

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Summer 2012

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Today at work, without telling anyone, I did a little experiment. Pretending to be working, I surreptitiously observed all of the different things going on in the course of a 15-minute period here at the Mono Lake Committee. This is what I found:

Geoff was on the phone with the State Water Board talking about DWP's request to end the limnology monitoring program at Mono Lake. Ellen was talking with a member about what state park facilities are open at Mono Lake. Rose was finalizing the details of seasonal staff training. Elin was working on the layout of the back page of this *Newsletter*. Five construction workers were sawing, digging, banging, and generally creating pieces of the new storefront. Bartshé was choosing colors for the new concrete Mono Lake map out front. Morgan was out scoping restoration sites on Mill Creek. Lisa and Greg were discussing the latest aqueduct operations model in preparation for an upcoming meeting with DWP. Donnette was getting the bills paid. The phone rang six times and various people answered it. Santiago came in after giving a South Tufa tour with Terry and Jessica, the new Outdoor Education Center staff, in tow. Jess helped eight people in the store with questions ranging from bird identification to hiking recommendations. Erica was making buttons for the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua event in June.

As this issue goes to press it is May, but it already feels like summer. Why? I thought maybe my survey could shed some light on that question. Sure, it's warm, Tioga Pass is open, the days are long, the birds are back, the coffee shop is open, and seasonal staff are beginning to arrive ... but is that it? There is an intangible something that happens as spring turns to summer in the Mono Basin. Something stirs, and suddenly the much-anticipated summer erupts. Can you feel it? I can only hope that it comes through in the pages that follow and draws you here so you can experience it for yourself, because it's ... summer!

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



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SANTIAGO M. ESCOBAR

Think globally, learn locally! Lee Vining Elementary School fifth and sixth graders participate in the Watershed Project in their own backyard—gathering data on and learning about the health of Lee Vining Creek. In spring of 2012 the Mono Lake Committee took 51 local students out in the field for fun and educational programs.

Mono Lake Committee Mission

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



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Mono Lake's state park is open!

Plan your visit to the Mono Lake Reserve today

by Morgan Lindsay

Overwhelming public outcry combined with a new parking fee solution achieved the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve's removal from California's 70-park closure list. The good news was announced last December, just before the Reserve's 30th anniversary in 2012.

Here on the ground, this means the Mono Lake Reserve will remain open and accessible to the public, attracting 250,000 visitors each year to strengthen the local economy. It also ensures the Reserve's dedicated and highly trained state parks staff stay on the job providing education programs, while sustainably managing and protecting Mono Lake for future generations.

Now is the perfect time to visit Mono Lake and celebrate the state park victory. If you have never dipped a canoe paddle through clouds of feathery brine shrimp, or if you think of the Mono Basin as your home away from home, this summer is a great time to indulge in all the pleasures Mono Lake has to offer.

Old Marina has a new look

Many Mono Lake fans are familiar with South Tufa and County Park as favorite spots along the lakeshore, but there is another great Mono Lake access point hidden in plain sight. Called Old Marina, this Mono Lake Reserve site received major upgrades in 2009.

Just off Highway 395 north of Lee Vining, visitors can enjoy a new boardwalk, plus a trail leading up to the Mono

Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center featuring interpretive signs. The boardwalk is accessible to people with disabilities, one of the longest in California's state park system. The collaboration between the Mono Lake Reserve and Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area—with support from partners including the Mono Lake Committee—also included the installation of a new vault toilet and re-surfacing of the Old Marina parking area. Be sure to put Old Marina on your trip list and check out Icebox Tufa, get a great view of Black Point, and see Mono's iconic California Gulls nesting just offshore.

People make a difference

In May 2011 the news came out that the Mono Lake Reserve was listed for closure. Another \$22 million had been slashed from the statewide parks budget, bringing the ten-year total to over \$100 million in critical state parks support lost.

Previous state budget cuts had already weakened the Mono Lake Reserve. Key ranger patrols had been reduced to a few times per month and the Reserve's non-profit cooperating partner, the Bodie Foundation, was forced to cover funding for the only other staff position, a part-time Interpretive Specialist.

Mono Lake advocates sprang into action. As the story of Mono Lake has shown many times, positive changes can happen when a group of passionate people come together

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The David Gaines Memorial Boardwalk, accessible from the Old Marina parking lot, is a beautiful and peaceful spot to visit Mono Lake.

Will Mono Lake's health be measured this year?

DWP staff still seeking to abandon Mono Lake monitoring

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

As summer arrives, Mono Lake brine shrimp head into their season of peak abundance. But will we know the status of the shrimp population—a key indicator of the health of Mono Lake—this year?

If you read the water licenses of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), you'd expect to be able to find that information, since DWP is required to conduct an annual lake health monitoring program.

And if you read the past legal settlement between the Mono Lake Committee and DWP, you'd also expect ecological health monitoring to be underway, given that all parties agreed that DWP would conduct the program "until ten years after Mono Lake reach[es] its transition level of 6392 feet."

But if you ask DWP, as the Mono Lake Committee does frequently, you'd quickly find cause for concern. That's because DWP appears to be planning to halt the program—without authorization from the State Water Board—in mid-summer.

Why is lake health monitoring in jeopardy?

For decades DWP has conducted continuous monitoring of Mono Lake's water chemistry, brine shrimp population, and related statistics. Yet in December 2011, a staff member at DWP wrote to the State Water Board and proposed that the ongoing scientific monitoring of the ecological health of Mono Lake be discontinued.

Here at the Committee we were, in a word, shocked. The program is a condition of DWP's water export licenses and a signed legal settlement. Most importantly, monitoring of the lake is the essential scientific tool for measuring the ecological health of Mono Lake and the status of its recovery from decades of excessive water diversions.

In a strange twist, the DWP staff member who wrote the letter is the same person who is supposed to be

working collaboratively to assure that the State Water Board's requirements are met. His letter, sent on his own letterhead, instead asked that the program be terminated. And one more twist: DWP did not officially comment on the request, leaving us to wonder exactly what strategy it is playing out.

The Committee has responded swiftly to the State Water Board to defend the monitoring program, but this unexpected conflict is not yet resolved and is receiving substantial attention from Committee staff.

No basis in science

There is no sound scientific basis underlying DWP's staff request. The essential concept put forth by DWP staff is that Mono Lake is fine, it has always been fine, and it will continue to be fine, so why spend the money to actually check the lake's ecological health in the real world?

If your most recent checkup at the doctor went well, would you conclude that you'll be healthy forever and never need a doctor's services again? Of course not; that's not logical.

Experts on salt lake systems, including the very specialists who conduct the Mono Lake monitoring work, have

reviewed the DWP staff proposal and found it to lack scientific merit. In letters to the State Water Board they detail a variety of specific issues and make the global point that "ecological systems, such as lakes, respond to multiple environmental factors in complex ways, and it is well known among ecologists that abrupt changes can occur ... we depend on regular measurements to assess [Mono Lake's] condition."

In addition, the lake's required long-term management level set by the State Water Board hasn't been seen since 1963. A half century ago little attention was being paid to Mono Lake, and there were no teams of scientists documenting the lake's salinity, the health of the brine shrimp population, or other important indicators of ecological conditions. The lake is rising into ecologically



Taking water chemistry samples is part of lake health monitoring.

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Committee storefront changes afoot

Legacy project made possible by generous bequest from Grace de Laet

by Bartshé Miller

Spring is a time of renewal and transformation. In front of the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore a dramatic metamorphosis is underway as we renovate the outdoor space along Highway 395.

For the first time in the organization's 34-year history, we are upgrading our storefront. In 2011 we began the first phase of the project with a new stucco façade and light fixtures. This spring we are completing the second, more substantial phase thanks to a significant bequest from Grace de Laet. Grace was passionate about getting people excited about Mono Lake. A longtime supporter, event planner, and Mono Lake Committee Board Member, she fundraised for many years on behalf of the Committee. Her commitment to Mono Lake will now be memorialized in the form of a more inviting outdoor space that will inspire people to get involved with Mono Lake. The improvements will be enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors for decades to come.

The improvements are substantial. There will be a new Trex deck in front of the main entrance. The deck material is made from recycled plastic bags; it's a durable composite board that does not splinter and lasts longer than wood. Integrated within the deck is a lift that will provide a front-door entrance to people with disabilities. Large granite boulders will surround the deck. The boulders are from the Simis property in the Mono Basin, where the original Mono Lake Research Group camped 35 years ago and first discussed founding the Mono Lake Committee.

Immediately north of the deck, a new plaza-style seating area will surround an approximately ten-foot-square inlaid, colored, concrete map of Mono Lake. The map will be oriented true to Mono Lake, which can be seen in the distance across Highway 395. Adjacent to the map a drinking fountain and water bottle filling station will provide visitors with access to some of the highest quality water in California—Lee Vining's very own spring water.

A new shade structure will protect two picnic tables (donated by members) and provide a small retreat from the sun and the summer bustle of Lee Vining. Finally, a new bike rack and handicap-accessible parking space will be added at the corner of Third Street.

The "greenest" feature of the remodel is the new greywater



The new stairs and plaza-style seating are built around boulders from the Simis property, where the idea for the Mono Lake Committee first took hold.

irrigation system. Beginning this summer, the public bathroom sink will serve double duty as a place to wash hands and as a landscape irrigator. The sink will drain to new greywater plumbing that will lead to sub-surface mulch boxes, which will irrigate all the annual plants and native aspens. For safety, there will be no opportunity for the public or pets to come in contact with greywater. As we understand it, this system is the fourth commercial greywater system in California and the first in Mono County.

The last time the Committee was renovated was in 1993. At that time the interior of the Information Center & Bookstore underwent a much-needed improvement. Since then we have upgraded indoor exhibits and added a new high-definition film. For visitors traveling on Highway 395 through a no-traffic-light-town like Lee Vining, it's critical to draw attention to the quality of service and information available inside our building. We wanted to create a more inviting and engaging outdoor atmosphere—for visitors, members, and locals—and make it easily accessible to all.

If you plan on traveling to the Eastern Sierra this summer, we welcome you to stop by and enjoy the new storefront. We will also provide updates online on The Mono-logue (monolake.org/today). ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee's Education Director. He is looking forward to the arrival of summer so he can examine more roadkill (wildlifecrossing.net/california).

Healthy streamflows require infrastructure upgrades

by Lisa Cutting

The collaborative process to resolve the issue of how to deliver State Water Board-appointed Stream Scientists' prescribed high peak runoff flows down Mono Lake's tributary streams is still very much in progress and kicking into high gear.

The process began in spring 2011 under the facilitated guidance of the Center for Collaborative Policy. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) and Mono Lake Committee staff have been meeting regularly to reach an agreement on how to overcome existing infrastructure obstacles so high flows can be delivered to Mono Lake's tributary streams (see Winter & Spring 2012 *Newsletter*).

The Los Angeles Aqueduct system in the Mono Basin was built in an era when water export was the primary and singular objective. At the time, the concept that high spring runoff flows for

the creeks would one day be a priority and a necessity for the creek's natural recovery and sustained health was not anticipated. As a result there is currently no way for the antiquated aqueduct system to physically release the amount of water called for by the Stream Scientists out of Grant Lake Reservoir and down Rush Creek in wetter years. This, quite simply, is the problem.

Deferred upgrade

Back in 1998 when the State Water Board was finalizing restoration requirements for DWP under restoration Order 98-05, the Grant Lake Reservoir outlet was a hot topic. Faced with a heavy burden of action items and programs to put in place, DWP argued vigorously against having to construct an outlet facility. In its wisdom, the State Water Board didn't eliminate the requirement, but instead allowed DWP time to test other methods for delivering

the peak flows. The State Water Board also directed the Stream Scientists to refine the then-mandated stream restoration flows after no more than a decade of monitoring and additional studies had been conducted—knowing that the additional science would yield a better flow regime for the creeks.

After 12 years of testing alternative methods for delivering flows, DWP has not been able to reliably deliver high peak flows to Rush Creek. Simultaneously, the Stream Scientists have been busy conducting studies and monitoring the creeks, with results confirming the direction set in 1998. Their recommendation to the State Water Board is a refinement of flows necessary for the creeks, which includes even higher magnitude peak flows and lower winter base flows than 98-05 ordered. Additionally, and as part of the 98-05 requirement, the State Water Board specifically wanted a recommendation from the Stream Scientists on the Grant Lake Reservoir outlet that had been deferred back in 1998: Was it necessary or not?

Fast-forward to present day

After all these years of monitoring and per the 98-05 requirement, the Stream Scientists released their findings in the 2010 Synthesis Report (see Summer 2010 *Newsletter*). This comprehensive report summarizes the data collected, makes final flow recommendations for the creeks, and addresses the State Water Board's question about the outlet. The Stream Scientists definitively state that (1) the alternative methods that DWP has been testing to deliver the peak flows haven't worked, and (2) an outlet in Grant Lake Reservoir is needed to be able to deliver the necessary flows.

With that information guiding the collaborative process, the group has

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Why was Grant Dam constructed without an outlet?

That's a good question. Facilities the size of Grant Dam normally have an outlet from the dam directly into the stream.

Mono Lake Committee consulting hydrogeographer, Peter Vorster knew that the answer might lie deep in the files of an obscure but vitally important state agency, the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD).

In April, Peter visited the DSOD offices in Sacramento and was handed a three-foot-high stack of files that mostly contained the periodic dam inspection reports and correspondence about whether the latest earthquake in the Eastern Sierra caused any movement of the dam.

At the bottom of the stack, musty old reports from the 1930s revealed the answer: Grant Dam originally *was* designed with an outlet! Construction started in 1935, but for some reason it was mysteriously halted less than a year later. A simple memo stated that the outlet was eliminated.

The file also had correspondence between the State and DWP, relieving DWP of the obligation to build a fishway around the dam.

Were the two connected? Stay tuned for more developments in the continuing saga of "the DSOD files."

Mono Lake shines for the Department of the Interior

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

On a sunny, scenic May day, a federal government delegation visited the Eastern Sierra. After attending the dedication of a successful restoration program with the Paiute tribe in Bishop in the morning, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Anne Castle and a group of Bureau of Reclamation and US Geological Society leaders made a stop at Mono Lake.

Why the visit? Mono Lake's standout role in water history was the primary reason, and our lakeshore discussion quickly turned to the Public Trust and the need to protect California's natural resources for the public to enjoy. Of course, the balanced manner in which the landmark Mono Lake solution recognizes urban water needs while assuring the lake's protection was also a topic.

Another focus was the remarkable restoration of Mono's tributary streams, their fisheries, and their streamside forests and wildlife. The success so far is notable, and the potential for restoration to really take off once the new science-based flow regime is implemented (see page 6) is exciting. Might the Bureau of Reclamation,



Visitors from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Geological Survey with CalTrout and Mono Lake Committee staff from left: Wes Danskin, Bill Steele, Mark Drew, Leslie Cleveland, Geoff McQuilkin, Anne Castle, Michael Gabaldon, Rose Davis, and Santiago Escruceria.

which has plenty of experience with the type of infrastructure modification needed in the Mono Basin, be able to help? Time will tell, and getting out on the ground is a great first step. ❖

Lake monitoring from page 4

uncharted territory, and for it to do so without its health being monitored just doesn't make sense.

A deal is a deal

The lake monitoring program is part of a package of restoration and monitoring requirements set forth by the State Water Board in 1998. In part these requirements came from a legal settlement agreement—signed by all—between DWP, the Mono Lake Committee, and other key parties.

That means two things. DWP has already committed to conducting the program. And, the program represents a compromise, resulting from negotiations in which other valuable monitoring programs were set aside. Abandonment of the agreed-upon outcome reopens a much larger conversation about lake chemistry, brine shrimp monitoring, bird surveys, alkali fly populations, and other studies that

measure achievement of the ecological health goals set by the State Water Board.

Next steps

The Committee's position is quite simple: since there is no scientific or legal basis for a change, DWP should continue to conduct the monitoring program without interruption.

There are now two key steps to take. First, we are working to be sure that DWP does not disrupt the monthly scientific work of the current program this summer.

And second, we are working to remind DWP—in whatever forum necessary—of its long-term commitment in order to get the program back on track. That will assure that the public, the State Water Board, and DWP will have a true measure of Mono Lake's health. ❖

Infrastructure from page 6

been grappling with what it means in terms of construction and implementation. Comparing various outlet options, weighing costs and benefits, and working out the myriad details of a comprehensive package that everyone can agree on has been an arduous process. But we're still at the table

trying to find a way to resolve the problems created by the lack of an outlet for Grant Lake Reservoir. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. This summer's hiking goal: a peak a week.

Restoring Mill Creek

Jump-starting natural processes with water, native plants, and ... volunteers!

by Morgan Lindsay

Eastern Sierra residents and visitors alike treasure Lundy Canyon for its colorful fall aspen groves, fascinating mining history, and quiet solitude; fishing, camping and hiking; wildflowers, bird life, and bighorn sheep; the list goes on. At the heart of Lundy Canyon is Mill Creek, rushing over waterfalls, filtering through quiet beaver ponds, and shimmering in Lundy Lake Reservoir before flowing out to Mono Lake near Black Point. In Lundy Canyon, Mill Creek flourishes.

But there is another, hidden side to Mill Creek. Below the dam, Mill Creek slows to a trickle and the once-rich mosaic of meandering side channels, wet meadows, and streamside forest west of Black Point has mostly disappeared. In drought years, cottonwood and willow trees died for lack of water. In wet years, torrential snowmelt scoured and straightened once sinuous stream channels and eroded the fragile stream banks. Previously lush bottomland habitat for the trout fishery, nesting songbirds, and waterfowl shrank to almost nothing. Today, after a recent period of low but consistent flows, Mill Creek clings tenaciously to life—with occasional wet years providing a vital lifeline. A degraded hundred-year-old ditch has prevented Mill Creek's water from returning to Mill Creek after generating hydropower.

Now there is good news. With the conclusion of a 30-year re-licensing process, Southern California Edison (SCE) will soon begin installation of a buried pipeline to replace the defunct ditch. The return of Mill's long-lost water represents a monumental opportunity for stream restoration in the Mono Basin.

Restoration ramps up

For years, Mono Lake Committee staff have monitored Mill Creek's surface flow and water quality, and pulled invasive plants growing along the banks. This spring the Committee received a generous grant from outdoor clothing company, Patagonia, to fund additional restoration work on Mill Creek. With this added support, an enthusiastic team of Committee staff, volunteers, and youth from Lee Vining and Los Angeles will clear out invasive species such as white sweet clover and bouncing bet to make room for planting native Jeffrey pine, black cottonwood, and quaking aspen seedlings.

The Patagonia grant will help cover the purchase



Volunteers pull invasive plant species along the banks of Mill Creek.

of native plants, as well as staff time to lead groups of volunteers and educate students, and supplies like trowels, gloves, and weed wrenches.

What happened to the water?

Mono Lake's third largest tributary stream, Mill Creek is unique in the Mono Lake story because it was never diverted to Los Angeles. Instead, from Lundy Lake Reservoir, up to 70 cubic feet per second of water is piped to the Lundy hydropower plant to generate renewable energy.

The way hydropower works in California is that after passing through the turbines, water is required to be returned to the waterway of origin—in this case, Mill Creek. So, when the hydropower plant was constructed in 1911, an unlined return ditch was built to carry the tailrace flows back to Mill Creek.

At that time ranches holding water rights to Mill Creek also used the water discharging from the hydropower plant as a convenient access point for their irrigation ditches. Over time, the return ditch deteriorated, gradually losing capacity until it ceased to function. Without a feasible way to return Mill Creek's water after it generated power, too much water went down the irrigation ditches—dewatering Mill Creek, eroding the Wilson diversion system, and burying the Black Point marsh under tons of sediment (see Winter & Spring 2010 *Newsletter*).

Bringing the water back

Now SCE's hydropower improvements are poised to make restoration a reality for Mill Creek. The buried pipeline will improve water efficiency and follow the path of the original return ditch to minimize disturbance. Once the necessary permits are approved, initial site preparation and construction could begin as early as this fall. ❖

What you can do

To volunteer at Mill Creek contact Office Director Rose Catron (rose@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Inyo budget comes in slightly better than expected

by Lisa Cutting

This summer visitors to the Mono Basin can expect many of the services they experienced last summer to remain intact thanks to the coordinating efforts of the Mono Lake Committee and other non-profit partners and a stable—at least for now—Inyo National Forest budget. This, of course, is a far cry from the visitor services that were available 20 years ago when the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center first opened (see Fall 2011 *Newsletter*). The reality of shrinking federal budgets and increasing demands across the forest has led to the point where we are today—trying to shore up key visitor services as much as possible.

South Tufa tours

One of the best ways to experience and learn about Mono Lake is a naturalist-led walk at South Tufa. South Tufa tours are offered three times a day: State Parks leads the 10:00AM tour, the Forest Service leads the 1:00PM tour, and the Committee leads the 6:00PM tour. Many will remember the abrupt cancellation of the Forest Service's 1:00PM tour last year mid-summer when the Inyo had to make further cuts to an already bare bones budget.

The Inyo has once again prioritized staffing for South Tufa tours for this season, but will need help covering some of the tours. To make sure there is no interruption to the summer schedule, and because we believe that the experience that visitors gain at South Tufa is so valuable, the Committee has hired an additional intern to help cover the 1:00PM tours. The South Tufa kiosk will be fully staffed by Forest Service employees and all three daily South Tufa tours will be available from late June to early September.

Mono Basin campgrounds

Campgrounds in Lee Vining Canyon that will be open include Lower Lee Vining, Moraine, Aspen, and Big Bend. Cattleguard Campground will not be



The Forest Service Visitor Center.

open because most of the campsites are too close to the creek and do not meet current regulations for riparian areas. Farther south, Hartley Springs and Deadman campgrounds, which were closed last summer, are open this year.

Forest Service Visitor Center operations

The Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA) continues to operate the bookstore at the Forest Service Visitor Center and is assuming more responsibility for front desk staffing and coordination. Many years ago, interpretive talks outside on the Visitor Center patio were a mainstay and both the Committee and ESIA plan to revive them this summer. ESIA is a longstanding partner in the basin and has been operating bookstores inside Forest Service Visitor Centers and Ranger Stations as a means to support interpretive programs throughout the Eastern Sierra for over 40 years.

Wilderness rangers

In 2011, the Inyo cut nearly all of its wilderness ranger positions for budget reasons, and the status remains the same for 2012. As this *Newsletter* goes to press the Inyo states they will maintain a wilderness presence through seasonal backcountry work crews. These work crews will be doing double duty—keeping up with the much-needed field work and checking on wilderness

visitors to make sure rules are followed. Additionally, because of a massive wind storm last November, the Inyo has received special funds to hire additional staff to clear trails of blown-down trees. The lands stewardship non-profit Friends of the Inyo will supplement the Forest Service workforce with stewardship interns to support trail maintenance and restoration work. While not ideal, it is a creative solution given the budget constraints.

Inyo intern program

The Inyo received funds for five Forest Service intern positions stationed throughout the Mammoth-Mono Ranger District. These seasonal employees will have a wide range of responsibilities including assisting with visitor services, interpretive programs, invasive species management, and the implementation of the Inyo's Travel Management Plan. These interns will also be learning what it means to work within a resource agency strapped for funding, trying to do more with less, and all the while operating under mandates to take care of our public lands for the benefit of all.

Partners and volunteers

The Committee was relieved to see the Inyo's budget come in better than expected and applauds the efforts being made at the local level to use funds as efficiently as possible to maintain a high level of visitor services in the Scenic Area. We are also extremely lucky to have the Mono Lake Volunteer Program, a joint program of the Committee, ESIA, the Mono Lake Reserve, and the Forest Service, up and running with enthusiastic and well-trained volunteers continuing to lend a hand. The reality is that shrinking federal budgets mean dwindling services, and that the Forest Service is relying more heavily on assistance from partners and volunteers to keep visitor center doors open and field programs running. ❖

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting, Morgan Lindsay, and Geoffrey McQuilkin

CalTrans' rock fall project rolling along

CalTrans is continuing to explore alternatives for a new highway project that will address rock fall issues just north of Lee Vining on the west side of Highway 395 (see Winter & Spring 2012 *Newsletter*). The project will address six slopes within a one-mile section of highway that is especially prone to sloughing rocks onto the highway. The draft environmental document is scheduled to be released this June with project construction now slated for the summer of 2015.

Visitors who have traveled this section of highway may be familiar with the steep slopes where exposed areas of ancient lakebed sediments are visible within areas of piñon trees. The unstable areas are the result of cuts made into the slope to make room for the road in this narrow stretch of highway adjacent to Mono Lake.

Of the six slopes, three appear to require only minor manipulation to address the problem. Based on guidance from vegetation restoration expert Michael Hogan, these three slopes can be stabilized through a process of soil rehabilitation and aggressive

revegetation. Addressing the rock fall problem in this manner would yield multiple benefits. It would stabilize the slope in a long-lasting, natural way, and it would fix the now barren cut areas with native vegetation—a visual improvement to the current situation.

The three slopes to the north are more significant and will require some sort of structural application to address the problem. Options include a wire mesh material that would anchor into the ground to literally hold the slope in place. There are several variations to this treatment that depend on the topography of the slope and the feasibility of application. Revegetation on these three slopes is also possible but would be more challenging.

The Mono Lake Committee has been visiting the site regularly with CalTrans staff to gain an understanding of the engineering constraints and options. We have relayed our concerns for visual impacts since the project is in the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area and close to Mono Lake and key visitor sites. While there will be some short-term visual impacts as a result of the project, the Committee's goal is to ensure that in the end, the now-damaged slopes will be healthy with natural vegetation holding

soil and rocks in place, which is a win-win for everyone.

DWP sues Mammoth, cases to remain in Mono County

In the last year, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) filed suit against the Mammoth Community Water District (District)—twice. In both lawsuits, DWP claims to have historic water rights to the surface waters of Mammoth Creek that predate the water rights the District has used for over 50 years to supply water to the town of Mammoth Lakes. In the words of Greg Norby, District General Manager, "The District considers these lawsuits to be without merit, and is taking aggressive actions to defend the community's water rights."

In the first case, DWP contends that the 15-year environmental review process the District finalized last December to protect the fishery in Mammoth Creek is "deficient" because it fails to consider DWP's alleged priority water rights (see Winter & Spring 2012 *Newsletter*). The second suit alleges that the District's Urban Water Management plan, which predicts moderate growth of Mammoth Lakes—along with commensurate increases in water usage—is similarly flawed, again for not considering DWP's water rights.

In the spring an initial hearing in Mammoth Lakes came before Judge Stan Eller, who is well known in Mono County for implementing a restraining order to prevent DWP from dewatering Rush Creek below the Grant Lake Reservoir dam as Assistant District Attorney in 1984.

Among several motions before Judge Eller was DWP's request to have any future hearings moved to Fresno where DWP was believed to have some advantage. Both sides quickly agreed to keep all future



Policy Coordinator Morgan Lindsay leads Committee staff on a tour of the rock fall project area.

Continued on page 11

hearings in Mono County provided that a neutral judge is assigned to the cases by the state's Judicial Council. The new judge is expected to have expertise in California Environmental Quality Act cases and to be in place this summer. In the meantime, both the District and DWP have expressed interest in coming to a negotiated agreement outside of the formal legal process in the coming months.

DWP drops two Owens lawsuits but carries appeal forward

When the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (APCD) issued the latest order requiring DWP to control dust emissions from an additional 2.9 acres of Owens lakebed, DWP refused.

Ignoring a stack of regulations sanctioned under the federal Clean Air Act that date back to the 1990s, and the specific requirements of a 2008 agreement, DWP appealed the order to the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Unsatisfied, DWP then filed suit against CARB over the appeals process as well as against the APCD in protest over \$250,000 in APCD legal fees that DWP is now responsible for covering from the appeals process it set in motion.

Once a haven for migratory and nesting birds, Owens Lake went dry less than 15 years after DWP began diversions in 1913. Owens Lake is now the largest single source of air pollutant PM₁₀, or particulate matter less than ten microns in diameter, in the United States. The APCD also regulates PM₁₀ emissions from the exposed lakebed at Mono Lake. As part of the 1994 State Water Board order, DWP must raise the level of Mono Lake to 6392 feet above sea level to control dust.

Suddenly, only weeks after filing this suite of lawsuits, DWP dropped both cases without a public explanation. DWP continues to move forward with the original appeal process before CARB. In the meantime, the APCD is holding firm to its mission: "DWP will

be done only when the historic lakebed isn't a source of dust," said APCD Director Ted Schade.

Airport rehabilitation back on track— with a twist

This summer there's good news for everyone who enjoys the view of Mono Lake from Lee Vining. Two years ago, a Mono County project to re-surface Lee Vining's Airport resulted in extensive unintentional earthmoving in addition to the planned improvements. The creation of a ten-acre stockpile of soil and gravel at the north end of the runway disturbed habitat for Greater Sage Grouse and mule deer and obscured a portion of the view of Mono Lake from key vantage points along Highway 395.

After intensive involvement by Committee staff and others, Mono County responded quickly to community concerns and the stockpile was reduced in height by half and contoured to match the surrounding slope before the contractor left the site. After vigorous experimental testing, vegetation restoration expert Michael Hogan developed a comprehensive revegetation and monitoring plan. A combination treatment of tilling, native seed, and carbon-rich mulch will give the greatest benefit at a moderate cost.

Restoration was put on hold last fall when a lack of funds remained from the original Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant to fully implement the treatment (see Winter & Spring 2012 *Newsletter*). Over the winter, Committee staff worked closely with Mono County to secure an alternate source of funds. Now, a new FAA-funded County project to resurface Bryant Field, Bridgeport's small airport, requires over 5,000 cubic yards of fill material to smooth out the runway. Where better to get this material than the already disturbed Lee Vining stockpile?

In a creative win-win solution, one



Beaver activity is visible along Lee Vining Creek above the Lee Vining diversion dam.

additional foot of sandy gravel will be removed from the surface of Lee Vining's stockpile to be utilized in Bridgeport. The trucks used to transport the material will also bring excess topsoil from Bryant Field and woody mulch from a nearby facility to complete the soil treatment at Lee Vining. Hogan will oversee the soil rehabilitation and revegetation of both sites. Ground breaking is set for mid-summer.

"Hey June, have you seen the Beav?"

Many people are familiar with the beaver dams of Lundy Canyon and the obvious evidence each spring of the industrious animals' winter activity on Mill Creek. But for reasons unknown we are seeing a rapid spread of beaver activity to other locations in the Mono Basin. Beavers were first observed on Lee Vining Creek just below the Lee Vining Creek diversion dam in January 2010 (see Summer 2010 *Newsletter*). We are now seeing evidence further up

Continued on page 12

Lee Vining Creek and on Parker and Walker creeks. Last summer there were signs that beavers had made their way downstream to a remote side-channel area in lower Rush Creek.

Beavers are not native to the Mono Basin and were introduced in the 1940s as a fur crop commodity by the then California Division of Fish & Game. The recent expansion of beavers in the Mono Basin could have negative restoration implications if left unchecked.

As a starting point, this summer the Committee would like to get a handle on the full extent of beaver activity in the Mono Basin—we are asking for your help. Please report any sightings (actual beavers, structures including dams and lodges, or downed or chewed trees) and location to Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Los Angeles Aqueduct gets new manager

As Mono Lake fans know well, DWP has a far-flung aqueduct system that stretches from downtown reservoirs to the banks of Lee Vining Creek 350 miles to the north.

A key player in the management of that system is the Aqueduct Manager. Starting July 1, Jim Yannotta will be taking over the duties of running the aqueduct system, replacing Gene Coufal who is retiring after 35 years with DWP.

Yannotta, who has 25 years of experience with DWP, recently led the city's water recycling effort. The Mono Lake Committee, a longtime advocate for recycled water as a reliable local source for the city, has worked with Yannotta for several years and looks

forward to his fresh approach to Eastern Sierra issues.

“Along with our LADWP team, I am committed to meeting our environmental obligations in the Mono Basin and Owens Valley, while optimizing water supply for Los Angeles. Water is critical to the Eastern Sierra environment and communities, just as it is for Los Angeles and the entire State of California. It is essential that we all work together to care for this precious and shared resource to meet our mutual needs,” Yannotta says. He will work in both DWP's Bishop and Los Angeles offices. ❖

Two Eastern Sierra fly fishing events of note this summer

by Lisa Cutting

The Southwest Council Federation of Fly Fishers is hosting two events in the Eastern Sierra this summer.

Rush Creek Cleanup

The sixth annual Rush Creek Cleanup will take place Saturday, June 23 and will focus efforts on a five-mile stretch of Rush Creek from the Southern California Edison power plant upstream of Silver Lake down the canyon to Grant Lake Reservoir.

Volunteers should meet at the Silver Lake boat ramp at 8:00AM and bring gloves, a hat, sunscreen, water, boots, and waders. Trash bags will be provided by Silver Lake Resort.

This section of Rush Creek is especially popular with anglers and each year up to 50 trash bags of material are collected. Of particular importance is collecting the stray fishing line caught in bushes and trees

as this is a huge threat to birds and other wildlife. After the clean-up, Silver Lake Resort will treat all volunteers to a free barbeque lunch.

If you're in the area come help and meet members of the Streamborn Fly Fishing Club, who are the primary organizers of the event. For more information contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 or to confirm your attendance contact Streamborn Fly Fishing Club member Joe Lemire (jflx8@dslextreme.com) at (909) 609-1101.

Fly Fishing Faire

If you are a fly fisher, the Southwest Council Fly Fishing Faire should not be missed. The Southwest Council Federation of Fly Fishers, in association with The Sierra Experience, is hosting this four-day fishing extravaganza September 13–16 in Mammoth Lakes. Planning is

still underway but activities will range from general informational workshops about the Eastern Sierra to fly casting and fly tying instruction and, of course, tips on how to catch the big one!

There will also be a strong conservation program component which will include local agency staff, scientists, and representatives of the 24 California and Nevada fly fishing clubs that make up the Southwest Council. Pre-registration for this event begins July 1 at 6:00AM at swc-fff.org/faire and is highly encouraged due to the overwhelming response so far. For more information contact Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 or send an email to faireinfo@southwestcouncilfff.org.

The Mono Lake Committee will be in attendance to support both of these events, and we hope to see you there!

Mono Lake Committee brings Wild & Scenic to Los Angeles

by Elin Ljung

The Mono Lake Committee's year-long celebration of our new film, *The Mono Lake Story*, came to a wonderful culmination March 8 at the southern end of the aqueduct. That evening the Committee hosted the first-ever Wild & Scenic Film Festival in West Los Angeles for a crowd of 200 Southern California members and new friends.

Presenting the Wild & Scenic Film Festival was a great way to celebrate Mono Lake in LA. A grant from Patagonia made hosting the festival possible, and it indeed felt like a member reunion that night.

The mission of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival is to inspire activism and unite communities to heal the earth. In that spirit, we put together a program of exciting environmental and adventure films for the audience:

- *Dark Side of the Lens*: perspective from an ocean-based photographer off Ireland's west coast
- *The Wolf and the Medallion*: an animated climbing film of a powerful letter from father to son
- *Yelp*: three minutes about addiction to technology
- *The Mono Lake Story*
- *Chasing Water*: a story following the Colorado River to the sea
- *The Craziest Idea*: dramatic dam removals on the Elwha and White Salmon rivers in Washington state
- *Kadoma*: an adventure film about kayaking in the heart of Africa

Mono Lake Story filmmaker Ryan Christensen from Bristlecone Media and score composer Cody Westheimer both attended. The film was introduced by Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin, Board Member Tom Soto, and one of the founders of the Outdoor Experiences program, Elsa Lopez, who is currently with the Water



Mono Lake Committee Board Member Vireo Gaines with Wild & Scenic Film Festival goers.

Replenishment District of Southern California, one of the festival sponsors.

On hand at the event from the Mono Lake Committee Board of Directors were Sally Gaines, Vireo Gaines, Tom Soto, and Doug Virtue, as well as education program staff Herley Jim Bowling and Jennifer Odum, and the festival organization team of Arya Degenhardt, Bartshé Miller, myself, and Carolyn Weddle. We were thrilled to have one of our Outdoor Experiences program groups, Communities for a Better Environment, attend the festival as well.

The inaugural festival was a success due in large part to those who helped get it underway. Dan Gorski of the Landmark Theater in West Los Angeles, a fantastic venue, worked with us before the event to make sure the films would look and sound their best on-screen. Enthusiastic volunteers Antonia Chihuahua, Carolyn Dasher, Kelly Miller, and Kathy Ramos sold tickets and took donations for DVDs at the door. And our generous sponsors—quite simply—made the event possible. Special thanks to our local event sponsors: Southern California Gas Company, the Water Replenishment District of Southern California, and Environment Now. Many thanks to the festival's national sponsors: Clif Bar, Mother Jones Magazine, Osprey, Patagonia, and the Sierra Nevada Brewing Company.

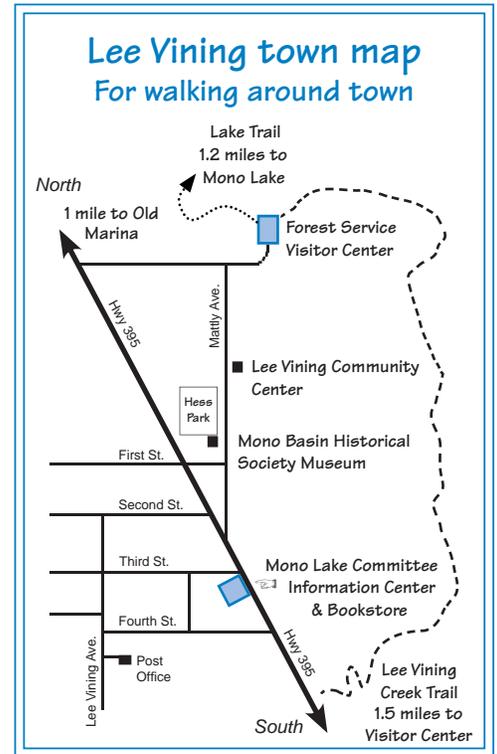
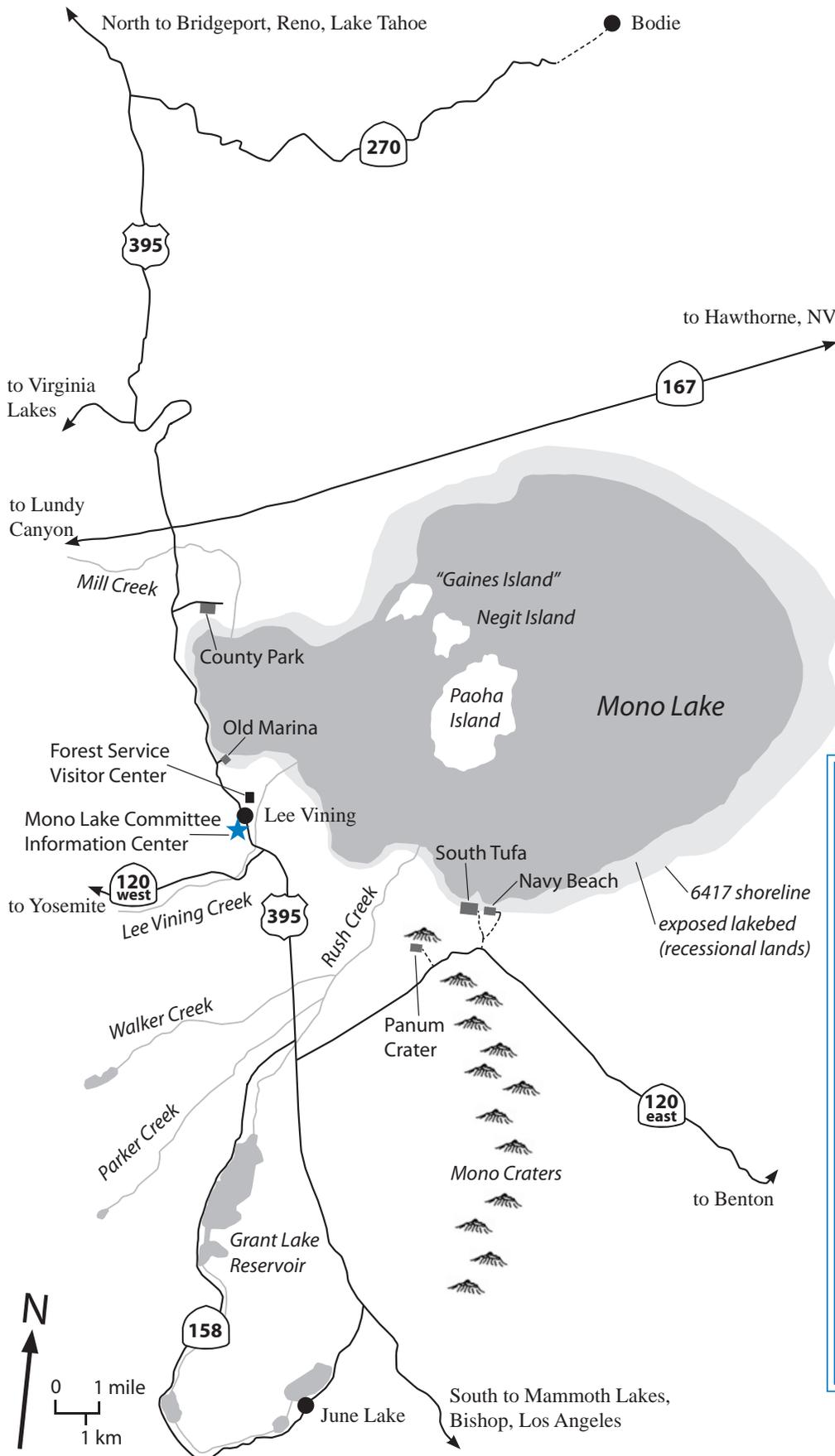
We loved celebrating with Committee members from Southern California and beyond, and enjoyed meeting many new friends of Mono Lake as well. The best part is that we have received another grant from Patagonia to host the Wild & Scenic Film Festival again next year. We hope to see you at next year's festival and this summer on the shores of Mono Lake. ❖

Elin Ljung is the Committee's Communications Coordinator. She recently moved to Mammoth Lakes—now she admires the Sherwin mountains at home and Mono Lake at work.

Mono Lake Story makes a splash

The Los Angeles Wild & Scenic Film Festival was the Southern California premiere of the Committee's new film, *The Mono Lake Story*. The film has garnered lots of recognition, gaining acceptance into the Colorado Environmental Film Festival, the Sun Valley Film Festival, the Newport Beach Film Festival, and New Zealand's Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival. In addition, *The Mono Lake Story* won the Director's Choice Award for Best Documentary Short at the Sedona International Film Festival!

Mono Lake and vicinity map



How far is it?

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

Distance from Lee Vining to:

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

Things to do in the Mono Basin

Activities

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

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

- **Canoe tours** depart Saturday and Sunday mornings in summer at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00AM, and last for about one hour. \$25 per person. Reservations are required; monolake.org/canoe or (760) 647-6595.

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

Visitor Centers

- **The Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore**, located in the heart of Lee Vining, offers a free film, educational and fine art exhibits, and activity schedules. The bookstore has an excellent selection of regional books, maps, T-shirts, local crafts, and gifts. The Committee also houses the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce with information on lodging, dining, and recreation opportunities as well as weather and road conditions. The Mono Lake Committee is open from 8:00AM–9:00PM daily during the summer, or call (760) 647-6595 for more information.

- **The Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center**, located just north of town, features an expansive view of Mono Lake, interpretive displays, and natural history trails. Three different films about the area show regularly in the theater, and during the summer rangers give patio presentations. Open daily from 8:00AM to 5:00PM; contact the Forest Service Visitor Center at (760) 647-3044 for more information on extended hours and program offerings.

- **The Mono Basin Historical Society Museum**, located in Lee Vining at Gus Hess Park, houses a fascinating collection of materials from the Mono Basin's past. See Native American artifacts, gold mining implements, and even the legendary upside-down house. Open Wednesdays–Mondays from 10:00AM to 4:00PM and Sundays 12:00 to 4:00PM. There is a \$2 charge but children under the age of 13 are free. Contact the museum at (760) 647-6461 or visit monobasinhs.org for more information. ❖

Regional travel resources

- Mono Lake Committee Information Center
(760) 647-6595 monolake.org
- Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce
(760) 647-6629 leevining.com
- US Forest Service Scenic Area Visitor Center
(760) 647-3044 fs.usda.gov/inyo
- Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve
(760) 647-6331 parks.ca.gov
- Mono Basin Historical Society
(760) 647-6461 monobasinhs.org
- Bodie State Historic Park
(760) 647-6445 parks.ca.gov
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
(760) 924-5500 visitmammoth.com
- June Lake Chamber of Commerce
(760) 648-7584 junelakechamber.org
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce
(760) 932-7500 bridgeportcalifornia.com
- Devils Postpile (760) 934-2289 nps.gov/depo
- Inyo National Forest 24-hour Wilderness Permits/Info
(760) 873-2408 fs.usda.gov/inyo
- Yosemite National Park nps.gov/yose
Information by phone (209) 372-0200
Campground Reservations (800) 436-7275
Hotel and Motel Reservations (801) 559-5000
Wilderness Permit Reservations (209) 372-0740
- White Mountain Ranger District–Bishop (760) 873-2500
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center (760) 876-6222
- Manzanar National Historic Site and Interpretive Center
(760) 878-2932 nps.gov/manz
- Death Valley Reservations (760) 786-2345
- Bridgeport Ranger Station—Toiyabe National Forest
(760) 932-7070
- California Road Conditions
(800) 427-7623 dot.ca.gov



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JOHN MUIR INSPIRED MONO LAKE T-SHIRT

Birding Intern and John Muir and Mono Lake fan, Erica Tucker wears this new T-shirt featuring a never before released quote about Mono Lake: "I never beheld a place where beauty was written in plainer characters or where the tender fostering hand of the great gardener was more directly visible." —John Muir. This charcoal grey unisex 100% pre-shrunk cotton T-shirt features an image of Mono Lake as well as Muir himself.

John Muir inspired Mono Lake T-shirt, S-XXL: \$24.99

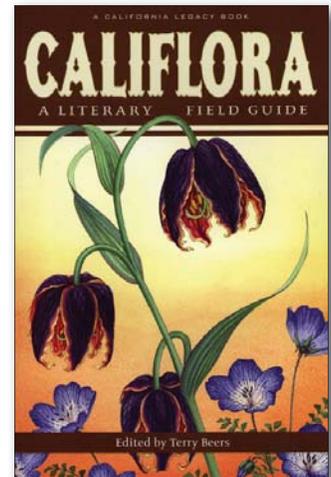
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A LITERARY FIELD GUIDE

EDITED BY TERRY BEERS

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The Mono Lake story

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

A story of hope

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

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

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

begin to rise, but his inspiration is carried on through the work of the Mono Lake Committee.

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

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

16,000 members

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

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

What is the Committee doing today?

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

Restoring Mono Lake. Restoration work at Mono Lake focuses on

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

Educating the next generation. Each year the Committee partners with Los Angeles community and school groups, bringing inner-city youth to the Mono Basin to learn about the source of their water. For kids who may never have left

LA, these are life-changing trips filled with hiking, canoeing, helping with restoration work, and learning about the connections between natural and urban landscapes.

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



Streamwatch

Grant Lake Reservoir to spill in this dry year

by Greg Reis

As of May 1, the runoff forecast for the 2012 runoff year (April 1, 2012–March 31, 2013) in the Mono Basin was 55% of average. Record late-April warmth started melting the snowpack early and fast, resulting in some of the earliest peak flows on record. Rush Creek’s maximum April flow into Grant Lake Reservoir reached a new high since 1941 of 191 cubic

feet per second (cfs) and kept rising in early May. Lee Vining Creek peaked at 135 cfs on April 25—if it doesn’t peak higher, this will be the first April peak since at least 1973.

It is a strange year for water management in other respects. Southern California Edison is storing less water this year in its Rush Creek reservoirs for operational reasons,

meaning Rush Creek flows will remain quite high this spring compared to a typical dry year. Due to maintenance work on the East Portal of the Mono Craters Tunnel this June and July, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) increased water export to 60 cfs in May—but around the time the tunnel is shut down for construction June 4, Grant Lake Reservoir appears likely to spill.

Since it is a dry year, no peak flows are required on the streams below the aqueduct. A spill out of Grant Lake Reservoir would provide a beneficial higher flow to Rush Creek, but it could complicate plans for a test of the 80 cfs “snowmelt bench” component of flows recommended to take place this year by the 2010 Synthesis Report (see Summer 2010 Newsletter). ❖



Grant Lake Reservoir is likely to spill this summer despite being a dry year.

Lakewatch

Dry year will cause Mono to drop as much as a foot this summer

by Greg Reis

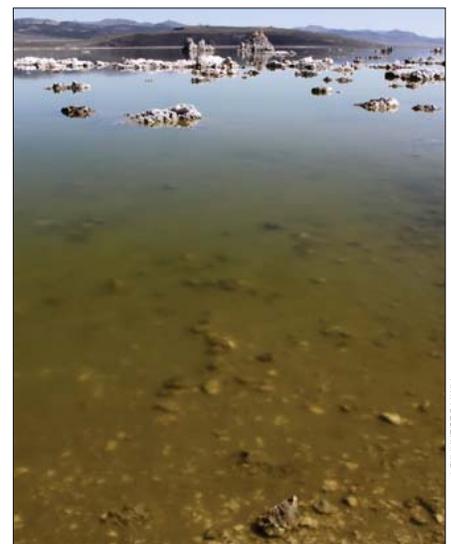
Mono Lake remained high this spring following a wet year last year that caused it to rise 1.7 feet. In early May the lake stood at 6383.9 feet above sea level—about the same level as its peak in August 2011. It is rising slowly due to the early runoff, but by July higher evaporation will catch up to the declining streamflows and cause it to begin dropping.

In 2007, the Mono Basin’s last dry year (with 46% of average runoff), Mono Lake dropped 1.5 feet during the runoff year (April–March). In 2008 (with 71% of average runoff but a release of normal-year

flows from Rush Creek) it only dropped 0.8 feet. This year will probably be somewhere in between. With no peak flows on the creeks this year, one would expect a similar pattern to 2007; however, with Grant Lake Reservoir potentially spilling in June, a case could be made for a similar pattern to 2008. As we await the higher flows released from the reservoirs upstream (see above), there is still a lot of uncertainty.

By September, Mono Lake should drop somewhere between 0.6 and 1.2 feet, but probably less than a foot given that it was still rising in May. By next April, a net drop of less than 1.5 feet is expected. This would keep it higher than it was a year ago, before the wet year of 2011. Much like the last wet-dry year combination of 2006–2007, the dry year erases much of the gain of the wet year—but it still makes progress slowly toward the management level of 6392 feet. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee’s Information & Restoration Specialist. He celebrates his first Father’s Day as a dad in June.



More of these Old Marina tufa towers will be exposed as Mono Lake drops this summer.

6417'

6392'

6383.9'

6372'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

Management lake level

Current lake level

Historic low, 1982

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



ARVA DEGENHARDT

As enjoyable as the snows of winter and adventures like lakeshore skiing are, there is always an exuberance to spring in the Mono Basin. California Gulls overhead, the song of warblers, the day on which aspen leaves burst forth like a thousand green flags; all build excitement for the renewed activity of life. People give off signs of spring too. Local residents cheerfully archive winter coats and break out warm weather wear, an enthusiasm perhaps enhanced by the tantalizing knowledge that at lower elevations, just miles away, flowers are already in bloom.

It is thus shocking, with spring excitement all around, to find the northwest shore of Mono Lake solid white, a look that at first glance drags one back into thoughts of winter. Did it somehow blizzard just here? Sagebrush and rocks alike,

hundreds of feet from the lake, are frosted over, all bright and reflective in the midday sun. May snowstorms certainly occur here in the high elevations, yet beyond the white-blanketed shore, desert peach bushes bloom in soft pink flowers and all is abuzz with the look of springtime. No, snow is not the explanation. Rather, it is a Mono Lake phenomenon: the sparkling crystalline coating is the salty remains of an earlier windstorm that whipped up a Mono Lake froth, blew it out across the shore, and left this mystery to linger until summer thunderstorms wash it away. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He is proud of his fifth grade daughter Caelen for organizing a tree planting event at Lee Vining Elementary School.

Benchmarks



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK DONALDSON

April 10, 1971: As the lake rises to the management level of 6392 feet above sea level, scenes from the past become scenes in the future. Note the offshore island at lake elevation 6386 feet.



ARVA DEGENHARDT

May 10, 2012: The view from Old Marina at lake elevation 6384 feet. You can see what just two feet of water (one really snowy winter) could do to the offshore island.

around a common goal. More than 4,000 Mono Lake friends near and far wrote letters and signed locally placed petitions in protest of the closure threat. Stacks of personal messages were hand-delivered to Governor Jerry Brown, Parks Director Ruth Coleman, Mono County's State Assemblymember Kristin Olsen, and State Senator Ted Gaines.

Mono Lake Committee staff also worked hard behind the scenes. Before the closure list was released, staff analyzed the list of 11 criteria for park closure and wrote the California parks department to point out how the Mono Lake Reserve was not eligible for closure under any of them. When the closure list came out with Mono Lake included, the Committee formally requested all documentation related to the closure decision for legal review.

This hard-hitting advocacy work eventually unearthed the parks department's main concern at Mono Lake: the lack of revenue generated to support state park operations. While the Mono Lake Reserve had experimented with user fee collection in the past, all the visitor dollars collected today at South Tufa support the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The path to getting off the closure list became clear: what was needed was a new sustainable source of revenue for the Mono Lake Reserve.

A workable solution

One of the many advantages the Mono Basin has is the abundance of longstanding partnerships. The Mono Lake

Committee commends our friends at the Bodie Foundation for stepping forward to operate the new fee collection system. As the established cooperating non-profit providing support to state park operations at the Mono Lake Reserve as well as Grover Hot Springs and Bodie State Historic Park, the Bodie Foundation is uniquely qualified to assume this role.

It took legal questioning, broad public outcry, and the establishment of a \$3 per car parking fee at Old Marina to achieve the Mono Lake Reserve's reprieve. The California State Parks agency, with its highly trained staff and depth of experience, will continue to manage and protect the sovereign state lands and waters of the Mono Lake Reserve. The nominal parking fee is now in place at Old Marina, and all funds generated will remain within the Mono Lake Reserve to offset operating expenses.

How can we help other parks?

While the Mono Lake Reserve is off the closure list, this summer more than 50 California state parks remain threatened by impending service reductions and closure. Helping a park is rewarding, and as shown here at Mono Lake, together we can make a difference. Visit monolake.org/action to find out how you can help. ❖

Morgan Lindsay is the Committee's Policy Coordinator. To celebrate the hard-won state park victory, she baked a cake in the shape of Mono Lake.

Thirty years just the beginning for the Mono Lake Reserve

First-time visitors are often struck by the singularity of Mono Lake—the miracle of abundant life thriving in an extreme environment. People nod their heads in recognition when they hear that this place is protected as part of the public trust for all to enjoy. Yes, they affirm, Mono Lake belongs to me. It belongs to all of us.

Just over 30 years ago, there was no state park, no Forest Service Scenic Area designation, and Mono Lake was in serious danger. Together with a grassroots campaign launched by the recently-founded Mono Lake Committee, Assemblymember John Garamendi led the California legislature to create the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve in 1982. The new state park recognized all lands and waters below Mono's 1941 elevation (6417 feet above sea level) as a State Natural Reserve, the strongest level of protection possible.

During this time Mono Lake started to attract more visitors than ever. Soon tens of thousands of tourists were visiting Mono Lake and the expert visitor management skills of the new park rangers proved invaluable. When the first state park rangers arrived, some intrepid tourists were camping on the lakeshore, building campfires in tufa rings, and even

carting off whole tufa towers to decorate their lawns. Today, the Mono Lake Reserve remains strong and resilient, with dedicated stewards in place to ensure that the next 30 years are just as successful as the last.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARINEHEAD

Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve Interpretive Specialist Dave Marquart leading a bird walk at Mono Lake County Park.

2012 Field Seminars



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Digital Photography Basics

June 22–24

David Gubernick

\$225 per person / \$200 for members

\$10 materials fee

limited to 12 participants

This workshop is designed to demystify the technical terms and functions of your digital SLR camera and enhance your picture-taking abilities in a warm and supportive learning environment. Learn how to get good exposures, read your histogram, understand f-stops, shutter speeds, shooting modes, ISO settings, depth-of-field, white balance, lens choices, and more. In addition to mastering the technical aspects of creating images, the group will explore the artistry of photography with an emphasis on composition. Through guided practice sessions, field trips in the Mono Basin, coaching in the field, and review of images, you will learn to create better images with visual impact.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

June 29–July 1

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$190 per person / \$175 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)

limited to 12 participants

Participants will prepare materials and create a Miwok-Paiute burden basket in this seminar designed for weavers of all levels. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20th century.

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

Eastern Sierra *en Plein* Air Oil Painting

July 6–8

Allison Horst

\$160 per person / \$145 for members
limited to 12 participants

Participants in this seminar will practice painting with oils in the Mono Basin, focusing on simplifying compositions, establishing light and shadow relationships, using a limited palette to harmonize colors, and finishing small-format paintings in rapidly changing light. This workshop is geared towards those who have previous experience oil painting, but all levels are welcome. Each participant will complete several sketches daily. Allison Horst is an avid *plein air* oil painter known for her ability to capture California's landscapes from the shores of the Central Coast to the peaks of the Sierra Nevada.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLISON HORST

"Granite Wilderness," an oil painting by Allison Horst.

Capturing the Mono Basin in Pastel

July 13–15

Ane Carla Rovetta

\$160 per person / \$145 for members
\$35 materials fee

limited to 12 participants

The sparkling light and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. Add a set of brilliant pastel chalks and your own unique imagination, and you have an incredible weekend of color exploration and art. Landscape painter Ane Carla Rovetta is known for her realistic depiction of our golden western lands. She will guide students through a value system she modeled after Ansel Adams' work that will help organize the overwhelming hues of the summer terrain. Each participant will go home with at least one small finished

painting and several sketches, color studies, and value experiments that will fuel future artistic endeavors. Ane Carla can provide you with your own set of 72 pastel chalks; *you must reserve your set when you sign up for the class.*

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

July 14

Greg Reis

\$90 per person / \$80 for members

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began transporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about the aqueduct's effects on Mono Lake, its tributary streams, the Upper Owens River, and land management in the area. The group will discuss the history of water diversions, the effort to save Mono Lake, and the future of habitat restoration. Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist and the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex and fascinating plumbing—he has over 15 years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and he keeps close track of Mono Basin water management.

The Art of Wildflower Macrophotography

July 20–22

David Gubernick

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

Learn to take creative and beautiful close-up images, further develop your artistic vision, and enhance your photographic skills in the supportive learning environment of this workshop for beginning to advanced amateur photographers. The weekend will emphasize the artistry of macrophotography and the technical means to render such images; this is not a course in botanical identification. David Gubernick, PhD, is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning nature photographer and workshop leader.

Summer Birds of the Mono Basin

July 21–22

David Wimpfheimer

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

This field seminar will concentrate on the identification and ecology of birds that breed in the Mono Basin and others that migrate to Mono Lake during the summer. In sagebrush meadows and riparian and montane forests, the class will explore a number of sites, mixing short leisurely

walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion. Woodpeckers, corvids, flycatchers, warblers, and other passerines display fascinating, varied behaviors. A major focus will be Mono Lake and wetlands where shorebirds feed. David Wimpfheimer has been educating and interpreting birds and California's natural history for over 20 years. His seasoned focus and knowledge make for enjoyable and educational outings.

Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 3–5

Ann Howald

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This class will explore the mosaic of habitats found in the Eastern Sierra high country—flower-filled meadows fed by meandering streams, sagebrush-covered slopes, lodgepole pine forests, subalpine lakes bordered by willows, and flowery rock gardens. Sight identification of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers will be emphasized, as well as the many ways that plants, birds, insects, and other wildlife interact in high country habitats. Ann Howald is a consulting botanist and volunteer for the California Native Plant Society and California State Parks. She has taught popular Committee field seminars for over ten years.

Birding the Migration: Mono Basin & Long Valley

August 4–5

Dave Shuford

\$140 per person / \$125 for members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm

southern habitats. As a result, late summer is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Lake Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for over 30 years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra.

Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

August 10–12

Greg Stock

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

From volcanic craters to glacial moraines, earthquake faults to tufa towers, the Mono Basin displays some of the most unique, spectacular, and accessible geology anywhere in the world. This seminar, consisting mostly of field visits to the premier sites, will present in understandable fashion the geologic stories of the Mono Basin. Greg Stock is the first-ever Yosemite National Park geologist. He has studied and interpreted the geology of the Sierra Nevada for over 12 years. He has authored or co-authored over 50 papers and abstracts on Sierra Nevada geology, and is co-author of the book *Geology Underfoot in Yosemite National Park*.

Mono Basin Mammals

August 17–19

John Harris

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

This class will introduce participants to the diversity of mammals found in the Mono Basin from desert sand dunes to the forests and alpine meadows of the High Sierra. More mammals occur here than in many states, and the group will try to see as many as possible by live-trapping and field



California Gulls bathe and feed at a brackish lagoon on Mono Lake's north shore.

observation. Participants will look for tracks and other signs and learn to identify skulls found in the field, emphasizing identification and adaptations to Mono's varied environments. John Harris is a Professor of Biology at Mills College whose interest in Mono's mammals began in 1975 while working as an undergraduate assistant in a study of chipmunks. He went on to study small mammals on Mono Lake's dunes as a graduate student and has worked on small mammals in the Sierra Nevada, San Joaquin Valley, and Mojave Desert of California.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 24–26

Lucy Parker & Julia Parker

\$190 per person / \$175 for members

\$80 materials fee

primitive group campsite included (no pets, please)
limited to 12 participants

During this seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a Miwok-Paiute burden basket—used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group, and evenings will be spent around the campfire with traditional songs and stories. Lucy Parker is a descendent of the Yosemite Miwok, Mono Lake Kutzadika^a, and Kayasha Pomo peoples. She learned traditional handiwork from her mother Julia, a master basket weaver. Julia Parker has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry and is the only weaver still practicing who was taught by women who wove in the early 20th century.

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

September 8–9

John Wehausen

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

The US Fish & Wildlife Service listed the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep as Federally Endangered in 2000. This field seminar will involve discussions of the fascinating biology of bighorn sheep, their relationship with other mammals (including mountain lions and humans), and their conservation in the field. Past participants saw bighorn 13 out of the last 14 years—while there is a very good chance of seeing bighorn sheep in the wild during this seminar, there is no guarantee. John Wehausen is a research scientist at the White Mountain Research Station in Bishop who has been studying the Sierra Nevada bighorn and working for their conservation since 1974. *Please be aware that this seminar involves very strenuous hiking at the 10,000-foot elevation and above.*

Birding the Migration: Mono Basin & Bridgeport Valley

September 15–16

Dave Shuford

\$150 per person / \$135 for members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, autumn is the time of year to see late fall migrants and early arriving wintering birds in the Mono Basin and Bridgeport Valley. This seminar will include a guided boat tour on Bridgeport Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at PRBO Conservation Science for over 30 years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra.

Mono Basin & Bodie Fall Photography

September 28–30

Richard Knepp

\$300 per person / \$285 for members

Autumn in the Mono Basin is one of the greatest photographic experiences in the country. Spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter for photographers in both color and black-



Autumn in the Mono Basin offers great photography opportunities.

ROSE CATRON

and-white. And, for the seventh year, the class will spend Saturday at Bodie, arriving at the park to photograph the dawn light. Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and the ghost town of Bodie. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This is the 18th year in a row of this popular seminar.

Photography at Burger's Sierra Retreat

October 5-7

Elizabeth Kenneday-Corathers

\$300 per person / \$285 for members
accommodations & meals included

This field seminar will explore photography of the beautiful aspen groves and alpine landscapes above Mono Lake. Practical topics will include landscape representation, flower macrophotography, painting with light, night photography, and time studies, as well as philosophical and ethical issues in photographing the natural environment. Accommodations will be provided at the rustic and comfortable Burger's Sierra Retreat above Lee Vining, with all meals catered by Linda Dore Food Service. Photographers of all skill levels

using either film or digital cameras are welcome. Elizabeth Kenneday-Corathers is an accomplished local photographer who is currently working on a photography book of the Mono Basin.

Arborglyphs & Aspen Natural History

October 13-14

Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock

\$160 per person / \$145 for members

A century of sheep grazing brought Basque shepherders into the Mono Basin's aspen-bordered meadows, and they left numerous carvings—or arborglyphs—on the aspens. Join the instructors for an enchanting journey into the aspen groves to explore this historic art form and to learn about the numerous wildlife, insects, and birds that are drawn to the groves. During leisurely walks the instructors will discuss the history of sheep grazing in the Mono Basin, Basque culture, the cultural significance of the carvings, and efforts to document them. Richard Potashin is a longtime Eastern Sierra resident who has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for many years. Nancy Hadlock has been a naturalist, interpreter and educator for the National Park Service and US Forest Service for over 30 years.

Field Seminar Registration Information

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

More extensive seminar descriptions are available online at monolake.org/seminars.

We accept VISA, MasterCard, and Discover only. We cannot accept personal checks or registration by mail or email. Seminars are limited to 15 participants except where noted. If a seminar receives less than six participants (with some exceptions) the seminar will be cancelled two weeks in advance, and full refunds will be issued. If you cancel three weeks prior to the seminar start date, we will refund your payment (less a \$15 processing fee). No refunds can be issued for any reason if cancellation is within three weeks of the field seminar date, but tuition can be applied to another seminar in 2012.

Participants must sign a liability release form. All seminars operate under permits from the Inyo National Forest and California State Park system.

The Mono Lake Committee works with instructors and field leaders who have received high ratings from past seminar participants. We emphasize a spirit of learning and camaraderie in this magnificent outdoor setting for a reasonable cost. Proceeds from Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

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

Registration
opens every year
on February 1 for
members.

Staff migrations

by Rosanne Catron

The Red-winged Blackbirds are chattering in the trees and the gulls are calling down at the lakeshore, which must mean that summer is here! Summer also brings a new crew of seasonal staff who share their enthusiasm for Mono Lake on tours and in the Information Center & Bookstore with visitors from around the globe. Here is a bit about this year's seasonal staff.

Outdoor Experiences Instructor **Jessica François** is a New York native who graduated in 2009 from Kenyon College. For the last two years she taught with Teach for America in Texas. Canoe Coordinator **Angela Glaser** graduated in 2011 from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has spent the past year doing interpretive work in Forest Falls and Yosemite National Park. Intern **Benjamin Hand**, originally from Oakhurst, graduated this spring from Harvard University with a Social Studies major. Intern **Max Henkels** just completed his last year at Whitman College with a major in Environmental Studies. He was originally introduced to the Mono Basin when he traveled here with Whitman's Semester in the West Program.

Outdoor Experiences Lead Instructor **Terry McLaughlin** joins the staff after a working sabbatical with Texas State Parks. Terry brings years of experience leading programs in the field and directing education programs and centers. We're also lucky to have Terry's husband **Vern Gersh** volunteering as the Mono Basin Field Station caretaker this summer.

Intern **Whitney Patterson**, originally from Texas, recently graduated from the University of Oklahoma with Women's and Gender Studies and Religious Studies majors. Birding Intern **Erica Tucker** has a wealth of experience in the outdoor education and non-profit worlds, and first became interested in working at the Committee during the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, which she has attended for the past two years.

Intern **Lynette Villagomez**, originally from Coachella Valley, recently graduated from Humboldt State University with a degree in Environmental Science and Natural Resources Planning. Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Jackie Williams** has been managing a native plant nursery in Sequoia National Forest, and has extensive interpretive and teaching experience.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Jessica Workman** originally hails from Utah, and has spent the last several years working as a ski instructor, field tech, and naturalist guide in Mammoth Lakes, Salt Lake

City, New Zealand, and Alaska.

Returning Intern **Nick Holt** recently graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in Civil and Environmental Engineering. Nick was an intern in 2008 and has visited the area many times with his family. Congratulations to recent Whitman College graduate **Erik Lyon** who will be returning for his second Intern summer with a degree in Economics. Welcome to all of our incoming seasonal staff!

A huge thank you to two departing staff. Local resident **Russ Reese** worked as an Information Center & Bookstore Assistant during the summers of 2010 and 2011, and then stayed on part time through the fall and winter of 2011. His knowledge of the area, enthusiasm, and work ethic were invaluable in the Information Center & Bookstore. We'll certainly miss Russ, but he's not going far, as he will be spending this summer working for the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association at the Forest Service Visitor Center. We're happy to know that he will be lending his knowledge to visitors just down the road.

Carolyn Weddle was the Information Center & Bookstore Assistant for the summer 2011 season, and became the Project Specialist for the following winter and the spring of 2012. Carolyn planned the annual Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner, was part of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival team, and coordinated the Free Drawing fundraiser, among many other projects. Carolyn is moving to Colorado this summer, and is excited to see the Rockies for the first time. Best of luck with your future adventures, Carolyn! ❖

Rosanne Catron is the Committee's Office Director. This summer you will find her looking skyward for Sierra wave clouds and redecorating her house for the umpteenth time.



Mono Lake Committee staff on a field tour of CalTrans' rockfall project area along Highway 395. From left to right, standing: Lisa Cutting, Bartshé Miller, Vern Gersh, Erica Tucker, Terry McLaughlin, Santiago Escruceria, Rosanne Catron. Kneeling: Jessica Horn, Morgan Lindsay, Jessica François, Ellen King, and Elin Ljung.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Ellen King

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

In honor

Joe Gordon & Mark Bauer of Woodbridge, CT sent a contribution in honor of the wedding anniversary of **Anne & Charles Bauer**. **James & Judith Lipman** of Portola Valley gave a gift in honor of **Helen Langsev** on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

In memory

Carolyn Crown of Burlingame made a donation in memory of **Vern Judy**. **Jill Durkee-Burgoyne** of Hawthorne, NV gave a gift in memory of **Warren Durkee**. **Verna McGann** of San Bruno sent a contribution in memory of **Charles Filippini**. **Noel**

Park of Rancho Palos Verdes made a donation in memory of his wife **Diana**. “She dearly loved Mono Lake and Mono County.” ❖

Ellen King is the Committee’s Membership Coordinator. She loved the exuberant lilacs in Lee Vining this spring!

2012 Andrea Lawrence Award goes to the Bodie Foundation

by Carolyn Weddle

On April 27, the Mono Lake Committee hosted the Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner to celebrate her inspirational environmental vision. Guests were treated to spectacular views from Mammoth Mountain Ski Area’s Parallax Restaurant at McCoy Station—the venue was filled with friends, good food, and memories of Andrea.

Andrea’s daughter Quentin Lawrence, Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin, and Ron Cohen from Mammoth Mountain Ski Area shared stories and memories of Andrea. Keynote speaker Robert Hanna, state park advocate and descendant of John Muir, spoke passionately about the efforts to get the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve off the state’s closure list as well as the importance of fighting for the parks that are still on the list.

The evening culminated with the presentation of the Andrea Lawrence Award to the Bodie Foundation in recognition of its dedication to supporting State Parks and its commitment to overcoming California’s budget woes with creative solutions to keep the

Mono Lake Reserve open and operating. Brad Sturdivant, President of the Bodie Foundation, received the award and spoke eloquently of Andrea’s work to preserve places like Bodie and Mono Lake.

Andrea Lawrence Fund

Proceeds from this event go to the Andrea Lawrence Fund for promoting passionate engagement in community and the land, with an emphasis on facilitating collaboration and inspiring youth to become environmental leaders.

Andrea Lawrence was an Olympic double gold medalist, mother of five, visionary environmental leader, 16-year Mono County Supervisor, and advocate for Mono Lake’s protection. She served on the Committee’s Board of Directors, and we are honored to help continue her legacy in the Eastern Sierra.



Committee Executive Director, right, presented Bodie Foundation President, Brad Sturdivant with the Andrea Lawrence Award. Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve Interpretive Specialist Dave Marquart, left.

The event brings together local leaders to honor and carry on Andrea’s vision to protect and enrich our communities and our shared landscape. The event could not have been possible without the generous support of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, the Lawrence family, and the many guests who came to celebrate Andrea’s legacy. We hope to see you at the Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner in the spring of 2013!



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CARL DENNIS BUELL



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a fundraiser for the
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Fall Century

September 8, 2012

.....

Lace up your running shoes for the...

Tioga Pass Run

September 9, 2012

.....

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