



MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2024

It has been a long, glorious fall season at Mono Lake this year. Warm, clear days have stretched on for weeks, lighting up the changing leaves in the canyons and enticing visitors to hike and camp long into October. Crisp nights have been enhanced by faintly visible pink auroras and a once-in-a-lifetime comet with its graceful tail, setting behind the Sierra Nevada.

On one of the few blustery days this season I ventured to South Tufa as storm clouds prepared to drop a dusting of snow on the Mono Craters. I huddled into my coat and hurried to the lakeshore to see small waves lapping at this summer’s high-tide level marked by windrows of alkali fly pupae casings. I followed the rerouted trail—moved uphill ahead of the rising lake—marveling at this new South Tufa reshaped by a higher lakeshore and brackish puddles.

But then I came around a corner with a view to the northeast and there it was—a dust storm stirred up by the wind racing across miles of exposed lakebed. Watching the shifting plumes of white dust, my elation at seeing Mono Lake’s highest level in 17 years faded.

I looked down at the waves nudging at my boots—the lake has come so far! I looked up at the dusty horizon—it’s not enough.

That’s the story this issue of the *Mono Lake Newsletter* tells. Mono Lake has come so far, and it’s not enough. We celebrate the decades of protection that have allowed the lake to rise, and we know we haven’t reached the goal yet. It’s both, at the same time—elation and frustration in the work for Mono Lake.

As you read about our work in the pages that follow, I hope you’ll reach the same conclusion I did at South Tufa on that stormy day: Let’s keep going.

—Elin Ljung, Communications Coordinator



COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBB HIRSCH

ANDREW YOUSSEF

Mono Lake rose to 6,384.2 feet above sea level in July for the first time in 17 years (see page 14), allowing for canoe tours through previously dry tufa groves.

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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The Mono Lake Decision turns 30

Historic State Water Board action halted ecosystem collapse, but lake is still only halfway to management level

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

On September 28, 1994, the California State Water Resources Control Board voted unanimously to approve Decision 1631, amending the water licenses of the City of Los Angeles in order “to establish fishery protection flows in streams tributary to Mono Lake and to protect Public Trust resources at Mono Lake and in the Mono Lake Basin.”

The crowd in the Sacramento hearing room stood in a genuine and enthusiastic ovation, a rarity for state agency decisions. Board member Marc Del Piero pronounced: “Today we saved Mono Lake.”

Remarkably, not one of the parties that participated in the hearing process that led to D1631 appealed the decision—most notably, not even the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP). D1631 provided water for the lake and streams. At the same time the Mono Lake Committee had helped to secure water solutions for Los Angeles that included conservation programs and millions of dollars in state and federal funding to develop local



Thirty years ago the State Water Board voted unanimously to save Mono Lake.

supplies. A decades-long water battle had ended with all parties agreeing to stop fighting and move forward to implement the solution.

Using science to strike the balance

Back in 1993 the State Water Board prepared an Environmental Impact Report that gathered extensive scientific information over three years covering the impacts of water diversions and how

Mono Basin resources would respond at a variety of lake levels. Forty-six days of hearings—with 125 witnesses and extensive cross examination—dug into the topics as the Board searched for a balance between urban water supply and protection of lake and stream resources.

For the streams, D1631 established a mandatory minimum flow regime that would fulfill the legal obligation to keep fish in good condition downstream of DWP’s diversion dams, correcting prior, full-flow diversions that courts had deemed illegal. The Board ordered a stream and fisheries restoration program as well, because decades of total diversions had left the streams as bare gravel washes, eliminating once-famous fisheries and causing streamside forests to collapse. The stream restoration program continues today under the leadership of independent experts and has achieved significant progress, with riparian vegetation returning and fish populations recovering.

Starting in the early 2000s a decade of focused scientific studies led to detailed science-based recommendations for a sophisticated pattern of stream ecosystem flows that mimic the natural snowmelt hydrograph. The

Los Angeles establishes Mono Lake Day

The Los Angeles City Council recognized the 30th anniversary of the California State Water Resources Control Board’s Decision 1631 by adopting a resolution establishing September 28 as Mono Lake Day.

The resolution states that “the Los Angeles City Council hereby remains steadfast in its commitment to Mono Lake and its tributaries as a part of the City’s sustainable water future and declares September 28th to be Mono Lake Day.”

Councilmembers Katy Yaroslavsky

and Tim McOsker introduced the resolution, which reaffirms the City’s support for D1631, including the restoration of the lake to a healthy level.

The resolution, plus the mayor’s decision to not increase water exports this year (see page 5), are encouraging developments that set the stage for continued collaboration between the City, the Committee, and other key parties to finish the job—and restore Mono Lake to the healthy level mandated by the State.

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Committee, DWP, California Trout and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife reached a settlement in 2013 on terms to implement these flows. They were ordered by the State Water Board in 2021 and today they are accelerating restoration. However, more work remains to be done, including monitoring and adaptive management, and construction of the essential, and now delayed, Grant Lake Reservoir outlet (see page 11).

For Mono Lake, D1631 set a sustainable long-term average management level of 6,392 feet above sea level, reducing DWP diversions that had caused the lake to fall 45 vertical feet, lose half its volume, and double in salinity. The management level will protect a host of Public Trust resources by reducing salinity so the ecosystem can thrive, improving air quality by covering exposed dry lakebed and reducing toxic dust storms, submerging the landbridge to protect the nesting California Gull colony, and providing a buffer of water to protect the lake in the face of droughts and climate change. The cultural resources of the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe will be better protected. The productivity of brine shrimp and alkali flies—the core of the Mono Lake food web—will recover, ensuring ample food for millions of nesting and migratory birds.

D1631 put limits on DWP's water

diversions where none had previously existed, and those limits were immediately effective in halting the lake's decline and worsening situation. Hydrology models show that, left unchecked, DWP's diversions would have lowered the lake another 40 feet below today's elevation, pushing salinity past the point of causing ecological collapse. Thirty years later, we can celebrate that we have Mono Lake at all thanks to the State Water Board's action to protect the Public Trust.

Promises still left to fulfill

Reflecting on D1631 today, its significance and accomplishments are clear, but it is also clear that its promise to Mono Lake remains unfulfilled. The lake has only recovered halfway to the mandated Public Trust lake level, and the serious problems that level was chosen to address—from dust storms to ecosystem impairment—remain.

The Board expected that it would take about 20 years for the lake to rise to 6,392 feet, yet Mono Lake is nine feet short and a decade overdue. Analysis and 30 years of observation confirm that the lake is stuck at this low level because of the volume of ongoing annual stream diversions.

Hydrology modeling shows that reducing water diversion volumes will allow the lake to achieve the 6,392-foot level. Modeling also shows that

changing the structure of the rules that govern stream diversions can accomplish a lot.

Working with LA to identify times of greater value for Mono Basin water can help—diversions have greater importance for the City's supply in drought years, for example, so wet year cutbacks are easier for the City to handle. Diversion cutbacks are currently assigned to fixed lake threshold elevations; moving to dynamically adjusting thresholds that rise together with the lake is a better way to lock in lake level gains as they happen and “ratchet” the lake upward to 6,392 feet more effectively (see page 6).

Fortunately, D1631 contains a provision for the current situation. It provides for the State Water Board to hold a hearing to adjust stream diversions if the lake has not recovered on schedule. Preparations for this hearing are well underway at the Committee and focus on finding water solutions for both Mono Lake and Los Angeles to ensure both can thrive.

Progress toward a hearing

Last year, at a workshop held by the State Water Board, Mono Lake Committee members and experts showed up in the hundreds and wrote letters in the thousands—communicating the urgency of the situation and asking the Board to advance the hearing process.

The State Water Board has since made Mono Lake a priority item in its workplan. And this fall the Board received the first draft of a Mono Basin hydrology model developed by the UCLA Center for Climate Science. This model will help the Board answer questions about future climate and diversion scenarios that would allow Mono Lake to reach the management level.

The wheels of state agencies can turn slowly, but they are now in motion toward a hearing on Mono Lake. While we are still awaiting word on a specific hearing date, we are heartened by the great interest in this issue shown in Los Angeles and throughout California as

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GEORGE MCCOULIKIN

In 1994, the State Water Board included a provision in Decision 1631 to hold another hearing if Mono Lake had not reached 6,392 feet on schedule. That hearing is expected in 2025.

Los Angeles chooses to help Mono Lake

Recent lake level gains retained thanks to Mayor Karen Bass choosing to not increase diversions in 2024

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

This year, in a significant change of operations, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) is moving less water out of the Mono Basin than the maximum allowed. Existing California State Water Resources Control Board rules allow for 16,000 acre-feet of water export due to 2023's dramatic lake level rise, but DWP has planned—for one year—to keep its export at the 4,500 acre-foot amount allowed last year.

Due to this critical action, Mono Lake will start next summer a quarter of a foot higher than it otherwise would have. Reducing the impact of diversions is precisely what is needed to raise Mono Lake and solve a multitude of issues, including air-quality-violating dust storms off the exposed lakebed, predation of the California Gull nesting colony, and the currently impaired productivity of brine shrimp and alkali flies, which limits food supply for millions of nesting and migratory birds.

Over the lake's 45,000-acre surface, maintaining those three vertical inches of water is significant, and represents tangible progress toward the mandated lake level of 6,392 feet above sea level. Over the past 30 years it has become clear that we must preserve lake level gains when they happen—such as the five-foot lake level rise in 2023. Ultimately, updated science-based diversion rules that dynamically respond to lake recovery will be critical to preventing the erosion of gains and raise the lake to 6,392 feet in a reasonable timeframe.

Mayor Bass makes a historic choice

Los Angeles is a big city and many supported this action. Thanks and credit go to Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass for her leadership, as well as to the City Council, agency leaders, and community leaders for speaking up for environmental sustainability, and to citywide investment in water resilience, including stormwater capture and localized water conservation programs. The action follows a request in March by the Mono Lake Committee and a diverse coalition of supporters urging the city to not increase diversions.

Following the announcement by DWP, the Mono Lake Committee and community leaders wrote to Mayor Bass, “September marks the 30th anniversary of the City’s agreement with the Mono Lake Committee to implement the State Water Board’s decision to raise Mono Lake to the protection level



For 2024, DWP has planned to keep its Mono Basin water export to 4,500 acre-feet instead of increasing to the maximum allowed, which means Mono Lake will start next summer a quarter of a foot higher than it otherwise would have.

of 6,392 feet above sea level. Through your leadership and vision, we can jointly celebrate this historic environmental milestone and reaffirm our City’s commitment to a shared sustainable water future—for Mono Lake and Los Angeles.”

“Mayor Bass has been clear that building a greener Los Angeles is one of her top priorities and protecting water resources certainly falls into that,” said Nancy Sutley, Deputy Mayor of Energy & Sustainability.

Mark Gold, Director of Water Scarcity Solutions for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, “I think it’s the first major environmental accomplishment for water in the Bass administration.”

DWP confirmed the decision in its Annual Operations Plan for the Mono Basin. However, a caveat provides for a November review of the 4,500-acre-foot commitment, and the Committee is closely communicating with the Mayor and DWP to maintain the plan as-is. As this *Newsletter* goes to press, the voluntary 4,500 acre-foot export plan remains in place.

The State Water Board still plans to examine the problem of Mono Lake’s low level in a hearing expected to take place in 2025. The flaws in the water diversion rules, now obvious after 30 years of implementation, mean that Mono Lake is a decade late and nine feet short of achieving the healthy lake requirement. Taking action to reduce diversions suggests that a solution and a shared sustainable water future—for Mono Lake and Los Angeles—is within reach. ❖

Successful hydrology modeling collaboration

Joint work with DWP investigated effects of water diversions on Mono Lake's level

by Maureen McGlinchy

The Mono Lake Committee and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) have a long history of legal conflict over Mono Lake. But there's also a lesser-known record of successful collaboration over the years. In the spring of 2023, a new collaborative effort began when Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin and Board Members Martha Davis and Tom Soto met with Los Angeles Deputy Mayor of Energy & Sustainability Nancy Sutley and then-DWP General Manager Martin Adams at Los Angeles City Hall.

The Committee briefed the mayor's office on the state of Mono Lake, notably that under the current diversion rules, the lake's rise has repeatedly stalled at the 6,384-foot to 6,385-foot elevation over the past 25 years, eight feet below the level mandated by the California State Water Resources Control Board's Decision 1631 in 1994. Reflecting on this problematic trend, Deputy Mayor Sutley observed that there must be more options for the future than simply "diversions-on" or "diversions-off." Could the two parties investigate diversion scenarios that would fall somewhere in between?

A team of hydrology modeling experts from DWP, the Committee, and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife launched a collaborative modeling effort. Staff from the State Water Board were invited to observe the process. The goal of the collaboration was to develop information about alternate stream diversion scenarios by employing a Mono Basin-specific hydrology model to evaluate the effects of adjustments to the current diversion rules on lake level and achievement of the D1631 management level (see page 3). From September 2023 to April 2024, an 18-person technical team came together for a dozen meetings to brainstorm criteria, discuss model runs, and dissect the results from all points of view. Additionally, a subset of the technical experts met between the larger meetings to keep progress rolling.

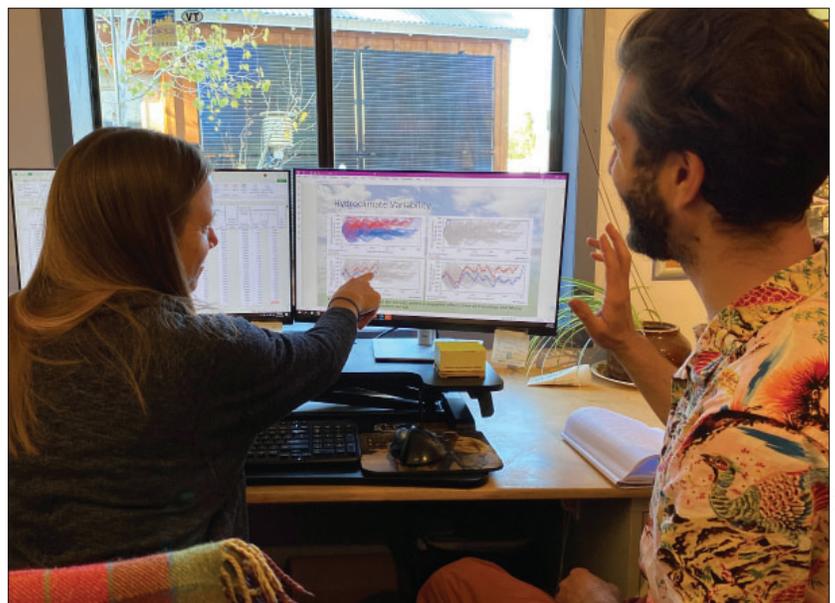
Constructive dialogue and willingness to study any party's proposal led to the development of ten stream diversion scenarios for analysis. DWP initially suggested reducing exports only in wetter years, when LA's water demand is more easily met by other sources. The Committee brought forward the idea of "bookends" to understand the full range of projected lake level attainment timeframes within the assumed hydroclimate. In this concept, Deputy Mayor Sutley's "diversions-

on" represents the current diversion rules as one bookend; the "diversions-off" bookend is stopping stream diversions altogether. By using the bookends approach, different scenarios are compared to the baseline fastest possible lake rise scenario in which all runoff reaches the lake.

The agreed-upon set of scenarios formulated stream diversion rules in a variety of ways—decreasing the total volume of export, restricting export in wetter years, increasing the thresholds at which DWP is allowed greater export, or reducing export over time. The Committee advocated for the integration of "dynamic rules" into the diversion criteria. Unlike the current rules, dynamic rules would automatically adapt to preserve lake level gains when they happen, and further restrict export allowances if an upward trend in lake level is not achieved over time. Unfortunately, the established hydrology model the group utilized was not designed to incorporate these new concepts, so dynamic rules could not be fully evaluated. The Mono Lake Committee's Vorster Model (see Summer 2022 *Mono Lake Newsletter*) can incorporate dynamic rules and our staff continues to investigate this concept.

The goal of the collaborative modeling effort was not to negotiate but rather to develop information and better understand the magnitude or type of adjustments required to put the lake on track to reach the management level of 6,392

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The Mono Lake Committee took part in a collaborative technical hydrology modeling effort with DWP and others to investigate stream diversion scenarios.

feet. Takeaways from the collaboration include:

Stream diversions affect lake level. In February 2023, the State Water Board held a workshop about conditions at Mono Lake (see Winter & Spring 2023 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). At the time, DWP asserted that its current volume of diversions does not impact lake level and that lake fluctuations are entirely the result of hydroclimate conditions. After the collaborative modeling work, it was accepted by all parties that current diversions *do* have an effect on lake level and that adjusting these diversions produces different lake level outcomes over time.

Scenarios exist that will raise the lake more quickly. The collaborative modeling exercise incorporated the last 50 years of runoff and climate data, including the two significant droughts starting in 2012 and 2020. Even with these and other dry periods, there are some diversion criteria that raise the lake more quickly than others. The more effective criteria require a significant reduction in annual stream diversions. (Note that the groundwater export from the Mono Craters Tunnel cannot be adjusted so Los Angeles is guaranteed approximately 5,000 acre-feet of Mono Basin water every year under any scenario (see Winter & Spring 2022 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).)

Differences between diversion criteria outcomes become more pronounced during dry periods. DWP likes to point out that a couple back-to-back epic winters could bring the lake up to the management level quickly, even under the current export rules—an outcome all parties would celebrate. But it has already been 30 years, and Mono Lake can't wait additional decades for that rare occurrence. Cycles of dry and normal runoff years extend the time it takes for the lake to achieve the management level, and year-by-year, there is a cumulative effect on lake level that differs between higher-

export and lower-export scenarios. Diversion criteria that are successful even in dry climate patterns ensure resilient lake levels under any future conditions.

The collaboration wrapped up in May of this year with a presentation of a consensus report to representatives of the collaborating parties, as well as representatives from the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe and California Trout. The information developed is already shaping the path forward and potential further collaborative work.

State Water Board staff and consultants participated in the modeling analysis and listened to the dialogue between the parties. The Board plans to hold a hearing to consider changes to stream diversion rules, which the Committee expects in 2025, and there is already evidence that productive ideas from the collaboration have informed the Board's planning.

Throughout the process the Committee was reminded of this important point: The lake's journey to the management level matters. Every foot of lake elevation gain improves conditions at Mono Lake. Analysis should not focus only on the length of time each diversion scenario requires to reach the 6,392-foot management level. Even when dry conditions slow the lake's progress toward the management level, the scenarios that allow the lake to rise higher during that time mitigate air quality issues, facilitate healthier brine shrimp and alkali fly populations, and protect nesting California Gulls.

In October the consensus report was jointly presented to Deputy Mayor Sutley and was well-received, with appreciation for the group's work and interest in continued collaboration. ❖

Maureen McGlinchy is the Committee's Hydrology Modeling & Membership Specialist. She has a new puppy and a new house. She looks forward to getting settled in with both this winter.

people are realizing that Mono Lake still needs saving.

Today, as in 1994, the Mono Lake Committee is dedicated to helping Los Angeles secure more water conservation measures. LA leaders have already made significant commitments to rapidly implementing environmentally responsible local supply projects such as stormwater capture, turf replacement, and water recycling.

The people of LA are calling for the same solutions. In front of the LA City Council Energy & Environment Committee, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice leader mark! Lopez talked about "the imperative to stop relying on imported water" from Mono Lake for the sake of Los Angeles.

Seeking joint solutions, Mono Lake Committee and DWP staff engaged in a collaborative hydrology modeling effort at the request of Los Angeles Deputy Mayor of Energy & Sustainability Nancy Sutley (see page 6).

Although there are many signs that DWP's attorneys

are preparing to contest any water diversion changes at a hearing, we appreciate further productive Mono Lake collaboration with City leaders. Mayor Karen Bass chose to not increase diversions this year (see page 5), in response to a request from the Committee and a coalition of Los Angeles community leaders. And the City Council honored the anniversary of D1631 by proclaiming Mono Lake Day in Los Angeles (see page 3).

Thirty years ago, the State Water Board acted to protect Mono Lake for the people of California and to preserve and restore the remarkable ecosystem we know and love. This anniversary is a moment to celebrate a great victory for Mono Lake—and to reaffirm our commitment to working to implement Decision 1631's promise of protection into a lake lapping at the healthy 6,392-foot elevation shoreline. True success for Mono Lake comes when D1631's expectations become landscape realities, with a thriving ecosystem, safe bird habitat, clean air, and a secure future. ❖

Defending the Public Trust, 30 years on

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

In September the Mono Lake Committee hosted members and supporters in Lee Vining to celebrate Mono Lake and present the Committee's Defender of the Trust Award. The award honors individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to championing Mono Lake and advocating for the Public Trust.

This year was special: the event took place on the 30th anniversary—to the day—of the California State Water Resources Control Board's Decision 1631 establishing the 6,392-foot protection mandate for Mono Lake (see page 3). And so too was the award recipient: Marc Del Piero, who served as the attorney member of the State Water Board from 1992 to 1999 and ran the lengthy Mono Lake hearing that led to D1631.

A remarkable State Water Board hearing

The hearing 30 years ago lasted for 46 days and many nights. It involved 14 formal parties, 17 attorneys, and more than 125 witnesses. Over 1,000 exhibits were introduced into the evidentiary record, and the transcripts ran to 30,000 pages.

This year's Defender of the Trust honor went to Del Piero because he led a meticulous, deliberate, and fair hearing process. Such precision was necessary for the first-of-its-kind effort to identify and protect Mono Lake's Public Trust values. The hearing had to answer many questions: What was the full roster of Public Trust values, from ecosystem health to air quality? How were diverse impacts to be measured? When, specifically, was harm inflicted, say, on brine shrimp, and at what lake levels was that impact acceptably reduced? Could lake values be protected while recognizing legitimate needs for water in the City of Los Angeles?

Mono Lake, its ecosystem, wildlife, and Rush, Lee Vining, Walker, and Parker creeks—they were in such a remote part of California and so long ago deemed of little value compared to Los Angeles Department of Water & Power water

diversions—in Del Piero's hearing room they all finally got their day to shine.

The scope and depth of the work remain legendary at the State Water Board. When it was complete, the Board achieved a first in California: the revision of a long-established water right of the City of Los Angeles to include requirements to restore the fisheries of the tributary streams to good condition and to restore Mono Lake to health to protect Public Trust values.

The hearing provided the information needed to balance competing factors with integrity. And not incidentally, although all parties accepted D1631, the record was ready to stand up to the litigation that had been expected to follow.

Del Piero's advice for the upcoming hearing

At the September event Del Piero spoke to the audience, which included attorneys, witnesses, public speakers, and Committee staff who were present in his hearing room three decades prior.

Acknowledging the success of D1631 in halting the destruction of Mono Lake, Del Piero spoke of the Board's expectation that the lake would be at the mandated healthy level by now, not 50% short. In their decision, the Board linked stream diversion amounts to lake level, using the best modeling at the time. But they were also farsighted enough to create a safeguard by committing the Board to a hearing if things unfolded differently than expected—that hearing is now expected in 2025.

Del Piero also highlighted the seriousness of the work ahead, underscoring the attorney smarts, science testimony, staff work, good problem-solving, and old-fashioned luck that will be required to ensure the lake level mandate is achieved.

"The price of the preservation of Mono Lake, its tributary streams, the ecosystems that we're here celebrating tonight," Del Piero made clear, "is vigilance." ❖



Marc Del Piero (upper right) led the State Water Board through an intensive and thorough hearing about Mono Lake in 1993 and 1994.



Del Piero (left) received this year's Defender of the Trust Award because of the meticulous, deliberate, and fair hearing process that he led.

DWP surveys Mono Basin groundwater

by Teri Tracy

Unusual helicopter activity around Mono Lake drew attention last April when the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) surveyed Mono Basin groundwater resources using the airborne electromagnetic method (AEM). AEM, analogous to an MRI for the ground's subsurface, measures responses to signals sent from a large and highly visible hexagonal frame carried beneath a helicopter.

Other recent AEM projects in California have been taxpayer-funded and support the goals of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, with resulting data made publicly available.

In contrast, DWP funded this AEM project, and the future availability of data is unclear. DWP has said, "the survey will provide LADWP with valuable insights that will improve the hydrogeologic model of Mono Lake, which is vital for preparation for the State Water Resources Control Board hearing pertaining to LADWP's water rights license."

The Mono Lake Committee, also in preparation for the still unscheduled State Water Board hearing, is inquiring about DWP's potential use of the data and will continue to provide public interest updates. ❖



GEORGE MCCOY/MLC

DWP's groundwater survey helicopter flights drew considerable local attention last spring.

Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area turns 40



EIM/JLJ

September 28, 2024 was the 40th anniversary of the designation of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, an important part of Mono Lake's protection. The Scenic Area is 118,000 acres of land surrounding Mono Lake that is managed by the Inyo National Forest with an emphasis on protecting "geologic, ecologic, and cultural resources" and providing recreational and interpretive facilities. The Scenic Area was one of the earliest recognitions of the Public Trust values of the Mono Basin, coming just two years after the establishment of the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. A public celebration marked the occasion in September on the back patio of the Scenic Area Visitor Center with an afternoon of speakers who had been involved with the Scenic Area's founding, the building of the Visitor Center, and who continue to steward the Scenic Area today. To see a video of the event, go to monolake.org/scenicareaspeakers.

Remembering F. Bruce Dodge, consequential Mono Lake attorney

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Bruce Dodge, lead attorney for the Mono Lake Committee and Audubon in the Mono Lake Public Trust lawsuit and State Water Board proceedings, passed away in July 2024. Bruce successfully argued that California's Public Trust doctrine requires Los Angeles' water rights to include requirements for Mono Lake's protection, a foundation of the effort to save Mono Lake.

Bruce began his 45 years of involvement with Mono Lake back in 1979. A partner at the law firm of Morrison & Foerster, he launched a *pro bono* case that argued the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) was violating the state constitution with its water diversions because of a lengthy roster of impacts that conflicted with the state's obligation to protect the Public Trust at Mono Lake.

It was a novel argument that required not just legal acumen but also mastering a vast amount of biological, scientific, hydrologic, and water engineering information. The case took Bruce and Mono Lake to the California Supreme Court, and in 1983 the Public Trust argument he made carried the day, and transformed water law in the process.

Bruce had won the principle, but the Public Trust decision revealed that chapters of the story had yet to be written. How much water would go to the lake to protect the Public Trust? Bruce led the charge on these next steps, which would prove to take decades.

In 1994, to implement the Public Trust doctrine, the Mono Lake legal effort moved to the California State Water Resources Control Board. Years of environmental studies and extensive

“The public trust,” the California Supreme Court wrote, “is an affirmation of the duty of the state to protect the people’s common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands, and tidelands.”

briefing laid the groundwork for 46 days of hearings in Sacramento. Bruce charted the path through the voluminous material, guiding the decision makers to what mattered. He enjoyed the opportunity to highlight the Supreme Court's Public Trust decision—his earlier victory—as grounds for action.

After the momentous State Water Board decision (see page 3) established a mandatory lake level to protect the Public Trust resources of the lake, Bruce continued to work closely with the Committee team of staff and scientists to ensure implementation of the stream and lake restoration requirements.

I feel fortunate that I had an opportunity to work with Bruce in the years after the State Water Board decision. His early-morning work ethic still inspires me—he'd have hours of accomplishments completed and be waiting at 8:00AM, often impatiently, with comments on the most recent document.

When I last spoke with Bruce, I was seeking advice on our current predicament of the lake level mandate being unfulfilled, and overdue. We discussed the situation, and I remember being struck by Bruce's simple clarity of vision. Looking back, this was emblematic of his approach across four and a half decades: turn a vast amount of information into a simple, common-sense case. Communicate the problem—and a solution—at a high level. Keep it simple. Keep moving forward. Persist.

Forty-plus years later we are still implementing Bruce Dodge's Mono Lake Public Trust victory, which first changed the legal landscape of water law, and then changed the conditions of Los Angeles' water rights, halting the destruction of Mono Lake. Now—a bit too slowly, I know he'd observe—Bruce's success is becoming realized out in the landscape as the lake rises and recovers. And yet it is only 50% of the way to the State Water Board's required level, and a new hearing to address the matter looms.

Thanks to Bruce Dodge, Mono Lake survives today. At his memorial, his family shared that Bruce considered his work for Mono Lake and the Public Trust doctrine to be “by far” the most consequential accomplishments of his career. Here at the Committee we recommit that, in memory of Bruce, we will get up early, get quickly to the point, and work hard to resolve that unfinished Mono Lake business. ❖



Bruce Dodge, right, during the State Water Board hearing in 1994, with Morrison & Foerster attorney Patrick Flinn.

Policy notes

by Elin Ljung and Bartshé Miller

Lee Vining streetscape project update

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is continuing to plan for the Lee Vining Pavement Rehabilitation Project, a major project that will change Highway 395 through town from a five-lane road to a three-lane road, add bike lanes, improve sidewalks and curbs, upgrade drainage systems, replace roadway pavement, and improve safety. The project is moving forward in the context of Caltrans’ “complete streets” design approach, implementing elements that “improve the quality of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and that improve safety for all users of transportation facilities.”

Over the summer Caltrans met with businesses and property owners, including the Mono Lake Committee, to discuss project details for when construction begins in spring 2026. Construction had originally been planned for summer 2025 (see Summer 2022 *Mono Lake Newsletter*), but the Lee Vining Public Utilities District will be replacing the water and sewer mains under the highway before the project begins.

A timeline, maps, and the project’s final environmental document are available to see online at monolake.org/leeviningstreetscape.



Complicating an already complex situation at Grant Lake Reservoir is a broken rotovalve, located 80 feet deep under the building visible in the distance.

Grant Lake Reservoir infrastructure in revised planning phase

Rush Creek restoration continues to be delayed as construction of the long-awaited modification to Grant Lake Reservoir is complicated by the replacement of the 88-year-old broken rotovalve buried 80 feet below the edge of the reservoir within the aqueduct intake tunnel (see Summer 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). Replacing the broken valve is a major undertaking and is now, along with the outlet modification of the reservoir, wrapped up in a much larger project that requires safety improvements. The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) is proposing a complex project that will allow for the

eventual replacement of the rotovalve infrastructure after the construction of buried siphons along the spillway.

The project schedule proposes multiple design and construction phases that must be carefully synchronized to allow for water to pass out of the reservoir to Rush Creek during the work. The project includes an upgrade of the existing spillway, temporary bypass pumps and flows to the return ditch over the nearby moraine, sealing of the intake tunnel to isolate the rotovalve, construction of siphons along the spillway, and, potentially, the complete excavation of the 80-foot-deep intake tunnel and replacement of the rotovalve and valve housing. The approval of the California Department of Water Resources Division of Safety of Dams is integral throughout the project design and phasing.

The former proposed modification using Langemann gates may now be replaced with siphons, which could deliver required high flows to Rush Creek while also functioning as a mid-level outlet for the reservoir during the replacement of the rotovalve and during work on the spillway. The Committee will be engaged to ensure that any new design will reliably deliver the required Stream Ecosystem Flows consistent with the 2013 Stream Restoration Agreement with DWP (see



Among other improvements, Caltrans’ Lee Vining streetscape project will change the highway through town from five driving lanes to three, as shown in the rendering above.

Continued on page 25

Experience Ambientalia students travel across the hemisphere

by Ryan Garrett

After a year of planning, organizing, and fundraising, students from Laguna Mar Chiquita and Mono Lake followed the migration path of the Wilson's Phalaropes between the two lakes by participating in an international exchange program dedicated to saline lake conservation and education as part of the Experience Ambientalia program.

Launched in 2021 by Fundación Líderes de Ansenusa (FLA) and the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network, Experience Ambientalia aims to engage youth in conserving saline lakes (see Winter & Spring 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

In June five students, one teacher, and four FLA staff members from Laguna Mar Chiquita came to Mono Lake and joined six Lee Vining High School students, one teacher, and Mono Lake Committee staff at the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center (OEC). During the week, students cooked and ate meals together, learned about the natural and human history of the Mono Basin, saw stars in a dark night sky, played in the snow, camped out, and made real-life connections.

The students also attended the

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, where they observed birds, butterflies, and wildflowers. The group presented at the Chautauqua, receiving a standing ovation for their bilingual presentation on saline lake conservation.

A month later the students from Mono Lake traveled to Laguna Mar Chiquita. During this leg of the exchange, they explored the region, visited communities around the lake, and engaged in conservation activities.

One of the key lessons in the exchange was understanding the differences between the two lakes. Laguna Mar Chiquita is far larger, the size of 14 Mono Lakes, and its tributary streams face challenges due to both pollution and unregulated water diversions.

Both lakes share a common thread of committed local communities dedicated to their conservation. The students from Mono Lake were inspired by their Argentinian peers and environmental advocates working to protect their home ecosystems. They learned about a range of initiatives, including ecological restoration projects, wildlife monitoring with Motus towers, and youth-led stream cleanups.

Beyond the invaluable environmental educational components of the trip, students were also immersed in Argentine culture. They rode horses, tried traditional food like empanadas and asado, and went on a boat tour where they saw flamingos and danced to reggaetón.

The week concluded with a forum for environmental leaders where students discussed collaborative projects to benefit both lakes. They created threat maps for Wilson's Phalaropes and designed conservation initiatives to protect the species. In a symbolic act of unity, the students from both countries signed an agreement to continue their partnership and work toward preserving saline lakes including Laguna Mar Chiquita, Mono Lake, and Great Salt Lake.

The students and their growth in this program are inspirational, and the exchange was a significant accomplishment for youth education and saline lake conservation collaboration. ❖

To keep up with this year's class of Experience Ambientalia students, visit monolake.org/ea.



In June, students and leaders from Argentina arrived at Mono Lake for a week of camping, birding, learning, and connecting with each other.



In July, students and leaders from Lee Vining made the journey to Laguna Mar Chiquita in Argentina to complete the exchange.



2024 OEC groups

This year the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center (OEC) will host more than 20 groups. Students learn about the Mono Basin/Los Angeles watershed and balanced solutions that meet the water needs of people and the environment through 3–5 day education programs, muscle-powered outdoor activities, and stewardship projects that help restore the Mono Basin watershed.

- Chicano & Chicana Studies Department, California State University, Northridge ♦
- Communities for a Better Environment, Huntington Park ♦
- Dorsey High School OEC reunion, Los Angeles ♦
- East Los Angeles Performing Arts Magnet, East Los Angeles ♦
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, City of Commerce ♦
- Experience Ambientalia, Lee Vining (see page 12)
- Fundación Líderes de Ansenusa, Miramar, Argentina (see page 12)
- Generation Green, Pasadena
- Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles ♦
- Inyo County Office of Education, Bishop
- Kid City, Los Angeles
- Monterey Bay Charter School, Monterey
- ONEgeneration, Van Nuys
- Pacoima Beautiful, Pacoima ♦
- Peace Camp Network, Los Angeles
- Port of Los Angeles High School, Los Angeles ♦
- Renaissance School, Oakland
- Sierra Expeditionary Learning School, Truckee
- The Action Project, Los Angeles

♦ denotes groups that have been coming to the OEC for more than ten years



Program's 30th year

After 30 years of OEC trips, the relationships between the Mono Lake Committee, students, and community groups have grown. OEC students and group leaders are actively advocating for Mono Lake—talking to city leadership and showing decision makers in Los Angeles that taking action to protect Mono Lake is also protecting their home communities in LA.

For more information about this longstanding program, contact OCE Manager Santiago Escruceria (santiago@monolake.org).

MONO BASIN
Outdoor
Education Center



Our mission is to build understanding and appreciation for the Mono Basin/Los Angeles watershed through education programs and muscle-powered recreational activity; to demonstrate that balanced solutions are possible for meeting the water needs of people and the environment; and to kindle stewardship through service projects that restore and improve the quality of the Mono Basin watershed.

monolake.org/education
facebook.com/mono.oec

PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA

Streamwatch

Rush Creek gets by on luck this year

by Greg Reis

Grant Lake Reservoir was nearly full on April 1st thanks to an extremely wet 2023 runoff year and limited water exports by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) due to wet-year capacity constraints in the aqueduct (see Summer 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The high reservoir level was essential to Rush Creek receiving a healthy peak flow this year.

Rush Creek flows are currently limited to Grant's diminished 175 cubic feet per second (cfs) release capacity due to the failed rotovalve (see page 11), plus any water that happens to spill over the spillway when the reservoir is full. Relying on spills has been the only way to meet Rush Creek's springtime peak flow requirements in wetter years while DWP has delayed construction of the new outlet agreed to in 2013 and

required by the State Water Board in 2021. But now, peak flow requirements in all years can only be met when the reservoir spills.

This year's Normal year-type peak flow requirement was 380 cfs for 3 days, more than double what DWP can deliver through the broken rotovalve. Luckily, reduced impairment at the upstream reservoirs, combined with fortuitous timing of snowmelt runoff, meant more water reached Grant during the natural peak runoff period and resulted in 7 days of Grant inflow greater than 380 cfs. As required, diversions from Lee Vining Creek to Grant were paused during the spring peak flow of 259 cfs, but then resumed and helped to keep the reservoir level high enough to spill for 83 days. Thanks to this spill and lucky for Rush Creek, flows exceeded the mandated 380 cfs for a total of 14 days,

with a peak flow of 501 cfs below the dam and 569 cfs in the bottomlands.

A slow reduction of runoff following the peak occurred and could also be considered lucky, and potentially resulted in good cottonwood regeneration this year in areas where high flows in 2023 prepared a suitable seedbed. There is a spot in the Channel 8 area of the Rush Creek bottomlands that looks like a cottonwood sapling farm due to beaver activity, recent wet years, and local channel changes. Unfortunately, most of Rush Creek is dominated by bush-size willows where there is little cottonwood regeneration. The restoration of Rush Creek's multi-story cottonwood forest is dependent on high flows, which currently are dependent on luck, and the 2023 and 2024 runoff years have been a lucky combination. ❖

Lakewatch

Mono Lake reaches highest level in 17 years!

by Greg Reis

On July 8th, Mono Lake peaked at 6,384.2 feet above sea level, the highest it has been since 2007. Waves lapped at shorelines that hadn't been inundated in 17 years. Vegetation has spread on some stretches of the lakebed during those years, especially on the western shores, and with a reduced bathtub ring of alkali playa the lake looked better than it has in decades. Flooded vegetation is especially good habitat for alkali flies. The entire ecosystem—water quality, air quality, lake-fringing wetlands, and stream deltas—also benefits from a higher lake level.

After Mono Lake's level had already peaked in June, a surprising additional tenth of a foot rise—when flows were lower, the weather was hotter, and there was no measured rain—was another stroke of luck in a lucky year (see above). But nature's "luck" goes both ways—in August the lake dropped about half a foot, more than any other August since 1968.

We can't manage Mono Lake with just luck. Additional limits on surface water exports are needed to preserve Mono Lake's gains and bring it to its 6,392-foot management level. In May, the City of Los Angeles announced it would not increase diversions in 2024 (as allowed by current State Water Board rules) beyond 4,500 acre-feet, but left the door open to revisit the decision in November and take more water this year (see page 5). Mono Lake will be

a quarter of a foot higher if this year's voluntary surface water export reduction remains in place.

On October 16th the lake was 0.2 feet higher than a year ago—6,383.3'. With a dry winter, the lake could drop 0.25 feet by next April. With a wet winter, it could rise over a foot. And with Mono Lake the same level as it was 17 years ago, if we have another 17-year period like we just experienced, there is only one way to ensure Mono Lake rises—the State Water Board must limit DWP's stream diversions to a significantly lower amount than they have been over the last 17 years to preserve the wet-year gains in lake level. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He climbed Tioga Peak at sunrise during the Mars-Jupiter conjunction in August.

6,417'

6,392'

6,383.3'

6,372'

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



GEORGE MCQUILKIN

Paddling on Mono Lake is always a memorable experience, navigating between tufa towers reaching for the sky and their rippling reflections that spread across the silvery lake surface. One warm morning in August the clear waters of the lake delighted with underwater sights: plumes of brine shrimp, newly submerged grasses, and tufa stretching two, ten, twenty feet and more down to their spring-fed roots on the lake bottom.

This year's paddles evoke memories of years past, when the lake was last this high. Back in 2008, I paddled reporter Huell Howser around South Tufa and across the clear, recently risen waters of the lake, pointing downward to the newly submerged foot trail beneath us. That, I offered, is a visual marker of the

lake healing. And yet within a few years the lake had fallen, and visitors once again kicked up dust on that path.

It is all a reminder that as we celebrate progress on the Mono Lake restoration journey, we must be ever-active in our advocacy work to bring new ideas and dynamic approaches to diversion management. That is how we ensure gains are not lost, lake level rise is retained, and submerged former lakebed remains beneath the shimmering surface of the lake. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He has enjoyed kayak trips on the lake this year with his youngest daughter, who is measuring water clarity for a school science project.

Benchmarks



GOOGLE EARTH

December 1994: Three months after the State Water Board issued Decision 1631 requiring Mono Lake to rise to 6,392 feet above sea level, the lake stood very low at 6,374.5 feet.



COPERNICUS SENTINEL DATA 2024

June 2024: Mono Lake had risen to 6,384.1 feet above sea level. Much more dust-emitting lakebed on the east shore is covered and the nesting islands are better protected.



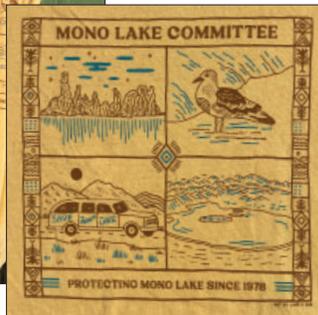
MONO LAKE COMMITTEE INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE Fall Catalog

See more
product
photos
online at
MONOLAKE.
ORG/SHOP



SCENES OF MONO LAKE T-SHIRT

This golden yellow T-shirt worn by Diego and Caelen with art by Land & She features a grid of four scenes on the back of the shirt including a tufa grove, a California Gull, a car ride through the Eastern Sierra, and an aerial view of Mono Lake. The front of the shirt



BACK DETAIL



FRONT DETAIL

features a small tufa graphic with “Mono Lake Committee” printed above. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive. Scenes of Mono Lake T-shirt, 100% cotton, unisex sizes S-XXL: \$35.00*

“MONO LAKE, IT’S WORTH SAVING”

LONG-SLEEVE SHIRT

This sky blue long-sleeve shirt modeled by Mara sports the classic graphic, “Mono Lake, it’s worth saving.” Hand-drawn in the 1970s, it features tufa groves, Paoha and Negit islands, and clouds forming over the mountainous backdrop of the Mono Basin. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

“Mono Lake, it’s worth saving” long-sleeve shirt, 100% cotton, unisex sizes S-XXL: \$30.00



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE LOGO TRUCKER HAT

This sporty hat worn by Juniper is stylish and will look great on any trail walk or keep the sun out of your eyes while birding or gardening. Wear this hat, in a gray-brown-cream color scheme, to show your love for Mono Lake or use it as a thinking cap to come up with great ideas! *Mono Lake Committee exclusive. Mono Lake Committee logo trucker hat, unisex, one size, adjustable: \$25.00*

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



MONO LAKE BLACK TEA BLEND

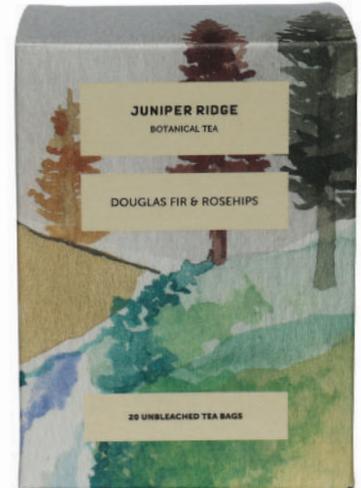
Wrap your fingers around a warm mug of specially blended black currant Earl Grey tea this winter. This custom tea blend is reminiscent of the autumnal currant harvest and the poconip fog at Mono Lake. This *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* tea comes in a 100-gram tin of loose leaf tea or 20 pyramid sachets.

Mono Lake black tea blend, please specify loose leaf or pyramid sachets: \$24.00

HERBAL TEA BLEND

This tea is for those who are seeking a restful, slow moment. Sip on a rejuvenating and calming blend of Douglas fir needles and rose hips, which have been sustainably sourced from the northern coast of California. Drinking this tea is a delightful way to start a wintry morning or unwind in the evening.

Herbal tea blend, 20 unbleached tea bags: \$15.00



TOPOGRAPHIC MAP EARRINGS

Handcrafted and made with Sierra sunlight, these cyanotype art earrings depict topographic lines of beloved Paoha and Negit islands—one on each earring. This *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* was specially designed by local artist Kali McKeown. Each earring set is unique and one-of-a-kind.

Topographic map earrings, 1" diameter round: \$32.00



KINGFISHER IN THE SNOW HOLIDAY CARD SET

The Belted Kingfisher's rattling calls are often heard along the beaver ponds and creeks near Mono Lake. In the art on these cards by artist Molly Hashimoto, one can almost hear the faint rattle muffled by falling snow. "Season's Greetings" is printed in red inside each card.

Kingfisher in the Snow holiday card set, 12 cards with envelopes, 7"x 5": \$16.95



SPRING SNOWFALL



DRESSED FOR WINTER

WOODCUT PRINT NOTECARDS

These cards by Millie Whipplesmith Plank celebrate snow, which becomes the very water that flows into Mono Lake. This artwork was originally produced by carving a flat wooden plate, rolling ink over the surface, and pressing the image onto paper with the process repeated for each color. Choose from the following blank-inside cards or grab a few of each: Spring Snowfall or Dressed for Winter.

Woodcut print notecards, individually sold, envelope included, please specify design, 6"x 4": \$6.00



BRINE SHRIMP ORNAMENT

This ornament serves as a festive tribute to Mono Lake's endemic brine shrimp. Hang this ornament in your home as a shiny reminder of this iconic Mono Lake species. This *Mono Lake Committee exclusive* is available in silver and gold.
Brine shrimp ornament, 3" tall, please specify color: \$12.50

MONO LAKE ORNAMENT

Enjoy John Muir Laws' illustration of the iconic birds of Mono Lake. A tufa grove is featured in the center of this stainless-steel ornament, which is layered with an epoxy coating.

Mono Lake Committee exclusive.
Mono Lake ornament, 3" tall: \$10.00



ON-THE-GO PAINTING KIT

For little and big kids alike, this portable watercolor paint set is there when creativity strikes. The set comes in a small wooden box and includes a brush, eight paint colors, a pipette, and watercolor paper.

On-the-go painting kit, 5" x 4" x 1½": \$18.00

WILDLIFE FINGER PUPPETS

Adorn your fingers with some of California's darling wildlife species. These puppets are great for fireside shows and small enough to fit in pockets for outdoor play. Choose between river otter, black bear, chickadee, or Great-horned Owl.

Wildlife finger puppets, please specify animal: \$11.00



PIKA PLUSH

This adorable pika looks just like one you would see on a hike in the High Sierra. It is our best-selling children's item and will warm anyone's heart.

Pika plush, 5½" tall: \$17.00

See all the products featured in this catalog and more in full color online at MONOLAKE.ORG/SHOP.

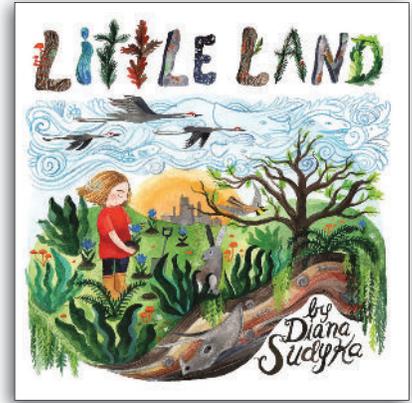
order at monolake.org/shop or (760) 647-6595

LITTLE LAND

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY DIANA SUDYKA

This is a book about the splendor of the earth and its provisions and how environmental changes caused by humans can imperil what we love. It invites children ages 4–8 to care for our surroundings in big and little ways and comfortingly suggests that humans have the power to make positive differences.

Little Land, hardcover, 48 pages, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 10½" x 10½": \$18.99



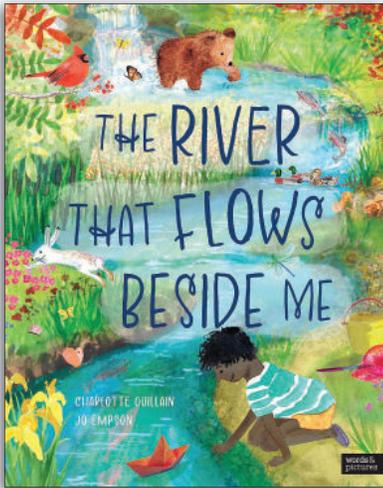
THE RIVER THAT FLOWS BESIDE ME

WRITTEN BY CHARLOTTE GUILLAIN,

ILLUSTRATED BY JO EMPSON

In this whimsical, brightly colored, pop-out book, children can explore the water cycle, ecosystem functions, and various habitats in colorful bits that are easy to grasp and absorb. This inviting picture book with beautiful watercolor illustrations is sure to delight children ages 4–8.

The River That Flows Beside Me, hardcover, 20 pages, Words & Pictures, 12¾" x 9¾": \$26.00



GRANNY REX

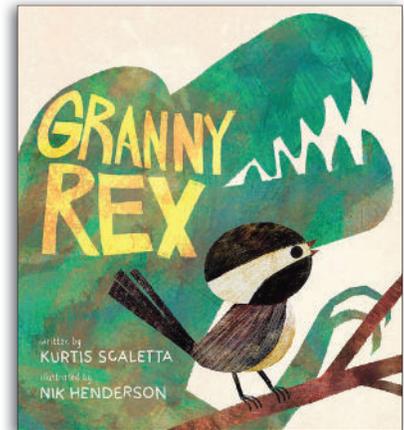
WRITTEN BY KURTIS SCALETTA,

ILLUSTRATED BY NIK HENDERSON

This story illuminates where the feisty little chickadee got its roar. This beautifully illustrated storybook captures an evolutionary journey as well as a little bird's discovery of confidence.

For children ages 3–7 who love the boldness of a chickadee.

Granny Rex, hardcover, 32 pages, Abrams Books for Young Readers, 10¾" x 9¾": \$18.99



MEL FELL

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY COREY TABOR

This Caldecott Honor Award-winning book for children ages 4–8 is a lovely story about learning to fly told from the perspective of a kingfisher. The physical layout of the book shifts with the story's progression, making it a fun and engaging read.

Mel Fell, hardcover, 40 pages, Greenwillow Books, 10¼" x 8¼": \$19.99



BRAIDING SWEETGRASS FOR YOUNG ADULTS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM,

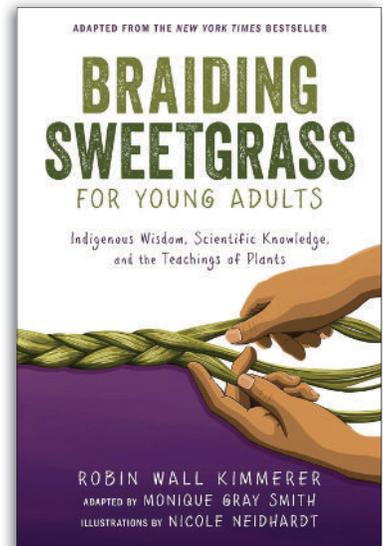
SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS

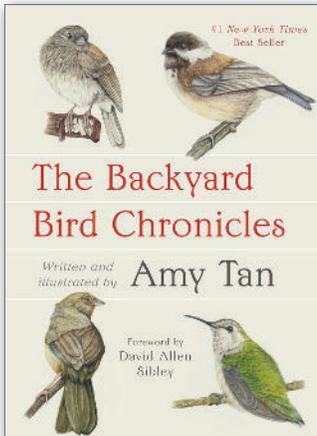
BY ROBIN WALL KIMMERER, ADAPTED BY MONIQUE GRAY SMITH,

ILLUSTRATED BY NICOLE NEIDHARDT

Robin Wall Kimmerer's teachings are finely laid out for youth ages 13–17 in this book, which underscores the relationship between humans and the natural world, highlights the true meaning of stewardship, and emphasizes the teachings of plants. This is an interactive book with discussion questions woven throughout.

Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults, paperback, 304 pages, Zest Books, 8¼" x 5½": \$17.99





THE BACKYARD BIRD CHRONICLES
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY AMY TAN

This is a wonderful book for those who yearn for a deeper connection with the natural world. These musings on backyard birds are a joy to read while sitting at the window in front of your bird feeder. Be inspired to observe and record the nature that graces you each day.

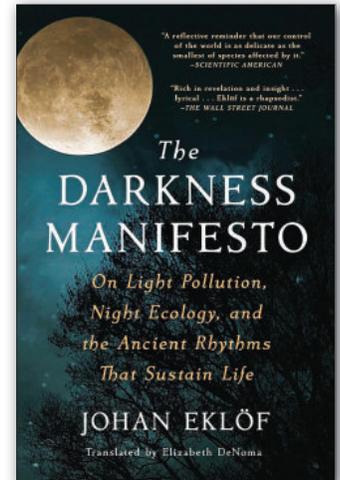
The Backyard Bird Chronicles, paperback, 320 pages, Knopf, 8¼"x 6½": \$35.00

THE DARKNESS MANIFESTO: ON LIGHT POLLUTION, NIGHT ECOLOGY, AND THE ANCIENT RHYTHMS THAT SUSTAIN LIFE

WRITTEN BY JOHAN EKLÖF,
TRANSLATED BY ELIZABETH DENOMA

This examination of the hidden impact of light pollution is a fascinating contemplation on the necessary balance between light and darkness in the rhythms of nature and how recent human alterations to that balance are affecting us and the planet.

The Darkness Manifesto, paperback, 272 pages, Scribner, 8¼"x 5½": \$18.00

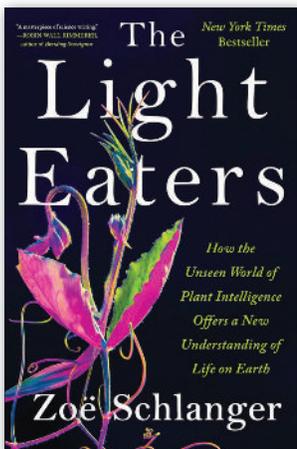


THE LIGHT EATERS: HOW THE UNSEEN WORLD OF PLANT INTELLIGENCE OFFERS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE ON EARTH

BY ZOË SCHLANGER

Unearth the incredible lives of plants and get rooted in the latest botanical research findings as you read this book. Learn the complexities of how plants communicate and adapt. The author explores the intelligence of plants with case studies from around the globe.

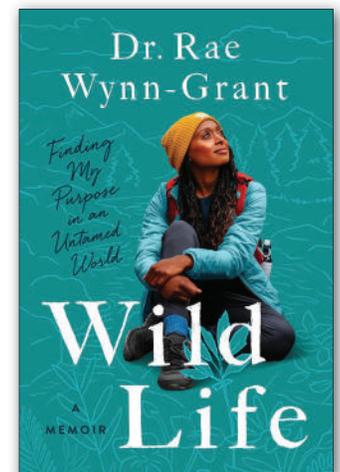
The Light Eaters, hardcover, 304 pages, Harper, 9¼"x 6": \$29.99



WILD LIFE: FINDING MY PURPOSE IN AN UNTAMED WORLD
BY DR. RAE WYNN-GRANT

At the intersection of wildlife ecology and race comes a memoir about Wynn-Grant's journey through her career, community, and personal ambitions. Her story highlights racial imbalances in the scientific field and speaks volumes about perseverance while simultaneously weaving in field observations about carnivores. The setting of this memoir begins in California and Virginia and extends to far reaches of the earth.

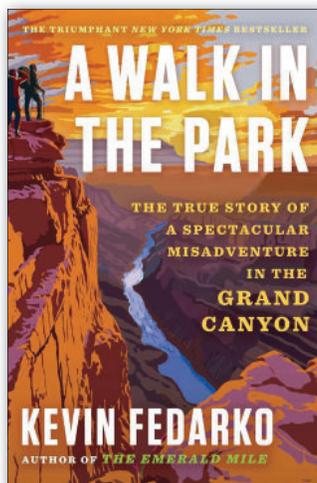
Wild Life, hardcover, 288 pages, Get Lifted Books, 9"x 6": \$28.00



A WALK IN THE PARK: THE TRUE STORY OF A SPECTACULAR MISADVENTURE IN THE GRAND CANYON
BY KEVIN FEDARKO

This true story is for those who love to immerse themselves in wild, rugged, and lesser-traveled landscapes. Join the author on a 750-mile, year-long journey through the parts of the Grand Canyon most have never seen, and learn about the area's history as recounted by the 11 Native American tribes that call the canyon their home. This travel autobiography captures the core spirit of adventure, reminds us that experience is the most valuable component of growth, and beckons us to take a deeper look into the history of our public lands and the consequences of tourism.

A Walk in the Park, hardcover, 512 pages, Scribner, 9¼"x 6½": \$32.50



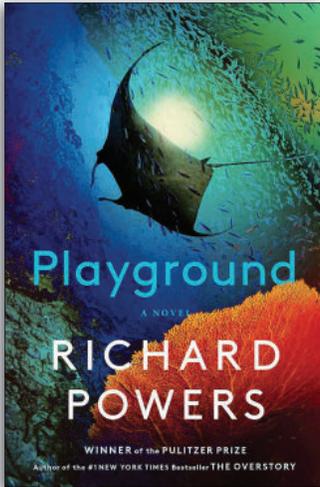
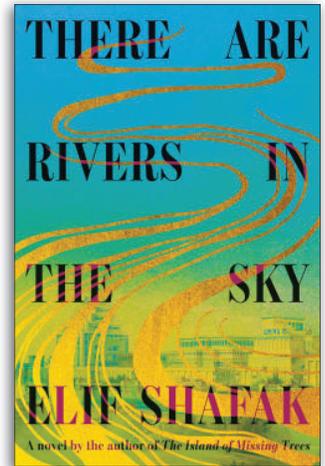
order at monolake.org/shop or (760) 647-6595

THERE ARE RIVERS IN THE SKY

BY ELIF SHAFAK

In this novel, follow a droplet of water along through multiple people, time periods, and places. The author connects the lives of Arthur, a publishing apprentice from 19th century London; Narin, an ill girl from present day Turkey; and Zaleekah, a hydrologist from present day London. She lays out her themes with the Tigris and Thames rivers as her main backdrops across different eras. Exploring our shared humanity, Shafak provokes a curiosity for history both past and present, and ultimately questions what kind of future we will choose.

There are Rivers in the Sky, hardcover, 464 pages, Knopf, 9½"x 6½": \$30.00



PLAYGROUND

BY RICHARD POWERS

Four characters are brought together in this story—Rafi and Todd, old classmates at a prestigious school; Ina, an artist; and oceanographer Evie. This environmental novel explores ocean colonization, climate change, the double-edged sword of technology, and reverence for nature. This story presses us to think about how we will steward our planet.

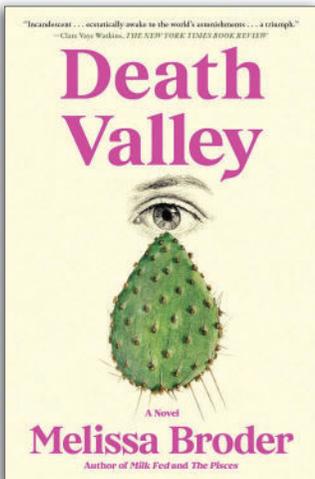
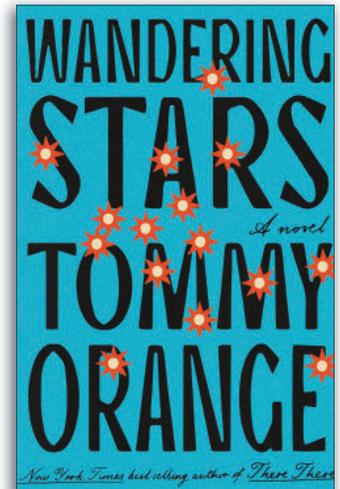
Playground, hardcover, 400 pages, W.W. Norton & Company, 9½"x 6½": \$29.99

WANDERING STARS

BY TOMMY ORANGE

Journey with a Cheyenne family for seven generations from the Sand Creek Massacre to modern day Oakland over a span of 150 years. This novel evokes heart-wrenching truths about generational traumas and injustices faced by Native Americans and beautifully unfurls stepping stones of healing. This book reads as a prequel or a sequel to the book, *There, There*, but also holds a story that stands alone.

Wandering Stars, hardcover, 336 pages, Knopf, 8½"x 6": \$29.00

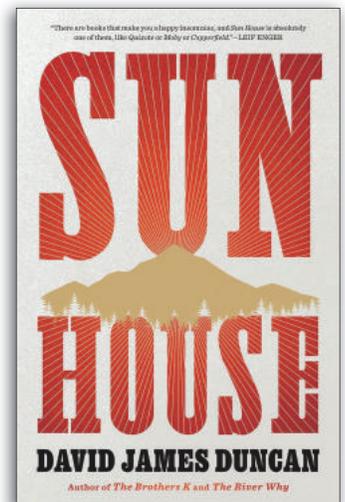


DEATH VALLEY

BY MELISSA BRODER

This novel about a grieving woman artfully intersects with humor. Retreating from Los Angeles, the main character ends up fleeing to Death Valley to seek solace from the looming death of her father and the weight of her husband's crumbling health. While hiking in the desert one day, she comes upon a cactus that holds a portal—perhaps to another world, or perhaps to a surreal hallucination in her mind.

Death Valley, paperback, 256 pages, Scribner, 8"x 5½": \$17.99



SUN HOUSE

BY DAVID JAMES DUNCAN

This novel is an exploration of human character. Take a deep dive into various life events that bring together several broken characters seeking revelation and growth in Montana, where they form a community called the Elkmoon Beguine & Cattle Company. This story, written by *The River Why* author David James Duncan, is laced with spiritual themes, Eastern wisdom, poetry, and philosophy. It beckons an expansion of the mind and meditates on the human condition.

Sun House, hardcover, 784 pages, Little, Brown and Company, 9½"x 6½": \$35.00



HUMMINGBIRD TEA TOWEL

This tea towel features six ornate western hummingbird watercolor illustrations by local artist Ellie Neifeld, and can be functional art for your kitchen.

Hummingbird tea towel, 28"x 28", 100% cotton: \$20.00



HAND-POURED CANDLE

Enjoy scents of cedar and fir as they wisp from this candle. It's perfect for those who want to bring the rich, enlivening smells of the forest into their home. It is made by Juniper Ridge in Oakland using only domestically sourced soy wax and steam-distilled essential oils. It has a cotton wick and comes in a glass vessel.

Hand-poured candle, 7 ounces: \$28.00

HANDCRAFTED BAR SOAPS

Choose from two varieties of handcrafted bar soaps for the perfect small gift. The oatmeal honey soap, made by Smoketree Massage & Apothecary in Mammoth Lakes, is crafted with gluten-free oats and organic raw honey to gently soothe your skin. The Sierra forest soap, made by Juniper Ridge in Oakland, will tingle your nose with aromas of cedar, fir, and rosemary—a refreshing, wintry scent, reminiscent of the high mountain air.

Handcrafted bar soaps, 4 ounces, please specify variety: \$11.00



DICK TAYLOR CRAFT CHOCOLATE BARS

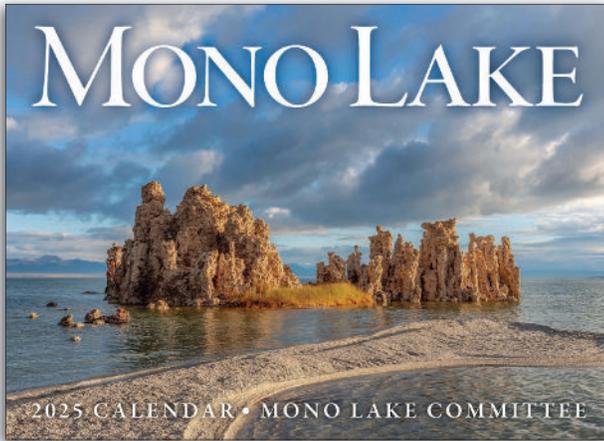
These California-handcrafted and ethically sourced bean-to-bar chocolates are available in four flavors. Dark chocolate varieties include a 55% cacao bar with peanut butter or a 73% cacao bar with fleur de sel. Milk chocolate varieties include a 55% cacao bar with hazelnuts and a 55% cacao bar with vanilla bean.

For complete ingredient lists and details on sourcing, please visit monolake.org/chocolate.

Dick Taylor craft chocolate bars, please specify variety: \$10.00–\$11.00



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



2025 MONO LAKE CALENDAR

Enjoy sweeping Mono Lake landscapes and surrounding scenes from the Mono Basin in the 2025 *Mono Lake Calendar*. These images celebrate the flow of water, the four seasons, and the grandeur of tufa. Printed in the USA on recycled paper. These make great gifts—special bulk pricing is available on orders of two or more calendars.

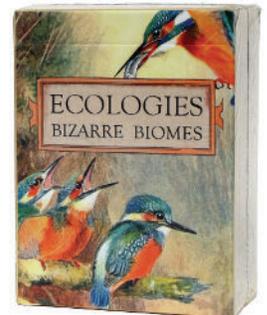
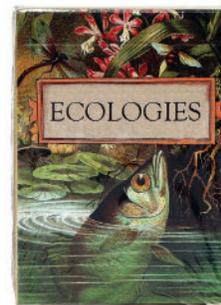
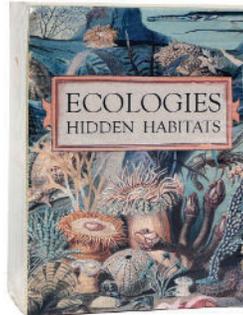
Mono Lake Committee exclusive.

2025 Mono Lake Calendar, 13"x 9½": \$14.95

ECOLOGIES CARD GAMES

Build tropical, underwater, and other fascinating food webs this winter as you spend time with family and friends. Be transported to different biomes and utilize your scientific mind in this strategic and simple-to-learn card game for ages 12+. Choose between the original game, Hidden Habitats, or Bizarre Biomes—all play by the same rules but have unique artwork.

Ecologies card games, 2½"x 3½"x 1¾", please specify game: \$30.00



MONO LAKE HOLIDAY CARD SET

Ten wintry wildlife cards designed by Wendy Morgan feature different wildlife species of the Mono Basin. This seasonal card set is a beautiful way to send holiday wishes with the message “May you have a Happy Holiday and joyous New Year” printed in red ink inside. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake holiday card set, 10 unique cards with envelopes, 6¼"x 4½": \$17.00



BEARS



CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS



HAIRY WOODPECKERS



CHICKADEES



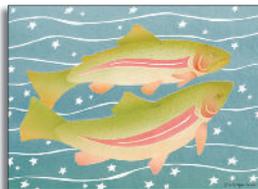
FOX



PIKA



STELLER'S JAYS



RAINBOW TROUT



ERMINE



BALD EAGLES

See all catalog products and more in color and place your order online at MONOLAKE.ORG/SHOP or call (760) 647-6595.

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

2024 Free Drawing to restore Mono Lake

Tickets due by December 9

When you enter the Mono Lake Committee's Free Drawing you get a chance to win one (or more!) of these exciting prizes, and you strengthen our effort to restore Mono Lake to a healthy level. Thank you to all of the generous businesses and organizations who donated prizes for this year's Free Drawing, which is one of our largest annual fundraisers. Mail in your tickets today (find them in the center of this *Newsletter*) for a chance to win and see all the prize details at monolake.org/freedrawing.

You could win one of these great prizes:

- Mammoth Mountain & June Mountain ski pass
- one-night stay at June Lake Pines, breakfast and boat rental at Silver Lake Resort, a movie at Minaret Cinemas, lunch at Epic Café, a goodie bag from The Lift, and a gift card to Ridge Merino
- one-night stay at Murphey's Motel in Lee Vining, a Mono Basin Field Seminar for two, dinner at Convict Lake Resort, plus breakfast at Stellar Brew
- two-night stay at the historic Wawona Hotel in Yosemite National Park, plus a National Parks Annual Pass
- one-night stay at Evergreen Lodge outside Yosemite plus a Yosemite Conservancy guided outdoor adventure
- Tamarack Cross Country Ski Center season pass
- Mono Lake Committee canoe tour for four
- Camp comfort gift packs: REI camp chair, Rumpl puffy blanket, and a Cognitive Surplus mug
- Patagonia Nano Puff jackets and gear
- Mono Lake Committee bookstore shopping spree
- one-night stay at Lake View Lodge in Lee Vining, plus a Mono Lake canoe tour for two, a movie at Minaret Cinemas, and lunch at Epic Café in June Lake
- two-night stay at the Inn at Benton Hot Springs plus breakfast and coffee from Looney Bean and a gift certificate for Eastside Sports in Bishop
- sailing trip on San Francisco Bay with Captain Kirk's Sailing Adventures
- Island Packers cruise to Channel Islands National Park
- Mono Arts Council art and wine experience for two
- Bodie Foundation custom tour for four
- Mammoth Mountain pint glasses, tumblers, and coasters from North Drinkware
- admission to the Aquarium of the Pacific
- Pentax Papilio II 8.5 x 21 binoculars
- Juniper Ridge home and body care gift set
- Photography books by Dennis Flaherty, Robb Hirsch, and Jeff Sullivan

Convict Lake Resort



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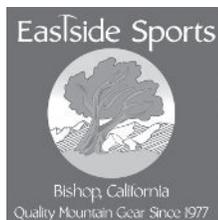
THE INN
AT BENTON
HOT SPRINGS



Mammoth



AQUARIUM
OF THE PACIFIC



Andrea Lawrence Award to Ryan Carle

by Lily Pastel

Community members, friends, and family of Andrea Mead Lawrence gathered at Mammoth Mountain's Parallax Restaurant in May for the annual presentation of the Andrea Lawrence Award celebrating passionate engagement with community and the land. This year's recipient is Ryan Carle, Science Director for Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge, in recognition of his dedication to

phalarope research and conservation in the Mono Basin and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Ryan is a true Mono Basin local, born and raised in Lee Vining. His work to study and protect Wilson's Phalaropes has taken him to saline lakes throughout the Western Hemisphere. Ryan's collaborative spirit has rallied people together across cultures and disciplines to further research, understanding, and preservation of these small saline lake-reliant birds. It is because of his ability to collaborate and inspire on an international scale that Ryan was chosen to receive the award.

Proceeds from the event support the Andrea Lawrence Fund to encourage collaboration and to inspire young people to become environmental leaders. This year a portion of these funds went to support Experience Ambientalia (see page 12) and the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center (see page 13).

The 13th Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner would not have been possible without the generous support of the Lawrence family and Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Thank you also to the dinner guests and to this year's award recipient, Ryan Carle, for his inspiring work. ❖



Award recipient Ryan Carle, third from right, with his parents Janet & David Carle, former Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve rangers, his brother Nick Carle, and Pearl Nelson, new Mono Lake Committee Facilities Caretaker (see page 26), plus Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin.

Andrea Lawrence was a visionary environmental leader, an Olympic double gold medalist, and a mother of five, who tirelessly pursued a principled vision of how ecological integrity, economy, and community can thrive in a way that preserves the vitality of each and enhances the whole. The Andrea Lawrence Award honors those who carry on her legacy of environmental conservation.

Policy notes from page 11

Fall 2013 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The entire project could span up to seven years with multiple, complicated phases of planning, inspections, geotechnical investigations, review, and construction.

In September, DWP briefed the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, CalTrout, and the Mono Lake Committee on the project status—an important and helpful step in relation to the 2021 State Water Board Stream Restoration Order that expected the outlet modification to be completed and operational by October 2025.

DWP Commissioners approve motion on biodiversity and nature-based solutions

In March the DWP Board of Commissioners discussed and approved a significant and historic motion that commits DWP to “integrate biodiversity, access to nature, and nature-based solutions into capital and infrastructure planning, strategic

plans, wildfire prevention planning and other key department plans.” The motion committed DWP to “engage with Native American Tribes, to apply Indigenous knowledge in land management, to enhance equity and access to nature for all Los Angeles residents.” The motion also stated that DWP “shall build on its best practices in the Eastern Sierra and develop urban biodiversity programs and urban resources for the Los Angeles area to enhance habitat, connectivity, and access to nature.”

The motion, passed unanimously, supports the Committee's argument that additional actions are needed to support Mono Lake's ecological health and biodiversity, the cultural traditions of the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, and clean air—all of which would be addressed through the relatively simple “nature-based solution” of allowing more water to flow into Mono Lake until the lake reaches its Public Trust level. ❖

Staff migrations

by Leslie Redman

Cloudy skies and changing leaves remind us that it's time to break out our sweaters and hopefully we've stacked enough wood to get through the colder days ahead. The annual seasonal cycle from summer to fall is also reflected at the Mono Lake Committee, where every year we close out the summer by saying farewell to staff members and friends as they launch into their next adventures.

After eight years introducing visitors to the natural wonders of the Mono Basin on guided tours, Field Seminars, and at the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, Lead Naturalist Guide **Nora Livingston** has moved on to the next stage of her career. Nora was dedicated to reconnecting old friends to Mono Lake through programs in the field and turning first-time visitors into new advocates. We are excited to see the amazing work she will do in the future.

After nine years as Information Center & Bookstore Manager, **Lily Pastel** recently shifted into the newly created position of Business Coordinator, where she is a key point person supporting the evolution of the Committee's internal organizational and financial systems. During her time as Bookstore Manager, Lily engaged more local artisans, sourced creative unique items, and expanded the online store, to which members and visitors responded enthusiastically.

Formerly a Project Specialist, **Mara Krista Plato** stepped into the role of Information Center & Bookstore Manager just in time for the year-end shopping season. We are grateful to have her around on a permanent basis and look forward to seeing what plans she has in store.

Having managed the needs of the Committee facilities

through the past three years of busy summers and harsh winters, Facilities Superintendent **Alyx Miller** moved south to Bishop, with its milder climate and longer growing season. We appreciate Alyx's stewardship of the office and Mono Basin Field Station buildings.

We're glad that **Pearl Nelson** stepped right in as Facilities Caretaker. Pearl grew up in Lee Vining and knows the many challenges this climate has on aging facilities. She worked most recently in the industrial kitchen for Mineral County Social Services in Hawthorne, Nevada and brings experience in handyman skills, parks upkeep, and administrative work.

The Committee was lucky to have Canoe Coordinator **Juniper Bishop** back at the helm of the canoe program this summer. After another successful season brimming with tours, Juniper went west to spend the winter in the San Francisco Bay Area. Project Specialists **Caelen McQuilkin** and **Katie Smith** brought their wealth of knowledge from previous stints working at the Committee and lent extra support as the summer staffing needs ebbed and flowed. Caelen has moved on to Emigrant Gap where she is working at the Sky Mountain Education Center as an Apprentice Naturalist. Katie has started her first semester pursuing a PhD at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Dana Diaz** spent the summer welcoming folks to the Mono Basin and sharing the story of Mono Lake before beginning graduate school at the University of Nevada, Reno. We're pleased to have **Karis Sabraw**, Information Center & Bookstore Assistant, staying on through the winter as a Project Specialist.

After migrating from the East Coast for the summer, Birding Intern **Sophie Coyne** departed for the Jug Bay Wetland Sanctuary in Maryland to work as a Chesapeake Conservation & Climate Corps member. Alkali Fly Research Technician **Liz Holte** was either in the lab at the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory or on the shores of Mono Lake all summer and has now moved on to other projects in the Mammoth Lakes area. **Via Ruiz** also spent a considerable part of her summer in the Mono Basin out in the field as the Committee's Field Monitoring & Reporting Intern; she is now a junior at the University of California, Berkeley.

Mono Lake Interns are the backbone of our summer programs, leading daily South Tufa tours and weekend canoe tours, sharing Mono Lake information and giving visitors guidance at the Committee's Information Center & Bookstore. After a busy, successful summer at Mono Lake, they are all off to continue their academic pursuits. **BreeLynn Butler** began her senior year at Cal Poly Humboldt, **Chris Hamilton** is finishing his final semester at California State University Monterey Bay, **Diego Murguia** started his first year at the University of California, Davis, and **Alden Seiberling** began her first year at the University of California, Berkeley. ❖



The 2024 Mono Lake Committee staff.



From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Leslie Redman

As the autumn winds pick up and falling temperatures gradually change the landscape of the Mono Basin, we reflect on how grateful we are to have the support of so many as we continue the work of the Mono Lake Committee. Thank you to everyone who contributed in honor or in memory of friends and loved ones.

In honor

Robert & Elizabeth Brown of Thousand Oaks donated in honor of **Cill Franco & John Schuyler**. The **Burch Weigen family** of Palo Alto contributed in honor of former staff **Juniper Bishop** and **Nora Livingston**. **Tilda De Wolfe** of Monterey Park gave a gift in honor of **Edgar Kaskla**. **Randy & Sharon Kinkade** of Hayward donated in honor of **Vic Avila**.

Rebecca Lyons of Forest Falls gave a gift in honor of the **2024 May term class** at the **University of Redlands**. **Jonathan Rapp** of San Francisco contributed in honor of **Sam Rapp**. **Laura Roberts** of Fresno contributed in honor of **Martin Brady**. **Rebecca Ward** of Irvine donated in honor of **Ryan Carle**.

In memory

Jack & Bev Waltman were remembered with gifts from **Robin Adams** of Inglewood, **Larry Berger** of Los Angeles, **Charles & Martha Farmer** and **Pamela Vadakan** of Grass Valley, **J. Kenneth Fleshman** of Green Valley, AZ, **Linda Gelpman** of Rio Dell, **Lori Hallmark** of Cool, **Jill Kleinberg** of Woodland Hills, **Joan Little** of San Diego, **Peter Mason** of Nevada City, **Sarah Miller**, **Lindsay Ostrom** of Colfax, and the **Ostram family** of Chicago Park.

The Committee received an anonymous donation in memory of **Robert Christensen**. **Marilyn Anticouni** of Santa Barbara and **Lisa Sereno** of Huntington, IN gave gifts in memory of **Ronald Barker**. **Bob Battagin** of Woodacre contributed in memory of **Rich**

Stallcup. **Robert Cook** of Livermore donated in memory of **Blanca Haendler**. **M. Logan Davis** of San Carlos gave a gift in memory of **Marty Strelneck**. **Kathleen Gaines** of San Rafael contributed in memory of **Dr. Marty Griffin**.

Darcy Hastings of Saugus donated in memory of **Daniel Hastings**. **Chris Huson** of Mill Valley gave a gift in memory of **Ellen Ruoff**. **Lida Judd** of Windsor contributed in memory of **Robert Judd**.

Heidi Hopkins of Big Sur, **John & Carol Sherrill** of Danville, and **Marilyn Krieger** donated in memory of consequential Mono Lake attorney **F. Bruce Dodge** (see page 10). **James Lazar** of Auburn gave a gift in memory of **Thomas Beattie**. **Jenefer Luckey** of Tustin contributed in memory of **Pamela Gates**. **Jim & Linda Michael** of La Mesa donated in memory of **Mort & Edith Gaines**. **Sarah Miller** of Inverness and **Polly Quick** of Berkeley gave gifts in memory of **Dave Sharp**. **Lee Mitchell** of Seaside contributed in memory of **Jere Mitchell**.

Nikki Nedeff of Carmel Valley donated in memory of **Kevin Dummer**. **Gary Pike** of San Francisco gave a gift in memory of **Susan Lock**. **Morgan Sanders** of Stinson Beach contributed in memory of **Owein Sanders**. **Stan Shiokari** of Campbell, the **Youngdale family** of Templeton, and **Jacqueline & José Cremers** of the Netherlands donated in memory of **Susan Size**. **Kirk Thomas** of Salt Lake City, UT gave a gift in memory of **Judy Goddard**. **Kitty Trejo** of

Rancho Mirage contributed in memory of **Martha Wright**. **Fei Wen** of Newbury Park donated in memory of **James Jonokuchi**. **Lisa Whitfield** of Mountain View gave a gift in memory of **Michael Willemsen**. **Jeff Wilson & Anne Scheer** of Port Costa contributed in memory of **David Stiedel**. **Kirsten Winter** of Poway donated in memory of **Karen Danielsen**.

Remembering Frank Stephens

On August 18, we lost a true Mono Lake friend, **Frank Stephens** of North Manchester, IN. Frank and his wife **Marie-Agnes** spent almost 30 years calling the Mono Basin their vacation home. In 2021, they donated the property to the Committee (see Winter & Spring 2022 *Mono Lake Newsletter*) and it has been a tremendous benefit not only to the Committee, but also to scientists working on research in the north Mono Basin. Frank is remembered by memorial contributions from **Mike & Lucy McKinley** of North Manchester, IN, **Sylvie Ring-Peterson** of St. Catharines, ON, and the **Sylvester family** of Chico. ❖

Leslie Redman is the Committee's Membership Coordinator and the Race Director for the Tioga Pass Run. After wrapping up another successful Tioga Pass Run event this fall, Leslie is rounding out a year of her own distance running accomplishments—trail races ranging from 26 kilometers to 50 miles in Bishop, Mammoth Lakes, and Moab, UT. She's looking forward to an upcoming 50k in the southern Sierra this winter.



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“This decision ... amends Los Angeles’s water right licenses to include specified water diversion criteria which are intended to gradually restore the average water elevation of Mono Lake to approximately 6,392 feet above mean sea level in order to protect public trust resources at Mono Lake.”

—1994 California State Water Resources
Control Board Decision 1631, page 195



Find out more in this *Newsletter* about the importance of Decision 1631 at Mono Lake and the Mono Lake Committee’s ongoing efforts to raise Mono Lake to the Public Trust lake level 30 years after the historic State Water Board decision to save Mono Lake.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD ERB