banks, running mini-fund-raisers, and more. They, and the Mono Lake Committee, ask for your help to make these trips possible. Sponsor an individual youth, an entire group, or just one day for one child. Your sponsorship will not only enrich the lives of young people from inner-city areas of Los Angeles, it will also help to build a conservation ethic among the youth who hold the future of Mono Lake in their hands. Your support will make a difference!

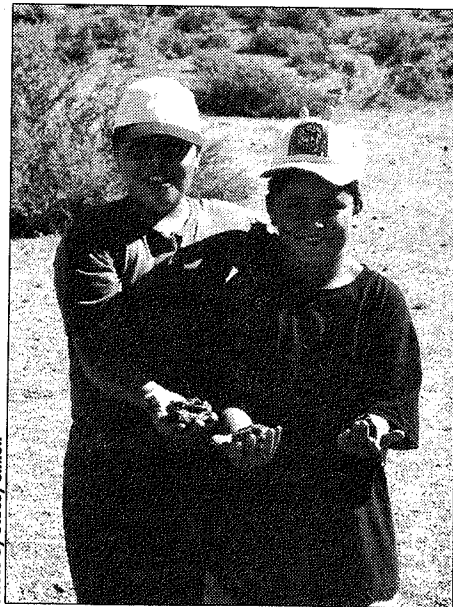


Photo by Stacey Simon

Outdoor Experiences participants comparing the weight of pumice and obsidian.

Stacey Simon is the Committee's Public Education Coordinator. Strangely, she doesn't seem to mind spending her summer in the field. 🐦

Yes! I'd like to sponsor the Outdoor Experiences Program

Sponsors at the \$50 level and above will receive a photograph from an Outdoor Experiences trip at the end of the summer. Please indicate below which group you'd like a photo of:

- ☐ Mothers of East Los Angeles Santa Isabel
- ☐ Los Angeles Conservation Corps
- ☐ Tree Musketeers
- ☐ First African Methodist Episcopal Church
- ☐ Korean Youth and Community Center
- ☐ ExPERT
- ☐ Boys and Girls Club of Reseda
- ☐ Pick a group for me

- _____ \$50: One youth for one day
- _____ \$150: One youth for a four-day trip
- _____ \$3,000: Twenty youth for a four-day trip
- _____ Other: Use where it's needed most

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

☐ My check is enclosed (payable to Mono Lake Committee)

Please charge my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa # _____

Exp. date _____

Donations to the Mono Lake Committee are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law
Please use the enclosed envelope or send to: Mono Lake Committee • P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541

Announcing 1995 Free Drawing winners!

by Jim Pyacek

Congratulations to the 1995 Free Drawing winners! And many thanks to all those who entered the drawing—your donations are an important source of support for the Committee's work on behalf of Mono Lake.

Each year, the Free Drawing offers Committee members a chance to make a donation for their favorite lake and at the same time possibly win a jacket, a trip, or something equally great.

One important benefit of the drawing is that the Mono Lake Committee attracts new members through it. Over 1,200 people joined up through the promotion, which offers a year's membership with the price of a ten-ticket entry.

Prizes donated by a range of supportive businesses inspire members and non-members alike to test their luck, and over 35,000 entries made their way to the Committee by the October deadline.

So, herewith, a listing of the fourteen lucky winners of the nineteen ninety-five MLC Free Drawing:

The winners

Arthur Antolick, of Los Angeles, was the Grand Prize winner of a four-day trekking adventure in the Grand Canyon,

courtesy of **Cal Nature Tours, Inc.**

Mr. Allen Mains, from Callexico, won the Ansel Adams print, signed by the artist and donated by **Ansel Adams Gallery** in Fresno, with framing provided by **Mammoth Gallery**.

Dave Donovan, of San Leandro, won two nights for two at the gorgeous Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley, courtesy of **Yosemite Concessions Services Corporation**.

Ms. Dora Williams, from the town of Ross, won a rental package and weekend of alpine skiing, courtesy of the **June Lake Villager Motel, Sandy's Ski & Sport, June Mountain Ski Resort**, and the **Sierra Inn**.

Michael A. Robinson, of Sebastopol, won a 3-night stay for four at **Murphey's Motel**, here in lovely Lee Vining. Included in the package is lodging, a Mono Basin and Lee Vining Creek tour, and dinner for two, thanks to **Murphey's Motel** and **The Mono Inn**.

Marge Milne, a resident of Seal Beach, received a two-night stay and dinner for two at the **Tamrack Lodge** in Mammoth Lakes, as well as breakfast for two, courtesy the **Tamarack Lodge**

Resort and **O'Kelly and Dunn**.

Bob Powers, from Atascadero, won the getaway weekend for two on the Eel River, courtesy the **Redwoods River Resort**.

Micheal Flint, who lives in Sunnyvale, gets to take home some new outdoor equipment with a REI camping package, donated by the **REI stores in Northridge, San Dimas, Carson, and Santa Ana**.

Mrs. John L. Jaeggli, from Riverside, will be able to enhance her birdwatching skills with her new binoculars, donated by **Bausch & Lomb Sport Optics**.

L.W. Garcia, of El Dorado, received a five-volume cookbook library donated by **Williams Sonoma**.

And four Mono Lake supporters won jackets donated by **Patagonia**:

Daumants Belte, of Rosamond; **Mr. & Mrs. W. A. Shrenk**, of Paso Robles; **Peter Karp**, of Menlo Park; and **M. Minow & J. Robenolt**, of Cupertino.

Jim Pyacek is a new intern with the Committee. He's investigating stories that Lee Vining sometimes has crowds of visitors. ☞

Awards go to top Bike-A-Thon fundraisers

Every year corporate sponsors make donations to the annual Los Angeles to Mono Lake Bike-A-Thon to support and encourage the riders.

Cyclists, in turn, raise money for Mono Lake by riding in the 'Thon, and in 1995 several prizes were offered to the top three fundraisers. The results are tallied, and here are the prize winners:

Glenn Skinner, of Palo Alto, raised over \$3,250 for the protection and restoration of Mono Lake and will

be off on a six-day Grand Canyon and Sedona trekking adventure donated by **Cal Nature Tours, Inc.** Congratulations!

The second highest fundraiser was **Mark Coolidge** with just under \$3,000. In exchange for his fundraising work Mark will receive a **Yakima** roof rack complete with bike mounts and locks, which will be just right for getting his cycle to the Russian River for his weekend bicycle tour donated by **Backroads Bicycle Tours**.

Tom McGillis raised \$2,600, bringing him in as the third highest fundraiser and winning him a pair of round-trip airline tickets from **Southwest Airlines** as well as a warm Snap-T pullover from **Patagonia**.

Congratulations to the top fundraisers, and the Committee's thanks go out to all the dedicated Bike-A-Thon cyclists who made the 1995 ride such a success. ☞



STORM OVER MONO

Author John Hart has spent the last five years conducting interviews, attending Water Board hearings, and tracing down legal maneuvers in dusty archives. The result is a thoroughly researched, well balanced, and readable work that covers the modern day Mono Lake controversy.

Storm over Mono is particularly interesting because it unravels the complex web of litigation and public policy that has grown around Mono Lake since 1978. Hart illuminates

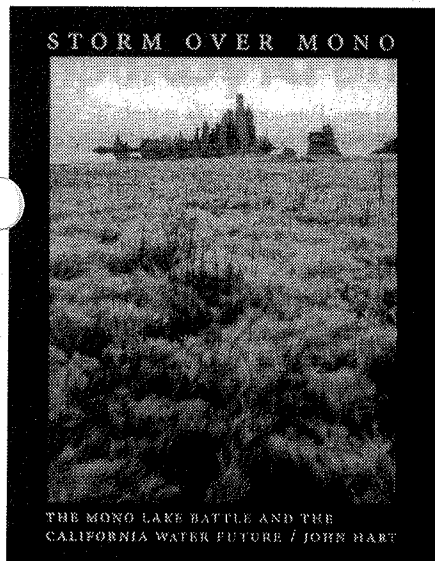
the hard work, dead ends, and ultimate successes of the complex battle to protect Mono.

Hart also examines the origins of ecological restoration in the Mono

Lake to the larger water rights picture of California and the West.

All in all, *Storm over Mono* makes for engrossing reading about a special place. If you want to relive the early days of the Mono Lake Committee; answer those nagging ques-

"A rich, absorbing, and illuminating account of one of the longest and most fiercely contested conservation battles in U. S. history—and that rare one (especially in these times) with a happy ending." —Mark Reisner



Basin and investigates how Mono Lake advocates came to look beyond stemming the losses of the day to recovering the past richness of the ecosystem.

The book winds up with a show-down: the 1994 Water Board hearings and decision. Awash with data, the Water Board hearings were the site of multiple simultaneous political negotiations, ultimately leading to the agreement between the Mono Lake Committee and DWP to not appeal the Water Board's decision. Hart brings these hidden conversations to light and then concludes with his thoughts on the significance of Mono

tions about CalTrout II, stream restoration, or the Water Board process; or just enjoy a good story of the triumph of grassroots action, this book is for you.

By John Hart; UC Press; 1996; 253 pages; 31 color plates, 61 b/w photos, and 10 maps: #190, hardbound, \$50.00; #191, softbound, \$29.95; Special shipping rate for one book only: \$4.50.

Note: books will be shipped as soon as they are available. We expect delivery in mid-May.

To have your copy signed in person, don't miss the Committee's Bay Area booksigning in May—see the back page for details!

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The Mono Lake Committee

P.O. Box 29, Lee Vining, CA 93541

Fall event thanks Eastern Sierra supporters

Mono Lake Committee members are spread far and wide throughout California, the United States, and the world. But a good number live in the Eastern Sierra, close to the lake, and often close at hand when volunteers are needed at Committee headquarters. Last fall the Committee hosted a free reception and benefit dinner at Whiskey Creek, in Mammoth Lakes, to thank local members for their support.

The evening kicked off with a reception giving folks a chance to mingle, see old friends, and tell stories of the Committee's early days. A benefit dinner followed and supporters and staff had a chance to discuss current issues facing Mono Lake.

Speaking for the Committee, Sally Gaines told the crowd "we know it's going to be at least twenty years before the lake level rises to the level mandated by the Water Board and there's a lot of work to be done."

"But we figure we're halfway to our goal," she concluded, "and we couldn't have done it without all of you."

Local businesses from Lee Vining,

Mammoth Lakes, and Bishop participated by donating door prizes. And several local supporters added prizes of their own time and expertise at the last minute!

Whiskey Creek donated four gift certificates which went to **Carla Spencer**, **Dianna Sanford**, **Elizabeth Philips**, and **Gordon Alper**.

Bishop artisan **Frances Cholewa** won a gift certificate from **Ace Hardware** while local author **Lynne Foster** took home a gift certificate from the **Booky Joint**. **Diane Hansen**, of Lee Vining, won a gift certificate from **Spellbinder Books** in Bishop. **Dennis Oakeshott** also won a gift certificate, this time from Mammoth eatery **Nik and Willies**. **Sandy's Ski and Sport** provided a performance ski rental package which went to **Heidi Hess Griffin**.


The **Great Outdoors** donated eleven Mono Lake Committee T-shirts and the winners were: **Darcie Levine**, **Edie Gaines**, **Suzanne Stimson**, **Courtney Smith**, **Jon Lonnie**, **Pete Schoerner**, **Rick Puskar**, **Leslie Goethals**, **John Dittli**, **Marta Nelson**, and **Neil McCarrol**.

One of the most admired prizes of the

evening was a framed print of Mono Lake provided by **Jim Stimson**. Taking home the image was Mammoth Lakes' own **Ralph McMullen**.

A handsome batter bowl was donated by potter **Jack Trefry**, and the winning ticket had **Nick Carle's** name on it. The **High Sierra Shrimp Plant** donated two "Mono Lake Brand" brine shrimp T-shirts. They were awarded to **Pete Bischoff** and **Ron Sharpless**. **Jody Aas** and **Dave Carle** were the winners of two specially designed sweatshirts donated by **Darcie Levine**. And three gift certificates for the Committee bookstore were given out to **Lynne Hess**, **Jules Jackson**, and **Jack Trefry**.

Lest the excitement die down, **Barbara Phillips** jumped up to donate an hour of massage therapy. The lucky winner: **Sarah Taylor** of Lone Pine. More donations followed. Local attorney **Tim Sanford** donated an hour of legal time which went to **Kathy Channel**. And **Frank Stewart** donated a day of construction work which was awarded to **Sally Manning**.

All told, the evening offered a fun time for all and is sure to be an event in 1996. 

Staff migrations

by *Martha Davis*

Departing the Committee this spring is **Alan Magree**, our Development Director of the past two years. Alan has done wonders for the Committee in that time, from increasing our overall fundraising income to improving our membership services and list maintenance capabilities. He has brought stability and a true sense of coordination to the Committee's fundraising efforts. As Alan moves on to new projects we'll miss his sharp instincts, keen business sense, and witty repartee.

On the special events front, we welcome **Kay Ogden**, a professional photographer and veteran Bike-A-Thoner, to the Committee. Kay came to Lee Vining with plans to be an intern, but


with her background in political organizing and deep enthusiasm for the Mono Basin we quickly enlisted her to run our upcoming special MLC events.

As a new intern this season we welcome **Jim Pyacek**, a hardy soul who has decided to brave a Lee Vining winter. Jim comes from Humboldt State with a degree in English, lots of natural history background, and some handy carpentry skills. When he's not busy helping with grant writing we'll use him to help us with a little workspace manipulation.

Speaking of which, **Kathi Richards**, our Bookkeeper, is our motivation for a little office construction. Kathi is truly undertaking a staff migration: she's moving from southern California to the

Mono Basin and joining the staff in the Lee Vining office. Kathi will be taking the entire accounting system with her, and we expect to see an increase in efficiency as she works more closely with the sales staff.

And lastly, **Greg Reis**, who has been with us since June of 1995, continues on with the Committee in the position of Research Assistant. Greg is researching material for the revision of the Mono Lake Guidebook (due out in 1997) and assisting with restoration planning and other policy department issues.

Martha Davis is Executive Director of the Committee. Rumor has it she's looking for new habitat. 

Accolades

In Memoriam

J. Michael Nitschke was remembered by **Mr. and Mrs. Albert Ghiorso** of Berkeley. They write that "Mike was a great scientist who was interested in the outdoors and its conservation."

Jimmy Howe was remembered by **Sliven Howe** of Los Angeles.

Lothrop Smith was remembered by **Mr. and Mrs. Ed Snyder** of Poulsbo, Washington.

Dr. Maria Nyswander has been remembered by her mother, **Dorothy Nyswander** of Berkeley.

Michael J. Seaman of Sacramento has remembered his best friend **Bear**. Mr. Seaman stated "he was a bird dog with a very conservative attitude about water."

Mary Engel of Long Beach has made a donation in the memory of **John H. Engel, Thomas George Lindsay and Dick R. Tague**.

Audrey Coleman has been remembered by **Lawrence F. Coleman** of Tiburon.

Alice W. Little of Bishop has been remembered by **John and Meredith Little** of Tucson, Arizona.

Einar Nilsson has been remembered by his wife **Annie Nilsson** of Davis.

George W. Davis, grandfather of MLC Executive Director **Martha Davis** was remembered by **Reginald and Marie Oliver** of St. Helena.

Of special note

Sanford and Verla Donner, of Sherman Oaks, made a donation to the Committee to honor the marriage of **Charles and Colleen Shuken**.

Congratulations to long-time Mono Lake researcher **Dave Herbst** and his wife **Katharine Allen**! Their new baby girl, **Anna Constance**, was born on Charles Darwin's birthday: February 12.

Ronald and Heidi Hall of Coleville made a donation as a "Christmas gift in honor of our families: **the Halls, the ifleys and the Friedmans**."

Congratulations to **Mary Hanson**, of Swall Meadows, who was elected an

emeritus director of the Mono Lake Committee in recognition of her many years of service as a Mono Lake Foundation board member.

Don Jackson, of Forestville, has been helping the Committee assemble some new computer equipment. We'll be e-mailing thanks all year.

The **Revs. Mark and Judy Kennedy** of Rochester, Vermont, made a donation as a "Christmas gift in honor of **Janice Work, Robert Atlee and Kendra and Kaela Atleework** of Bishop."

Rick Shull and Helen Constantine-Shull of Arcata—both former MLC interns—made a donation "in honor of our family."

The **South Coast Audubon Society** honored **Pearl Sylvester** and made a donation toward restoration in her name.

And **Richard and Carole Tunley** made a donation to celebrate the marriage of their friends **Mike and Barb Snyder**.

Equipment donations

Special thanks go out to Committee consulting hydrologist **Peter Vorster** who donated two new plain-paper fax machines to the Committee. We can't believe we got anything done without them!

Three donated computers recently came our way, helping greatly with office efficiency. The kind donors are: **Douglas R. Barnett**, of Napa; **Ray Bransfield and Connie Rutherford**, of Ventura; and **Steve Fischer and Rosemary Occhiogrosso**, of Los Angeles.

Final thoughts

The Mono Basin lost three friends this winter. Long-time resident and veteran Mono Lake expert **Wallis McPherson** passed away at his home in Bridgeport. Wally freely shared stories of Mono's golden days and made us come to realize the lost vitality of Mono Lake.

Mono Basin pioneer **Betty La Braque** also passed away. Betty came to the basin in 1927 with her husband **George**, lured by a \$125 per month job with the Sierra Power Company. Captivated by a certain azure lake, picturesque craters,

Matched Gifts

Keith Askoff of Mountain View made a donation which will be matched by **Lam Research Corporation**.

Nanvy Burdge of San Diego made a donation which will be matched by **The Reebok Foundation**.

Joel and Marion Farber of San Jose made a donation which will be matched by **IBM**.

Arthur W. Feidler III of Kentfield made a donation which will be matched by **BankAmerica Foundation**.

Michael Grandcolas of Santa Monica made a donation which will be matched by **Citicorp**.

Rodman King of Colorado Springs, Colorado, made a donation which will be matched by **Sun Microsystems, Inc.**

Curtis and Pamela Reis, Rancho Palos Verdes residents, made a donation which will be matched by **First Interstate Bank of California**.

William and Michele Sooy, Laguna Niguel residents, made a donation which will be matched by **BankAmerica Foundation**.

Doris A. Stoessel of Los Altos made a donation which will be matched by **IBM**.

Richard and Barbara Vandervoort of Hinsdale, Illinois, made a donation which will be matched by **CPC International**.

And **L. Wheaton and Marjorie Smith** of Palo Alto made a donation which will be matched by **IBM**.

and wide open spaces, they made the basin home for the rest of their days.

And local paramedic **Pete Schoerner** left the basin before his time this winter, the victim of an unfortunate ice climbing accident. We'll miss you all. 🐻

Join us

for a special evening
celebrating the 1st edition of the
authoritative new book on Mono Lake

Storm over Mono: **The Mono Lake Battle & the California Water Future**

Meet the author, John Hart, and get a first look at his
soon-to-be-released book from UC Press

Copies will be available for signing by the author

Friday, May 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M.

Special guest: David Brower

The Officers' Club in the Presidio of San Francisco

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