

MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Spring & Summer 2013



I hope you get to visit Mono Lake this summer. I hope you walk through the sagebrush down to the shoreline to say hello to the alkali flies. I hope you get to see a sunset, or a sunrise, or the march of puffy clouds across the quiet sky. I hope you fish one of the streams, photograph a tufa tower, see a bird you've never seen before, go for a float.

Why do I hope this for you? There are two reasons: the first is that there is a small, but dedicated staff that has been working tirelessly through the chilly winter months to prepare for your visit. We've been working to make sure that this special place is protected, that water flows down the creeks, that there are tours and seminars to be taken, that new books are available for you to read, that our fleet of canoes is ready to paddle, a water fountain for filling your bottle, and an ecosystem working its way steadily back to health to be explored. "Really?" You may be thinking, "for me?" Yes, read on and you'll see it's true.

The second reason is that visiting Mono Lake makes you an official member of the "I ♥ Mono Lake" club. Mono Lake will change you—I don't know how it does it, but I haven't met a single person who hasn't had it happen. I am, admittedly, biased, but I'd even go so far as to say that it will make your life better. Again, the proof is in the pages that follow.

So, if you're reading this while standing at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore, if you just got your *Newsletter* in the mail, or if you just clicked a link to get here ... the message is the same ... what are you waiting for?

—Arya Degenhardt, Communications Director



COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF JOEL ST. MARIE. WWW.JOELSTMARIE.COM

ARYA DEGENHARDT

A stunning Sierra wave cloud above Mono Lake and the Mono Craters. Sierra wave clouds are a celebrated Eastern Sierra phenomenon.

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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Founded by David Gaines in 1978

MONO LAKE
NEWSLETTER

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Solutions at hand to modernize Los Angeles Aqueduct, heal streams

Will DWP choose the win-win path?

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The Los Angeles Aqueduct is a fixture in the Mono Basin, and few here can remember a time before it existed. Today it remains at the center of issues with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), especially as the three-year anniversary approaches of the effort to implement restoration streamflows that will heal the damage done by decades of excessive water diversions enabled by the aqueduct.

win-win solutions are the hallmark of water issue history at Mono Lake, and the Committee expects nothing less for the critical issue of stream restoration.

Will DWP sign on to win-win solutions?

As a result of a lengthy, productive, often technical, and occasionally frustrating, collaborative discussion and negotiation process with DWP and other key parties, we have arrived at feasible solutions to implement the stream scientists' prescriptions developed over the past decade. Here at the Committee, we hope that DWP has signed on to these solutions by the time this *Newsletter* reaches you.

The collaborative process has resolved substantial issues of disagreement, in large part through joint hydrologic analysis of streamflow and aqueduct operation using a sophisticated, collaboratively developed, Mono Basin water balance model. The process has also identified win-win solutions that will achieve the restoration the streams deserve without altering a single gallon of the City's existing water supply from the Mono Basin.

The Committee sees the following as the key elements to a successful agreement that all parties can support:

- Fulfillment of existing legal commitments and the obligations of DWP's Mono Basin water licenses by implementation of the mandated 2010 science-based stream restoration plan;
- Enhancement of the restoration of fisheries and riparian habitats of Rush, Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks;

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ARVA DEGENHARDT, WITH AERIAL SUPPORT BY LIGHTHAWK

A view of Rush Creek from Mono Lake, which should receive high flows critical for restoration and required by the State Water Board.

For the Mono Lake Committee, the aqueduct and the water it diverts from Mono Lake's tributary streams have always been an important focus, but in years past the issue was how much water was inside that buried concrete pipeline to Los Angeles—and how much remained in the Mono Basin for the lake and streams. That was settled with the landmark 1994 State Water Resources Control Board decision, which established a long-term, ecologically-sound management level for the lake, created a restoration program for the desiccated streams, and allocated continued water for export.

Now, after a decade of study and with the summary report from the State Water Board's expert stream scientists in hand, the physical aqueduct infrastructure has become the focal issue of the day. How can the limitations of the pipes, dams, ditches, structures, and valves be overcome in order to release the ecologically beneficial amount of water the streams need at the times of year they need it most?

The good news is that solutions are available that provide both healing for the streams and benefits to DWP. Principled

LA Aqueduct centennial

This year marks an anniversary for the Los Angeles Aqueduct—its 100th birthday. Remarkably, the aqueduct has been transporting water to the city for all these years through its network of pipes, tunnels, siphons, and reservoirs. November 5 is the exact anniversary of the grand opening of the gates in Los Angeles in 1913—the day William Mulholland famously waved to the cascading flow of water and proclaimed “there it is, take it!”

While the aqueduct turns 100 this year, diversions from Mono Lake's tributaries did not begin until 1941, when DWP completed the aqueduct extension to the Mono Basin.

- Creation of modern infrastructure and reliable operational rules for DWP to continue authorized exports of Mono Basin water;
- Establishment of mechanisms for efficient, long-term Mono Basin monitoring, adaptive management, and restoration programs that minimize controversy while achieving the mandates set by the State Water Board;
- Containment of the cost of infrastructure upgrades.

The aqueduct's limitation

The main challenge, as *Newsletter* readers know well, is DWP's World War II-era Los Angeles Aqueduct infrastructure in the Mono Basin. The aqueduct was not designed or built to routinely allow water to pass down Mono's tributaries in an ecologically sound manner. It was designed to capture the full flow of the tributaries, which it did for decades. Since then, stream restoration and the flow of water to the lake have depended on the use of spillways, bypass valves, and return ditches. No one would construct the system that way today—it's simply what has been inherited from a bygone era. The facilities don't have the physical capacity to release the right amount of water into the streams at the right times of year.

Here's one example of that problem: One way of releasing

water to Rush Creek requires draining the aqueduct pipe, then having DWP employees climb into the aqueduct conduit and barricade the inside of the pipe, then refilling the pipe so it overflows out a nearby bypass gate, then draining it again, then having employees return to remove the barricade materials. Obviously, a modern structure would have a release valve built in—probably one that could be operated and monitored remotely from DWP offices in Bishop.

Aging infrastructure needs upgrading

The aqueduct is well maintained, but it is getting old. Even if you forget restoration for a moment, major facilities questions still loom for DWP. There are questions about facility reliability, structural integrity, the amount of time invested in operations and maintenance, and operational protocols. DWP can keep maintaining the system it has piece by piece, or it can invest in facilities that meet their modern day mandates—that now include the needs of the lake and streams—for the decades ahead.

We're confident that solutions for stream restoration, such as modern water release facilities, are also solutions that meet challenges already facing Los Angeles, such as assuring compliance with State Water Board requirements and reliably exporting the millions of dollars' worth of Mono Basin water allocated to the city.

There's already an example of how this type of solution can achieve benefits on all of these levels—you only have to look as far as the Lee Vining Creek diversion facility. A few years back DWP removed an entire section of the dam and installed a modern, real-time adjustable gate. This gate assures that state-mandated streamflow requirements are delivered and that restoration requirements such as passing sediment and peak flows are accomplished. And the benefits for DWP? It gained certainty that streamflow requirements would be met, allowing greater certainty to continue the export of water, as allowed, from the creek.

Seeking a centennial year solution

DWP has launched celebrations for the centennial anniversary of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. It is the perfect opportunity for DWP to put forth a modern, balanced, environmentally responsible vision for the next century of aqueduct operations.

An agreement to implement state-mandated stream restoration flows and to heal Mono Lake's four tributaries—if adopted by DWP—will go a long way in establishing such a proactive and positive vision.

Indeed, a solution for Mono Basin stream restoration will be worthy of celebration, just as the 1994 Mono Lake decision was. And it will provide a statewide showcase for how the use of the best available science can achieve the dual goals of a restored environment and improved water supply reliability. ❖

The LA Aqueduct's next 100

Aniversaries always raise questions for the future: What will the next century of the Los Angeles Aqueduct look like? What is the vision for the future? Will there be broad implementation of the kind of balanced, win-win solutions forged at Mono Lake?

The history of Mono Lake and the aqueduct provides an excellent guide to achieving protection of the unique resources of the Eastern Sierra while finding solutions that provide water for the people of Los Angeles. In fact, that story is now close to adding a new significant chapter with the completion of a win-win stream restoration agreement that will physically alter the aqueduct to achieve stream protection and restoration while efficiently making allowed exports of water to the city.

Will the Mono Lake Committee be celebrating a new Mono Lake success amidst the glitzy aqueduct gala events planned for November—or preparing for renewed legal confrontation? We are working hard to make a principled solution happen, though of course the decision to embrace it lies with DWP. Progress in the Mono Basin would be symbolic of a sustainable, balanced future possible for the entire Los Angeles Aqueduct—and *that* would be a centennial milestone to celebrate!

A legacy for Mono Lake

by Benjamin Hand

For over 30 years, visitors to Lee Vining have been lured off of Highway 395 and into the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore by the iconic storefront and mural—and for many, the colorful front with its deep steps has become the lasting image of the Mono Lake Committee and the town of Lee Vining.

But last summer visitors arrived to find a sight not seen since the Committee first moved into the building more than three decades ago: a complete renovation of the building-front and its surroundings. Members and longtime visitors who visited the store during the summer shared their excitement with staff over the look of the new front, and related to us a number of wonderful recollections of the old storefront and the many events that took place on its steps.

Many visitors have also been interested in the story behind the new storefront, and the reasons for renovating it for the first time in 30 years. The long answer is that renovating the front gave us the opportunity to make the Committee more accessible to guests with physical handicaps, as well as to create a more pleasant space for outdoor events and evenings spent watching the sunset. But the short answer is that we renovated the front of the Mono Lake Committee because of the generosity of Grace de Laet, and it is only because of her that the storefront has undergone such a dynamic renovation.

Grace was born in Detroit in 1933, but by the 1960s she had moved west to California. In 1978 she, like many Californians, heard a passionate young environmentalist named David Gaines describe the plight of Mono Lake and the subsequent endangerment of the Mono Basin's ecosystem. Grace, a lifelong birder and conservationist, was immediately struck by the immense importance of saving Mono Lake, and by the vision that Gaines outlined for achieving such a vast undertaking. Grace brought something to the Committee that it had previously lacked: a fundraiser with ambitious plans.

Over the next several decades Grace would not only provide her skills as a wonderful fundraiser and public advocate for Mono Lake in the San Francisco Bay Area, but she also remained a pivotal voice within the Mono Lake Committee community—providing advice, guidance, and support to numerous staff members and volunteers. Grace also joined the Committee's Board of Directors, thereby institutionalizing her role with the organization.

When Grace passed away in 2008 her famous generosity toward the Committee and the cause of Mono Lake conservation and restoration did not end. As part of her will, Grace set aside a portion of her estate to the Mono Lake

Committee, in support of projects that help visitors learn about the lake and why it should be protected.

We were able to use the money Grace left to us to complete the long-needed renovation of the front of the Information Center & Bookstore. Because of her bequest, the front of the Committee now not only has an aesthetically-pleasing remodel, it also has a wheelchair lift to make it handicap-accessible, a water bottle filling station, a scale model map of the lake, a renovated seating area, and a greywater system—among other improvements.

None of this would have been possible without Grace's generous gift and vision for the future of the Mono Lake Committee. You can see a short video about Grace and the remodel project at monolake.org/members/legacygifts. Because of Grace and her desire to see the Committee continue to serve as a source of both information and conservation, we will be able to welcome visitors during their visit to the Mono Basin, and inspire people of all ages to learn more about the lake and what they can do to help. Thank you, Grace. ❖

Benjamin Hand was a 2012 Mono Lake Intern. He is currently in England for graduate school at Cambridge University.



Grace de Laet, 1933–2008.



The Mono Lake Committee's renovated storefront, thanks to Grace's generosity.

Caltrans' rockfall project rolling along

Test project to inform critical revegetation plan

by Lisa Cutting

With the meager winter snow now long gone from the Lee Vining area, the rockfall slopes north of Lee Vining and adjacent to Mono Lake are exposed once again. During winter months the snow acts as a kind of cement, holding rocks and other material in place on the slope. Come springtime, melting snow and rainfall destabilize rocks and high winds erode soils. At times, rocks tumble down and occasionally settle on the pavement, causing problems for motorists navigating the winding two-lane section of highway. Clearly this is a problem, and the question is how to solve it without impacting Mono Lake and the scenic views.

The good, the bad, and the ugly

Caltrans is working to address the rockfall problem through the proposed Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project (see Fall 2012 *Newsletter*). The purpose of the project is to improve safety for the traveling public by reducing rockfall incidents. The project as proposed would stabilize six slope areas prone to rockfall along a one-mile section of Highway 395 beginning two miles north of Lee Vining near Old Marina.

The slopes vary in complexity, as do their proposed remedies. The three southern slopes are smaller and less challenging and the Mono Lake Committee, in consultation with our experts, believes that soil rehabilitation and aggressive revegetation will stabilize them. The three northern slopes are more problematic. These slopes are steeper, have been deeply eroded into chasms and rills, and have added complexity due to ancient lakebed sediments in the soil. These three slopes will require a physically engineered solution in addition to aggressive revegetation, which must be well planned and executed in order to succeed.

There really isn't a perfect solution, especially with the three slopes to the north, and visually, things will get worse before they can get better. Some slopes will need to be prepared for mesh material to be installed, and rills will need to be worked so that soil nutrients are accessible for seeding and natural plant recruitment. The good news is that in the end, all of these slopes will improve in stability, vegetation cover, and visual appearance.

The root of the problem

As any successful gardener knows, the key to healthy plants is healthy soil. Ironically, the rockfall problem started when the first roadcut was done back in the early 1900s to make room for the road. Not much was known back then about soil science, and stripping valuable topsoil when scaling a slope was routine. Now we know that the top layer of soil is critical



ARVA DEGENHARDT, WITH AERIAL SUPPORT BY LIGHTHAWK

Roadcuts in the Lee Vining Rockfall Safety Project area along Highway 395 above Old Marina.

to successful vegetation cover and continued growth.

The Committee sees the revegetation component as the most critical part of the project both to assure slope stability and also to minimize visual impacts. In addition to having specific vegetation success criteria identified before the project starts, the Committee has worked with Caltrans on implementing a test project within smaller sections of the larger area in advance of the rockfall project. The results of the Lee Vining Test Plot Project will inform the rockfall project—identifying specifics such as appropriate plant density, diversity, viability, and soil health components. The test project is scheduled to be in place this summer, so visitors may see signs of it in the project area. Testing different methods to find out what works best *before* beginning the main project makes good sense and is something the Committee and Caltrans agreed to as a way to ensure success.

It's not "no," but "how?"

Environmental advocacy organizations are often criticized for saying "no" to every development project—even ones that are justified in need, if not supportable in approach. The Committee has a long history of working to find balanced solutions, and this project is no different. Understanding the goals and values of all sides, incorporating them into plans, and working together while still holding firm to the Committee's principles are key to getting the best projects done, and in essence, doing them right. The way we see it, that's a win, win, win—for the land, for the public, and for the agency. ❖

Lisa Cutting is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director. For her, the opening of flowers, the high country, and the Latte Da Coffee Cafè are sure signs of spring.

Forest Service reaches financial end of the line with visitor center at Mono Lake

One-year collaborative operating test underway

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

In early 2013 the Inyo National Forest announced that it is reconsidering how the federal Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center is managed. At issue is what resources the Forest Service can provide due to a declining budget and increasing operations and maintenance costs. A creative operating test for the 2013 year is underway, though the funding crisis continues to raise questions about the agency's capacity to manage the congressionally-designated Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area as a whole.

The problem, which also affects Inyo National Forest visitor centers in Mammoth Lakes, at the bristlecone pine forest, and in Lone Pine, is rooted in the steady decline in federal recreation and facility funding since the early 1990s, combined with additional budget cuts in recent years. As the Forest Service summarizes it, these cuts are "failing to provide the required resources needed to operate and maintain the facilities."

At the same time, public use of these visitor centers remains high, and with four million visitors annually, the Inyo National Forest is one of the top recreation forests in the entire national forest system.

A discussion has been underway for several years about options for continuing the many public benefits offered by the Scenic Area Visitor Center, which was authorized by the Scenic Area legislation advocated by the Mono Lake Committee in 1984, and opened in 1992. Most of the

options on the table have been cost-cutting measures such as reducing the hours and season of operation, facilities closures, and staffing reductions, and some of these have already been implemented.

However, the Inyo National Forest has developed a creative option that is now being tested. In essence, the test involves passing greater responsibility for day-to-day operations of the Scenic Area Visitor Center (and the Mammoth Welcome Center as well) to the Inyo National Forest's non-profit interpretive partner, the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA). Under the plan, ESIA will also seek to develop new revenue sources to support operation of the federal facilities and continue the educational programs they offer.

ESIA is a well-established non-profit that has run the retail sales operations in all Inyo National Forest facilities for many years. The Committee has worked with ESIA for decades and commends them for investing substantial effort in studying and now testing this expanded role in visitor center operations.

The goal is to have visitors notice little change in their experience at the Scenic Area Visitor Center. The Forest Service has assured the Committee that they will maintain a staffing presence that, though limited, will continue to make public land management agency staff available to the public.

The initiative is being set up under a one-year permit,

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For 2013, the Inyo National Forest has passed responsibility for day-to-day operations at the Scenic Area Visitor Center to the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association as a test arrangement to keep the doors open.

Counting Mono's Eared Grebes

by Erica Tucker

Many, many Eared Grebes pass through the Mono Basin during their fall migration. Because the grebes use Mono Lake as a critical stopover, it's important to know just how many stop here each year. The process of finding out involves dedicated and professional volunteers, and the Mono Lake Committee assists researchers by coordinating the annual aerial photo survey.

On October 15, 2012, volunteer LightHawk pilot Geoff Pope and photographer Stephen Ingram spent the morning flying over and photographing Mono Lake's surface and the birds upon it. The final results from researcher Sean Boyd of the Pacific Wildlife Research Centre in British Columbia show that Mono Lake hosted about one million Eared Grebes. That's roughly 150,000 more than in 2011.

Boyd calculates the number of grebes by taking the initial "grebe dot" count from the photos, converting that number into a density, adjusting it for scale, and using the current lake surface area to extrapolate the final number. The annual Eared Grebe survey has happened for most of the past 20 years, and you can see the fluctuations over time on the Mono Basin Clearinghouse website at monobasinresearch.org/research/boyd.htm.

The Committee is dedicated to promoting scientific research at Mono Lake, and has been taking an even greater



ARVA DEGENHARDT WITH AERIAL SUPPORT BY LIGHTHAWK

Volunteer LightHawk pilot Geoff Pope steers the plane over Mono Lake during the 2012 Eared Grebe aerial survey.

hands-on role with the Eared Grebe survey. The Committee will be training a volunteer this year to count the grebes in the photos to assist Boyd. If you are interested in this or other volunteer opportunities, please contact Rosanne Catron (rose@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595. ❖

It's now officially Mt. Andrea Lawrence!



GEORGE MCCOULIKIAN

The newly named Mt. Andrea Lawrence is on the boundary between the Mono Basin watershed and Yosemite National Park. President Barack Obama signed legislation, advanced by California Senator Barbara Boxer and Congressman Buck McKeon, in January, thus designating the previously unnamed peak in Andrea's honor. Andrea was a double Olympic gold medalist, Mono County Supervisor, Mono Lake Committee Board member, inspirational leader, and Eastern Sierra environmental champion.

SoCal water drops

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

It is election season in Los Angeles, and decisions made by the city's voters will have effects on policy and practice throughout the Eastern Sierra. Current Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is termed out, and as of press time, a runoff between Eric Garcetti and Wendy Gruel to replace him is underway.

Both candidates are well aware of the city's environmental history at Mono Lake and the importance of the balanced solutions that protect the lake and serve the city's water needs. As important will be the people appointed to leadership positions—for example, the incoming Mayor, who will take office on July 1, will appoint all five commissioners who oversee the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP).

Also up for election are a number of City Council districts, the City Attorney, and the City Controller. While DWP is remarkably autonomous under the Los Angeles city charter, these positions all play important oversight roles. To this end, the Mono Lake Committee was pleased to be an endorser of the recent *Los Angeles Candidate Forum on the Environment, Transportation, and the Economy*, which was sponsored by a number of groups including our friends at TreePeople, Heal the Bay, Climate Resolve, and the Green LA Coalition. The event provided all the candidates with a chance to speak on key issues, respond to panel questions, and talk with the interested public. ❖



In October Assemblymember Kristin Olsen honored the Mono Lake Committee with this resolution celebrating organizations in her district that helped keep state parks from closing.

Farewell Huell Howser



Huell Howser, left, canoeing with Mono Lake Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin in 2008 when he visited Mono Lake to film a second "California's Gold" episode about the Mono Basin. Huell passed away on January 6 at the age of 67.

Policy notes

by Lisa Cutting

Old Marina fee collection

The fee collection program initiated last summer at Old Marina in order to keep the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve open amidst widespread state park closures is undergoing a modification this summer. Instead of the Bodie Foundation collecting money from the parking fees, now State Parks will assume responsibility for the self-pay parking system at Old Marina.

When the Mono Lake Reserve was put on the closure list in 2011, the Bodie Foundation stepped up, implementing the parking fee collection at Old Marina in order to fund Reserve operations at Mono Lake. This ultimately ensured that the Mono Lake Reserve would stay open. This summer visitors won't notice a difference, since the only change is the entity collecting the money. The parking fee is still the same—simply drop \$3 per car into the iron ranger.

The Mono Lake Committee commends the Bodie Foundation for launching the program and is glad to see State Parks deepening its commitment to keeping the

Mono Lake Reserve open for public recreation and enjoyment.

Inyo National Forest planning process

The Inyo National Forest is one of three National Forests in California revising its management plan under the 2012 National Forest System Planning Rule. Currently, the Inyo is operating from a management plan that was established in 1988, so a plan revision is long overdue. This will be a multi-year process and a plan is not expected to be finalized until 2016.

As you can imagine, the process is complex. The Inyo has broken it down into several stages: assess current forest resource conditions and trends (which include biological, social, and economic information); develop the plan; analyze and evaluate the proposed plan under the National Environmental Policy Act (which includes circulation of a draft plan and Environmental Impact Statement); revise the plan based on public input; and implement the final plan.

The Mono Lake Committee is

involved—lending expertise and insight about everything related to Mono Lake and the surrounding Forest Service lands. The Inyo has encouraged all stakeholders and members of the public to become involved, and the earlier you get in on the process, the better. Go to fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/landmanagement/planning for more information.

Digital 395 connecting Mono Lake to the world

Recently, drivers on Highway 395 in the Eastern Sierra have grown accustomed to seeing backhoes, drilling equipment, and huge spools of fiber optic cable near the highway—all signs of the Digital 395 project. On-the-ground work began in August 2012, and the flurry of work over the past six months means high-speed broadband internet service will be a reality here this summer.

The stimulus-funded project will connect Carson City, Nevada to Barstow, California, bringing reliable internet access to 36 previously underserved communities. For us in Lee

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State Park Interpreter Dave Marquart, left, will take over collecting the \$3 per car fee at Old Marina from the Bodie Foundation, which implemented the fee solution to keep the park open.

Vining and the rest of the region this means better connectivity for visitor services and community institutions such as schools, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies. For visitors, it may mean the ability to spend more time in the area because high-speed connectivity will be possible. Expected end-user broadband speeds will be up to urban standards, an exponential increase from current speeds.

The fiber optic cable route through the Mono Basin and adjacent to Mono Lake follows already-disturbed areas well away from Mono Lake, primarily along Highway 395. In advance of any shovels hitting the ground, careful thought was given to the ecological and scenic sensitivities in the area, and Committee staff provided guidance early on in the process.

The economic benefit to the region has been significant too, especially in the quiet winter months when, with the exception of Mammoth Lakes, the rest of Mono County typically goes into a deep slumber. Crews have been working almost non-stop and often in adverse weather conditions to be able to meet the July 2013 construction deadline.

Tim Alpers returns to Mono County public service

Like a steelhead (sea-run trout) returning to its home waters, Tim Alpers was elected supervisor of Mono County District Two and took office in January. Tim isn't a stranger to the Supervisors' chambers in Bridgeport or the challenges of political life. He has previously served on two separate occasions in the 1980s and 90s as a

Mono County supervisor and now after a long break spent raising Alpers' trout, he has returned again.

Tim understands the importance of balancing our tourist-based economy with preserving our natural landscape and how Mono County's marketing slogan "Wild by Nature" draws visitors to our area over and over again. We look forward to working with Tim throughout his tenure. ❖



ARMA DEGENHARDT

Digital 395 will bring high-speed broadband internet to communities along Highway 395, including areas near Mono Lake.

with a plan to perform an evaluation in support of possible permit extensions. The Committee will be watching closely to see how this test functions to be able to usefully provide the Forest Service with feedback at the end of the year. Feedback from visitors is important for moving forward in the best way possible, so please let us know your experiences by stopping by the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. You can also contact Policy Director Lisa Cutting (lisa@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595.

Partnerships like this are valuable tools the Forest Service can draw on, and they function successfully in many areas of Inyo National Forest operations. For example, the Committee

has had an interpretive partnership with the agency for decades, ensuring that the visiting public has naturalist-led tours at South Tufa and educational opportunities around the Mono Basin.

However, partnerships have historically been ways to expand and enhance the work of the Forest Service as the agency charged with management of public lands. The visitor center situation is different; as the Inyo National Forest points out, it is now seeking partners to accomplish duties the agency can no longer fulfill on its own. This unavoidably highlights a question that has hung over the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area for the past decade: does the Forest Service have the institutional capacity to

administer the Scenic Area to "protect its geologic, ecologic, and cultural resources" and "provide recreational and interpretive facilities" as required by law, for the long-term?

As the summer proceeds, the Committee looks forward to working with ESIA to help them succeed in their new role at the Scenic Area Visitor Center, especially in areas like Mono Lake information, staff training, and public engagement. We'll also be continuing our dialogue with the Forest Service about the long-term management of the Scenic Area with the goal of assuring that this unique place receives the special protection and attention that Congress and President Ronald Reagan set forth nearly 30 years ago. ❖

Streamwatch

Two dry years in a row

by Greg Reis

Runoff during the 2012 runoff year (April 1, 2012–March 31, 2013) was about 53% of average, ranging from 40% in Walker Creek to 60% in Parker Creek. This is the driest year since 2007, when 44% of average runoff was recorded in the four Mono Basin streams diverted by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP).

Mono Basin precipitation from October 2012 to March 2013 was only 60% of average, with the driest January–March on record. The Sierra captured a bit more precipitation from winter storms than the east side—April 1st snow surveys found 72% of average snowpack in the high elevations of the Mono Basin. This is the highest in the state, thanks to the Mono Basin’s tall mountains in a location that benefits from storms that favor the northern Sierra and storms that funnel moisture through the favorably-oriented San

Joaquin River gap. The Truckee River and Sacramento River basins were the only other basins in the state to exceed 60% of average snowpack. The statewide average was 42%, with generally wetter conditions to the north.

The April 1st preliminary runoff forecast for the 2013 runoff year is 66% of average, meaning another dry year is in store. There is a chance that the final forecast in May could rise above the 68.5% threshold for a “Dry-Normal I” year-type, which would result in a requirement for peak flow releases on the streams, higher base flows, and slightly more water for Mono Lake.

New information about the activity of the Silver Lake Earthquake Fault is causing Southern California Edison to keep its three Rush Creek reservoirs (Waugh, Gem Lake, and Agnew Lake) low again this year. Seismic retrofit work on the dams is estimated to

take until 2017. For four more years, additional water will flow down Rush Creek during the peak flow season that normally would be stored during June and released in the fall and winter. This will give Rush Creek a slightly more natural hydrograph above Grant Lake Reservoir, which will benefit the stream ecosystem. ❖



ERICA TUCKER

Reading the lake level gauge in February required both skis and hiking boots this year.

Lakewatch

Mono Lake could drop another foot this year

by Greg Reis

During the 2012 runoff year, Mono Lake dropped 1.9 feet. This much of a drop in a single year has not occurred since the years of excessive water diversions. Based on the 2012 runoff year forecast of 55% of average runoff, only a 1.3-foot drop was predicted by DWP’s lake level forecast model.

Lower than average winter runoff and precipitation explain about half of the 0.6-foot difference. January–March precipitation at Cain Ranch was the lowest on record (since 1933), and February–March precipitation was the second-

lowest. It was the first time since record keeping began in Lee Vining that there was no measurable precipitation in February. This incredibly dry weather limited the lake’s winter rise to just 0.16 feet, whereas Mono Lake has risen at least 0.2 feet every winter since DWP’s water diversions were first significantly curtailed by court order in 1989.

The other half of the forecast error is likely due to higher than expected evaporation from Mono Lake’s surface. The average of the daily maximum temperatures in 2012 was the highest since 1990, and the average of the daily minimums was the highest since the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration installed the Lee Vining weather station in 1988.

In 2007, when runoff and

precipitation were lower, Mono Lake fell 1.5 feet, but it fell more during the months that were warmer than 2012, and less in the months that were cooler. Spring and fall were especially warm in 2012 and consequently, the lake dropped faster than forecasted in May, June, October, and November.

Based on predicted runoff, the lake could drop another foot this year from its April level of 6382.1 feet above sea level. Predicting groundwater inflow, precipitation, and evaporation is not possible, and if those diverge from average, they could influence the change in lake level as much as runoff does. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee’s Information & Restoration Specialist. He’s a member of the “Grateful Dads” hiking club with his son.

6417'

Prediversion lake level, 1941

6392'

Management lake level

Current lake level 6382.1'

Historic low, 1982 6372'

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



ARVA DEENHARDT

The last time I met up with Huell Howser was a cool, quiet, summer-at-sunrise early morning in front of the Mono Lake Committee in Lee Vining. As we prepared for a visit to the lake, I noticed that there was exactly one other person out, a distant approaching figure whose pace soon quickened noticeably; clearly he had recognized Huell, who took time to chat about California and encouraged him to visit the amazing Mono Lake.

That was Huell Howser, authentic, ever energetic and curious, as excited off camera as on about California's gold. He brought his renowned public television show to Mono Lake in both 1992 and 2008; we can still tell when reruns air by the surge in phone calls and inquiries we get the next day.

Huell passed away in January and many have written eloquently about his uniquely authentic love of our great state. Here at Mono Lake, we agree. The image I will always remember is standing by the lake, later that same

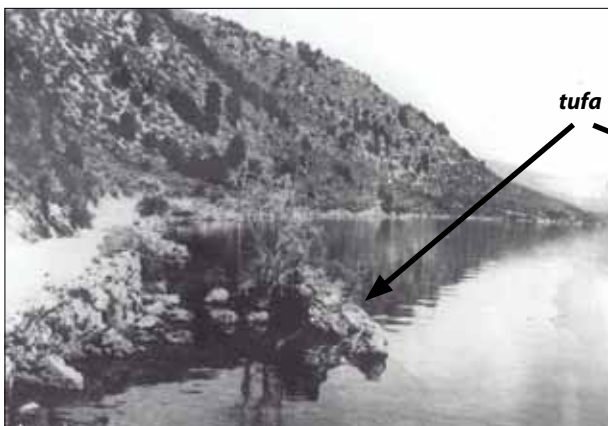
day. Huell had just finished a surprise interview seeking first impressions from some international visitors, and turned his full attention to the water's edge.

With gulls wheeling overhead and the distant Sierra escarpment stretched crystal clear to the sky, Huell focused in on something else: the vast band of alkali flies buzzing along the shore. With an enthusiastic pronouncement that "these flies are ama-a-a-azing!" he was off, bent low with his handheld microphone tipped forward, walking through the flies as they rose and buzzed in great clouds. He appeared to be seeking their comments, as he did everyone's, on his certainty that Mono Lake was a piece of California's gold.

Thank you, Huell, for loving California's special places. We were lucky to know you, and Mono Lake was too. ❖

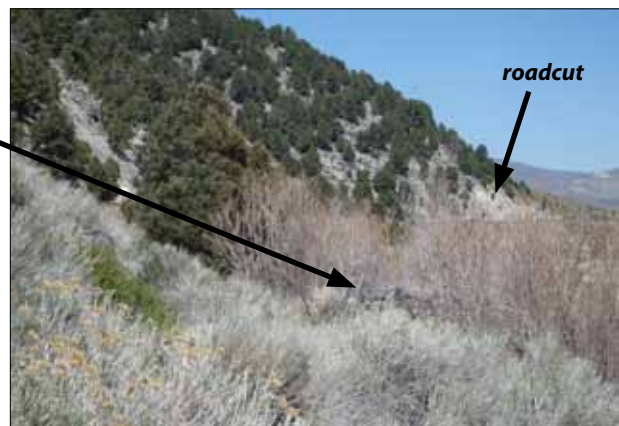
Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. His daughter's science fair project won 4th place in the state this year.

Benchmarks



ARCHIVE PHOTO

The old Highway 395 along Mono Lake in a photo marked "1915-1922." Mono Lake stands at 6426 feet above sea level.



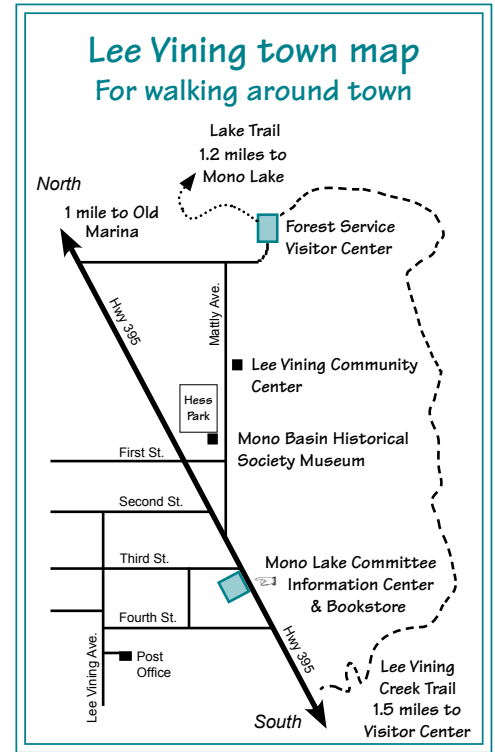
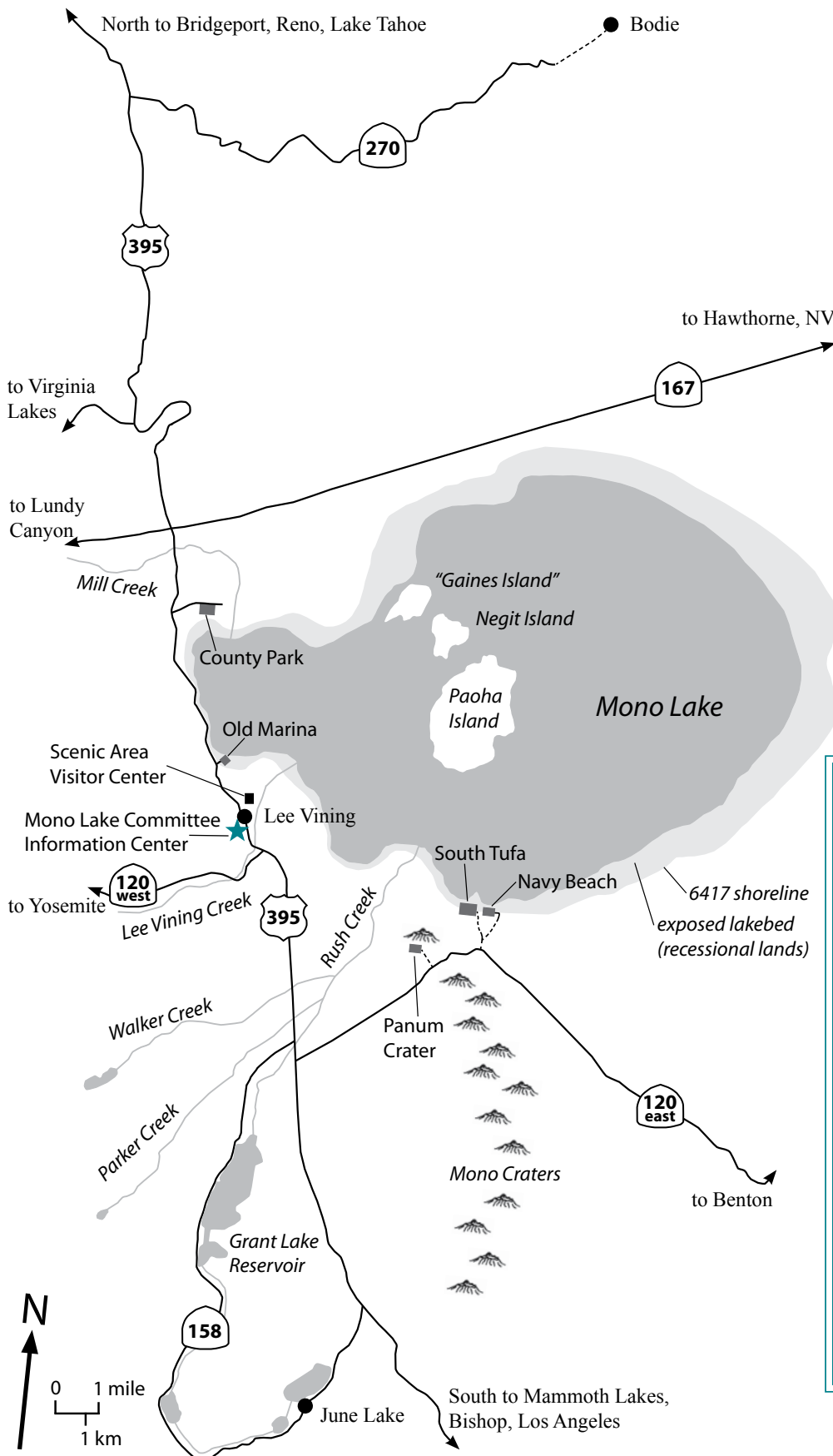
BARISHE MILLER

The same view of the modern Highway 395, with a roadcut visible, on April 20, 2013. Mono Lake's level: 6382.1 feet.

Mono Lake and vicinity map



Scan for quick directions!

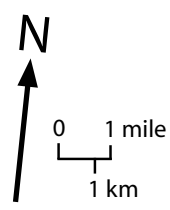


How far is it?

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 South Tufa 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. Suggested entry donation: \$2 per person. 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 Natural Reserve
(760) 647-6331 www.parks.ca.gov
- Mono Basin Historical Society
(760) 647-6461 monobasinhs.org
- Bodie State Historic Park
(760) 647-6445 www.parks.ca.gov
- Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center
(760) 924-5500 visitmammoth.com
- June Lake Visitor's Bureau
1-800-845-7922 visitjune.com
- Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce
(760) 932-7500 bridgeportcalifornia.com

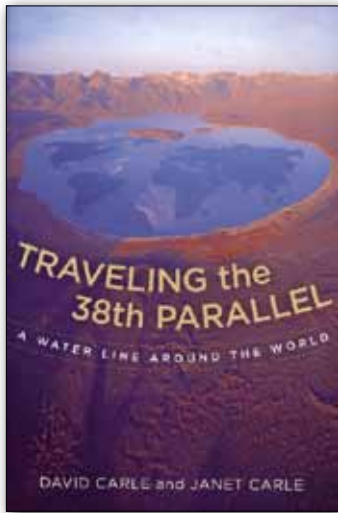
- Devils Postpile (760) 934-2289 nps.gov/depo
- Inyo National Forest 24-hour Wilderness Permits/Info
(760) 873-2408 fs.usda.gov/inyo
- Yosemite National Park nps.gov/yose
Information by phone (209) 372-0200
Campground Reservations (800) 436-7275
Hotel and Motel Reservations (801) 559-5000
Wilderness 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 & Interpretive Center
(760) 878-2932 nps.gov/manz
- Death Valley Reservations (760) 786-2345
- Bridgeport Ranger Station (760) 932-7070
- California Road Conditions
(800) 427-7623 dot.ca.gov



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

SEE ALL
PRODUCTS
IN COLOR
ONLINE AT
**MONOLAKE.
ORG/STORE**



TRAVELING THE 38TH PARALLEL: A WATER LINE AROUND THE WORLD

BY DAVID & JANET CARLE

Local authors Dave and Janet Carle present an environmental world view inspired by their 22 years as park rangers at the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. Following the 38th parallel, they encounter complicated water issues and delve into the battles valiantly fought around the globe in the name of conservation.

Traveling the 38th Parallel, hardcover, University of California Press, 278 pages, 9"x 6": \$29.95

HAND INKED AND STAMPED CARDS

Rosanne Catron is the Mono Lake Committee's Office Director, but she is a multi-talented artist as well! She has carved quail and raven graphics into rubber stamps to create these unique, high-quality cards.

The black embossed images on heavy cardstock are each signed by Rosanne and can serve dual purposes: as a card and as a piece of art that can be framed. Cards are blank on the inside.

Single card, 7"x 5 1/4", please specify quail or raven: \$6.00

Two-card set, one quail and one raven: \$11.00



QUAIL



RAVEN



LOGO BOTTLE

REFLECT BOTTLE

STAINLESS STEEL WATER BOTTLES

Back in stock after a year hiatus! The Mono Lake Committee logo adorns the traditional stainless steel Klean Kanteen 27-ounce water bottle, keeping you healthy and hydrated in Mono Lake fashion. In addition, we are now carrying Klean Kanteen "Reflect" bottles, which are completely plastic-free. The bottles themselves are stainless steel and come with beautiful steel, silicone, and bamboo lids. The convenient loop top makes for easy toting. Choose between the brushed finish and the mirror finish.

Mono Lake Committee logo stainless steel bottle, plastic lid: \$23.00

Klean Kanteen Reflect bottle, bamboo/steell/silicone lid, please specify brushed or mirror finish: \$33.00

order at www.monolake.org/store or (760) 647-6595

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 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.



A Scenic Area champion retires

Nancy Upham leaves Forest Service after 28 years

by Bartshé Miller

This past winter, Nancy Upham, a skilled leader, communicator, and manager-advocate of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, retired after a 28-year career with the Inyo National Forest.

Almost 30 years ago Congress passed legislation that designated the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The Inyo National Forest was put in charge, with no institutional experience managing such a designation. Fortunately, there were capable people who were up to the task, and Nancy Upham was one of them.

In those early years, Nancy navigated and incorporated community and public concerns to transform an abstract designation into a special experience for visitors. She was lead in developing a comprehensive Scenic Area Management Plan, which still guides management decisions today. She managed the newly-opened Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center, started a world-class interpretive program, designed interpretive exhibits, and became the first Scenic Area Manager.

When Nancy retired, she was working as the Inyo's Public Affairs Officer. Her long career put her in the thick of many difficult decisions, and her thoughtful, articulate, and calm communication style made her a skilled facilitator. She helped the Forest Service navigate complicated

management decision implementations. It helped that she cared deeply about doing the right thing for people and public lands.

We will miss working with Nancy because she was dedicated to her work and she was an advocate for the Scenic Area. Nancy played a critical role in the Forest Service's decision to weigh in on a lake level for Mono Lake before the State Water Resources Control Board in 1993. Previously it was uncertain that the Forest Service would take a position, but Nancy's leadership made the difference, and the Forest Service supported the higher lake level eventually chosen by the State Water Board. Even after she departed as Scenic Area Manager, Nancy maintained a special interest in the Mono Basin. She continued to play a role in issues related to education and

interpretation and advised the Scenic Area Managers that followed.

We can speculate that the Forest Service will miss Nancy as well. The Inyo National Forest no longer has a budget to support positions like Scenic Area Manager. Nor can it sustain the education and interpretive programs of the past. Nancy's character, experience, and skills were a valuable addition to an agency that is increasingly losing funding and positions while also having to shift priorities.

We congratulate Nancy and thank her for her years of service on behalf of the public and Mono Lake. ❖

Bartshé Miller is the Committee's Education Director. His first Mono Basin job was at the Scenic Area Visitor Center.



Nancy Upham, right, leads an interpretive tour at South Tufa in this photo from the early 1990s. South Tufa tours offer one of the best ways to learn about Mono Lake's ecology, cultural history, and political issues. South Tufa tours happen at 10:00AM, 1:00PM, and 6:00PM every day during the summer (see page 15).

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE US FOREST SERVICE

2013 Field Seminars



ARVA DEGENHARDT

Woodpeckers of the Mono Basin

June 7–9 • Stephen Shunk

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

Join North American woodpecker specialist Steve Shunk for this dynamic overview of Mono Basin woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are one of the most specialized bird families in the world, and at least nine species of woodpeckers occur regularly in the Mono Basin, making the forests around Mono Lake a perfect stage for observing these amazing forest carpenters. Steve has studied the ecology of western forests for the last 14 years and recently completed the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*.

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

June 8 • Greg Reis

\$105 per person / \$95 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 with nearly 20 years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration.

South Shore Kayak

June 9 • Stuart Wilkinson & Committee staff

\$105 per person / \$95 for members

limited to 12 participants

Early summer reveals snow-capped mountains towering over a glassy Mono Lake—a great time to kayak! Join Stuart Wilkinson and a Mono Lake Committee staff member for a guided naturalist expedition that will cover a wide variety of topics relating to this unusual Great Basin lake, such as geology, ecology, history, and politics. Expect to see underwater tufa towers, birds, brine shrimp, and lake-bottom springs. Some kayak experience is helpful, but not necessary; kayaks and safety equipment are provided.

Birding & Bird Photography

June 11–13 • Santiago Escruceria

\$165 per person / \$150 for members

limited to 12 participants

This seminar will focus on identifying and photographing birds found in the Mono Basin's diverse habitats, such as

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

sagebrush scrub, open meadows, riparian corridors, and forests. Participants should have basic photography skills; *this seminar is not a course in photography instruction*. Santiago Escruceria has taught environmental education at the Mono Lake Committee for 13 years and also runs a birding tour company. This seminar makes a perfect addition to the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua weekend, which begins Friday, June 14.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID GUBERNICK

"The Bennettville Trail" by instructor David Gubernick.

Digital Photography Basics

June 21–23 • 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. Learn how to get good exposures, read your histogram, understand different f-stops, shutter speeds, shooting modes, ISO settings, depth-of-field, white balance, lens choices, and much more, while also practicing 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. *Participants must bring digital SLR cameras; no point-and-shoot cameras.*

Visions of the Past: First Discoveries

June 22–23 • Terri Geissinger
 \$155 per person / \$140 for members

The Mono Basin is filled with monuments to a bustling past—take a journey back in time and discover its fascinating history. The past will spring to life as you hear stories of the discoverers, the prospectors, and the families who settled here and made the Mono Basin their home. Visit Dogtown, Monoville, Bodie (with a special visit to the Bodie Bluff!), Mono Mills, stagecoach routes, railroads, and gold mines. Terri Geissinger is a retired Bodie State

Historic Park interpreter and guide with a contagious love of history.

Willow & Tule Basketry

June 28–30 • 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 willow and tule burden basket—used for gathering pinenuts, acorns, and berries. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels and participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group at the peaceful private campsite. 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 who has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry.

Insects & Plants: An Ecological Marriage for the Ages

June 29–30 • Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock
 \$155 per person / \$140 for members

Explore the complex, intimate relationships and attractions between insects and plants, including the threats to this essential relationship and how cultures, artists, and poets have interpreted “this marriage for the ages.” Richard Potashin is a longtime Eastern Sierra resident who, in a previous life as a landscape gardener, developed a passion for native flora. Nancy Hadlock has been a naturalist, interpreter, and educator for the National Park Service and US Forest Service for over 30 years.



ARVA DEGENHARDT

A grazing white-lined sphinx moth caterpillar (*Hyles lineata*).

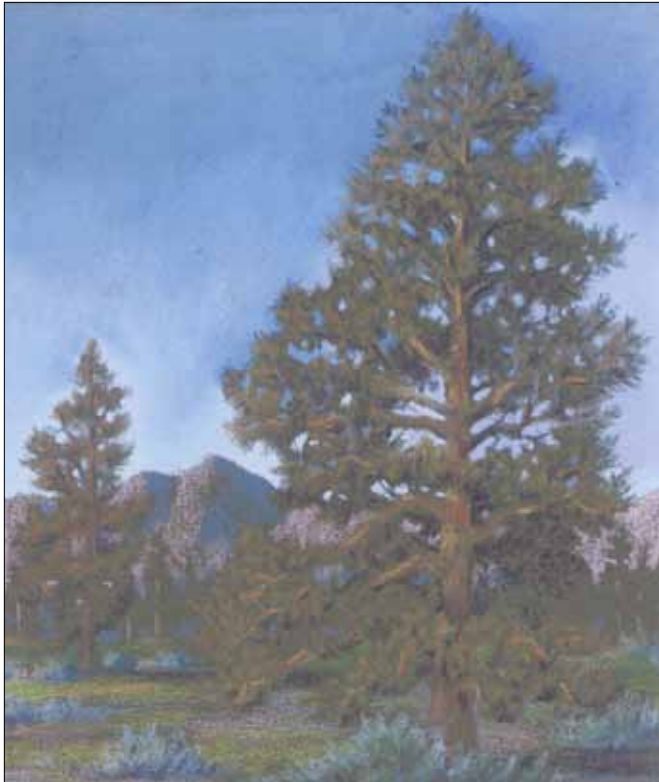


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANE CARLA ROVETTA

"Lodgepole Pines," a pastel painting by instructor Ane Carla Rovetta.

Summer Birds of the Mono Basin

July 12–14 • David Wimpfheimer
\$165 per person / \$150 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. A major focus will be Mono Lake and other wetlands where phalaropes and other shorebirds feed. David Wimpfheimer has been educating and interpreting birds and California's natural history for over 20 years.

Mono Basin Moonlight Photography

July 19–21 • David Gubernick
\$250 per person / \$225 for members
limited to 8 participants

Nighttime photography opens up a new world of photographic possibilities, both compelling and challenging. Through guided practice sessions, field trips in the Mono Basin and upper reaches of the Eastern Sierra, coaching in the field, and review of images, you will learn to create nighttime images with visual impact. David Gubernick is an internationally and nationally published and award-winning

nature photographer and workshop leader. His exhibition prints can be seen at Gallery Sur in Carmel and the Ventana Inn & Spa in Big Sur.

Mono Basin Mammals

July 20–21 • John Harris
\$155 per person / \$140 for members

This class will cover the diversity of mammals found in the Mono Basin, from desert sand dunes to 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 observation. Participants will look for tracks and learn to identify skulls, 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 studying chipmunks as an undergraduate.

Capturing the Trees & Skies of Mono Lake on Paper

July 26–28 • Ane Carla Rovetta
\$175 per person / \$160 for members
\$10 materials fee
limited to 12 participants

The fragrant forests and radiant skies of the Mono Basin are pure inspiration. During this weekend of sketching, we will concentrate on the unique shapes of clouds and trees in the vast landscape. Historically, this kind of painting was called "elements of landscape" and was part of classical training. Our impressions will be recorded on toned paper using handmade charcoal and chalks provided by the instructor. Everyone will go home with at least one finished painting, as well as several drawings that can be expanded upon later. These fun investigations are geared towards artists of all levels.

Introduction to High Country Plants & Habitats

August 2–4 • Ann Howald
\$165 per person / \$150 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 retired consulting botanist who has taught popular Committee field seminars for over ten years.

Eastern Sierra en Plein Air Oil Painting

August 9–11 • 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. 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.

Geology of the Mono Basin

August 16–18 • Greg Stock
\$165 per person / \$150 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 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*.

Coiled Willow Basketry

August 23–25 • 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 small Miwok-Paiute coiled willow basket. This seminar is designed for weavers of all levels and participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group at the peaceful private campsite. 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 basketweaver who has dedicated her life to learning and teaching basketry.

Creating the Illuminated Field Journal

September 6–8 • Hannah Hinchman
\$175 per person / \$160 for members
limited to 12 participants

A field journal is an ideal vehicle to record moments of discovery about the natural world, as well as a quiet way of simply being present outdoors. In this workshop, artist/writer Hannah Hinchman will guide you in exploring the variety of nearby habitats, opening windows to nature's many secrets and learning to personalize these experiences through journal entries, both drawn and written. Hannah is the author of three books about field journals, and has been teaching field journal workshops all over the US for over 20 years.

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

September 7–8 • John Wehausen
\$180 per person / \$165 for members

This field seminar will involve discussions of the fascinating biology of the federally endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, their relationship with other mammals (including mountain lions and humans), and their conservation in the field. Past participants saw bighorn 14 out of the last 15 years—while there is a very good chance of seeing bighorn sheep during this seminar, there is no guarantee. John Wehausen 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.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF HANNAH HINCHMAN

An event map from one of instructor Hannah Hinchman's field journals.

monolake.org/seminars or (760) 647-6595 to register

Birding the Migration: Mono Basin & Bridgeport Valley

September 12–13 • Dave Shuford
\$190 per person / \$175 for members

Birding the Migration: Mono Basin & Long Valley

September 14–15 • Dave Shuford
\$155 per person / \$140 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, Bridgeport Valley, and Long Valley. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at Point Blue 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.

Arborglyphs & Aspen Natural History

September 14–15 • Richard Potashin & Nancy Hadlock
\$180 per person / \$165 for members

A century of sheep grazing brought Basque shepherders into the Mono Basin's aspen-bordered meadows, and they left numerous carvings—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 wildlife, insects, and birds that are drawn to the groves. Richard Potashin has been discovering and documenting aspen carvings for many years. Nancy Hadlock has been a



This arborglyph translates to "Take care of your health, friend."

naturalist, interpreter, and educator for the National Park Service and US Forest Service for over 30 years.

Visions of the Past: Bodie, Masonic, Aurora

September 21–22 • Terri Geissinger
\$155 per person / \$140 for members

In the Bodie Hills lie three ghost towns full of stories of pioneer families, prospectors, muleskinners, heroes, and gunslingers. This guided tour will visit the town and the cemetery of Bodie, once the second-largest city in California. Next, visit the rock cabins and foundations of Masonic, where 500 people resided in a beautiful canyon—mining gold with great hope and eventually producing considerable wealth. The last stop is Aurora, once a bustling town of 8,000 souls in the 1860s. Your leader Terri Geissinger is a retired Bodie State Historic Park interpreter and guide, with a talent for making history come alive.



Wilson's Phalaropes flock over Mono Lake.

Geology of the Mono Basin

October 4–6 • Greg Stock

\$155 per person / \$140 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 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 Fall Photography

October 11–13 • Richard Knepp

\$225 per person / \$200 for members

Autumn in the Mono Basin is one of the greatest photographic experiences in the country. Spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter for photographers in both color and black-and-white. Join accomplished photographer Richard Knepp to explore varied shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and grand overviews of the Mono Basin. Photographers of all levels are welcome; a fully

adjustable camera of any size or format is suggested. This is the 19th year in a row of this popular seminar.



Negit Island through a gleaming frame of aspen leaves.

ARVA DEGENHARDT

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 2013.

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 to register early and receive 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.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival—Los Angeles

by Angela Glaser

In early March the Mono Lake Committee successfully hosted the Wild & Scenic Film Festival in Los Angeles for the second consecutive year. An audience of 110 members and new friends traveled the world during two film screenings with a total of 18 adventure and environmental films. We journeyed to the arctic on snowmobiles in *Wild Bill's Run*, skied the mountains of Hokkaido, Japan in *Unicorn Sashimi*, and witnessed the remarkable power of grassroots efforts in the Committee's award-winning film *The Mono Lake Story*.

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival—LA not only brought a unique and inspiring film line-up to a diverse audience, but also provided an opportunity for conversation and celebration at a reception hosted by Barefoot Wine & Bubbly in honor of Committee co-founder Sally Gaines. Sally has been honored by Barefoot as one of their seven "Soles of the Year"—

extraordinary people who have made lasting impacts in their communities. At the reception Sally spoke to three generations of Mono Lake advocates—in attendance were David Gaines' mother Edith Gaines, the current Committee staff, and more than a dozen students from the Outdoor Experiences program. All the Mono Lake Committee staff members were able to attend thanks to a generous grant from member and friend Roger de Freitas, and we enjoyed reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones at the southern end of the aqueduct.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLEANDAMEN.COM

The Mono Lake Committee hosted the second annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival—LA in the Fairfax neighborhood this year.

Many thanks are in order to the enthusiastic volunteers and generous sponsors who made the event possible: Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Environment Now, Patagonia, Clif Bar, Mother Jones Magazine, and Sierra Nevada Brewing Company. Plans are already in the works for next year's Wild & Scenic Film Festival—Los Angeles.... Stay tuned for details! ❖

2012 Free Drawing winners

Thank you to everyone who entered the 2012 Free Drawing—your contributions support Mono Lake! Congratulations to the winners:

Apple iPad 3: Dennis Gerdes of Porterville. Kindle Fire: Kate Jackson of Ashland, OR. VIP guided tour of the Mono Basin: Darryl & Claudette Dunn of Castaic. Mammoth Mountain season pass: Linda Vida of Oakland. Sierra Star season pass: Paul & Martha Williams of Bishop. Wilson's Eastside Sports camping package: Gregory Walter of San Jose.

Weekend by the Bay package: Linda Duke of Selma. Yosemite adventure package: Karen Caselli of San Jose. Yosemite luxury package: Barbara Scott of Carson City, NV. Eastern Sierra vacation package: Rowland Bevans of Sherman Oaks. Guided fly fishing trip: Scott Overgaard of

Los Osos. Double Eagle Spa package: Linda & Tom Hendrycks of Reno, NV. Hope Valley getaway: Karen Solberg of Reno, NV. Napa Valley wine tour: Gary & Christine Bard of Alameda. American River rafting trip: Richard Mayer of Oceanside. Mammoth Lakes weekend: Bernie Guzenske of Palmdale. Silver Lake boat trip: Liz Fleming of Crowley Lake.

Mono Lake Committee shopping spree: Marc Picard of Soquel. Wave Rave snowboard: Dale & Vicki Schumacher of Santa Maria. Lowepro gear: Richard Buxton of Alamo. REI gear: Paul Friedman of La Jolla. Patagonia gear: Gary Falxa of Eureka and Mike Beebe of Seattle, WA. Robb Hirsch photography



ARVA DEGENHART

Lynette Villagomez reads a winning 2012 Free Drawing ticket with Angie Glaser looking on.

prints: Robert Siebert of Orange. *Tracks of Passion* book: Bill & Dorothy Normark of Sunnyvale. Friends of the Inyo package: Donna Thomas of Santa Cruz. Mono Lake Committee gift packs: Anne Salisbury of Torrance and Mark Tomes of Santa Margarita.

We are grateful for the support of businesses and organizations that generously donate prizes—thank you!

Staff migrations

by Rosanne Catron

As the weather warms, there is an influx of life in the Mono Basin. Red-winged Blackbirds and California Gulls add their calls to the cacophony of summer noise. Summer also means the arrival of a phenomenal group of seasonal staff who spread the word about Mono Lake on interpretive tours and in the Information Center & Bookstore.

We welcome back **Erik Lyon**, who spent the last two summers at the Committee as an Intern, and most recently worked with Whitman College's Semester in the West program. We are excited to have him here as a Project Specialist this summer.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Alex Kalita** majored in Cultural Anthropology at the University of South Florida. Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Christine Weedman** comes to the Committee from Portland, where she worked as a Veterinary Technician Assistant.

Outdoor Education Lead Instructor **Elina Rios**, originally from Pomona, most recently worked as a teacher-naturalist in Idyllwild. Last summer **Jessica François** had a great season with the Outdoor Experiences program, and stayed in the basin through the winter working at Lee Vining Elementary School. We are excited to have Jessica back for another season as Outdoor Education Instructor.

Canoe Coordinator **Julia Frankenbach** recently graduated from Mt. Holyoke College with a degree in Environmental Studies.

Birding Intern **Ryan Price** graduated from UC Santa Cruz in Environmental Studies, and has been working as a seasonal naturalist in the Santa Monica Mountains.

We welcome five Mono Lake Interns to the crew for the summer: **Julie Curtis** currently attends the University of San Diego, majoring in Environmental Science. **Edith Harris** has spent many summers visiting the Mono Lake area, and

has just finished her degrees in German and Philosophy at Pomona College. We welcome back Whitman College graduate **Max Henkels** for his second intern summer. We're happy to have you back, Max! **Emma Oschrin** graduated this year with a degree in Biology from Whitman College, but originally hails from Bishop. Another Bishop local, **Bryce Tiernan**, graduated with a Graphic Design major from Montana State University.

Terry McLaughlin finished up a great season as Outdoor Experiences Lead Instructor last fall, and volunteered at the Committee through the winter. We're very happy that she and her husband **Vern Gersh**, Mono Basin Field Station caretaker, are staying through the summer, continuing to volunteer.

A huge thank you to four departing staff, who helped with a variety of projects through the winter months. Project Specialist **Angie Glaser** helped with the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua and the Wild & Scenic Film Festival-LA before moving on to work in Yosemite National Park as an Interpretive Ranger. We'll miss you, Angie! Project Specialist **Nick Holt** worked part-time helping with IT and research this past winter. Luckily for us, he is now working close by at the Mammoth Community Water District in Mammoth Lakes.

Project Specialist **Erica Tucker** monitored Mono Lake and the streams and coordinated the Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner. This summer she is working as an Interpretive Ranger in Yosemite National Park. Thanks for all of your hard work, Erica! Project Specialist **Lynette Villagomez** maintained the Committee's social media presence and worked on membership projects. This summer, Lynette is heading north to Oregon—we wish her the best of luck! ❖

Rosanne Catron is the Committee's Office Director. Last fall, she planted bulbs from her grandfather's iris plants, and this spring she has enjoyed watching them grow in Lee Vining.



During a trip to LA in March for the Wild & Scenic Film Festival-LA (see page 25), the Mono Lake Committee staff toured the Orange County Water District's Groundwater Replenishment System facility, which included tasting the treated drinking water.



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

Terence & Donna Katsuranis of Brookfield, CT made a donation in honor of **Paul Tomascak**. **Melvin Levet** of Portland, OR gave a gift in honor of **Jan & John Le Pouvoir**. **Angela Moskow** of Albany sent a contribution in honor of **Peter Vorster**. **George Wortiska** of Mountain View made a donation in honor of **Linda Johnson**.

In memory

Laurie Buffington of Tahoe City gave a gift in memory of her father **Wilbur Vaughan**, “who loved and protected Mono Lake.” **Sharyn Denison** of Gardnerville, NV sent a contribution in memory of **Carl Denison**. **Edith Gaines** of Los Angeles gave a gift to remember her son **David** on what would have been his 65th birthday. **Lisa Hom** of Rancho Cordova made a donation “in memory of my aunt, **Esther Lum**.” **Otto Hub** of Tahoe City gave a gift “in memory of my wife **Diane Hub**.” **Christina Irvin** of Stockton sent a contribution in memory of **Karl Irvin**. **T.B. Lyons** of Honolulu, HI gave a gift in memory of **Tom Lyons**. **Carol Mathews** of Walnut Creek made donations “in loving memory of **Robert Mathews**.” **Ralph Mendershausen** of Santa Monica sent a contribution “in **Elfriede’s** name—she passed away in August 2012.” **Richard Quinn** of Encinitas gave a gift in memory of **Catherine Toft**—“my high school friend.”

Jerry Emory & Jeannie Lloyd of Mill Valley, **Nikki Nedeff** of Carmel Valley, **Henrietta Stern** of Pacific Grove, and **Peter Vorster** of Oakland made donations in memory of **Kevin Dummer**. **Lilli Miller** of Sherman

Oaks gave a gift “in loving memory of **Huell Howser**.” **Darien Raistrick** of Los Alamos, NM made a donation in memory of the “wonderful, incomparable **Jim Pence**.” We also received a gift in **Jim’s** memory from **Theodore Jackson, Jr.** of Folsom. **Scott & Claudia Hein** of Concord and **John Ranlett** of Newcastle sent contributions in memory of **Rich Stallcup**.

Mildred Bennett

“She was a great friend of Mono Lake.” —a note sent with a gift in Millie’s memory

Longtime member **Mildred Bennett** passed away in October 2012. Millie was a dedicated advocate for the preservation of Mono Lake, and sold raffle tickets to raise funds for the Mono Lake Committee as well as awareness of the impacts on the lake of water diversions to Los Angeles. From 1985–1997, Millie organized 14 fundraising trips to seven continents and the Arctic, all of which benefitted Mono Lake. We’ve received numerous donations in her memory, many with notes recounting wonderful adventures shared with her.

Donations in Mildred’s memory were sent by **Virginia Foote Anderson** of Berkeley, **Keith & Atsuko Bennett** of Palo Alto, **Ruth & Glenn Cushman** of Boulder, CO, **Alice Dekker & Laurie Salatich** of El Cerrito, **Joanne Drabek & Thor Start** of Oakland, **Linda Drey-Nightingale** of Portola Valley, **Constance Fraser** of Oakland, **John & Ann Kadyk** of Berkeley, **Kenneth & Sharon Kaufmann** of New Providence, NJ, **Sylvia Kershaw**

of Menlo Park, **Douglas Leslie** of San Francisco, **Louise Linford** of Oakland, **Thomas & Barbara Olwin** of Alamo, **Jeanne Reuter** of Kirkwood, **Anna Robinson** of Berkeley, **Lloyd & Rosemary Short** of Lake Linden, MI, **George & Madeleine Trilling** of Berkeley, and **Mary Tyson** of El Cerrito.

Wish list

Now in its 20th season, the Mono Lake Committee’s Outdoor Experiences program is looking for:

- camping equipment
- outdoor clothing
- natural history field guides

Please contact Santiago Escruceria (santiago@monolake.org) at (760) 647-6595 if you can help. ❖

Ellen King is the Committee’s Membership Coordinator. She accelerated springtime with a trip to Death Valley.

Music & Ecology Camp

Explore Mono Lake through an independent camp for instrumentalists ages 12–18 from August 4–10, 2013 in the Mono Basin. Study ecology and natural history in the Mono Basin and Sierra Nevada while horseback riding, hiking, and boating on Mono Lake. Play instruments in coached chamber groups, private lessons, and classes. For more information visit musicandecology.com.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

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Trail Chic Fashion Show

.....
July 20, 2013
at the Lee Vining
Community Center

.....
a fundraiser for the
Committee's Outdoor
Experiences Program

This year, look for bottles of **Barefoot Impression Red Blend** with Sally Gaines on the label!




barefootwine.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLENDONAMERI.COM

Tioga Pass Run September 8, 2013



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD HENS

tiogapassrun.com

Volunteer at Mono Lake!

Help make a difference for Mono Lake in a hands-on way! Free volunteer training begins in late May.

For more information contact Rose:
rose@monolake.org
or (760) 647-6595

