Mono Lake Newsletter

Summer 2025

California Gulls in Peril | DWP Maximizes Water Export | Rush Creek Flow Waiver | Summer Activities

I am noticing California Gulls differently this year. Their raucous calls are a sound of summer that always makes me smile. I love their bold manners and handsome white-and-gray plumage that gets messy as they forage for food until they fly to the creek deltas to bathe. But after near-total nesting failure twice in the last three years, now I watch them soaring over Lee Vining and worry.

When I arrived to work at the Mono Lake Committee as an intern 20 years ago, the outlook generally felt hopeful. It seemed the State Water Board's rules for DWP's diversions would be effective in allowing Mono Lake to reach the healthy management level with just a bit more time. I helped tally California Gull nests on the islets during one of the most successful years for chick production. DWP's working relationship with the Committee seemed cordial and collaborative.

In the pages of this *Newsletter* you'll see that we're in a very different place now.

We now know unequivocally that the rules for DWP's water exports must change if Mono Lake is to rise. DWP has let its aqueduct infrastructure fail and asked to skip out on its obligations to restore Rush Creek. Our working relationship is frayed—DWP often skips communication and recently has been issuing misleading press releases claiming Mono Lake is doing fine.

And the California Gulls are now struggling to survive.

This year's recipient of the Andrea Lawrence Award, Martha Guzman, acknowledged how frustrating things feel right now in her acceptance remarks. But she also reminded us that the pendulum always swings back and we must be ready when it does. Many people mentioned in the pages that follow—Doña Juana, Hap, Andrea Lawrence herself—showed us how to stay vigilant for Mono Lake, to push through the frustration and be ready.

Longtime Mono Lake Committee members know this well. And if you're picking up this *Newsletter* for the first time—welcome. We need everyone with us to work for the gulls' survival and for Mono Lake's recovery.

—Elin Ljung, Communications Coordinator

COVER PHOTO BY SARA MATTHEWS

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIE READ

California Gulls rely on abundant brine shrimp and alkali flies (being chased here) for food when they migrate to Mono Lake to nest, lay eggs, and raise chicks. *See more on page 3.*

Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a 501(c)(3) 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. Tax ID: 77-0051124

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Mono Lake may be losing its California Gulls

Continuing DWP water diversions and decades of low lake levels causing harm

by Bartshé Miller

For centuries California Gulls have migrated east across the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada to nest at Mono Lake. Their graceful, raucous, and quirky presence is a distinct and iconic part of the Mono Basin along with granite peaks, brine shrimp, tufa towers, and volcanic islands. For generations gulls have played an important role in the biodiversity of the Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra, and their health is a measure of the health and abundance of the Mono Lake ecosystem.

Now, three decades after the California State Water Resources Control Board ordered that Mono Lake must be allowed to rise to 6,392 feet above sea level—which it has not yet reached—California Gulls are not only struggling to recover, they're also struggling to survive. A new report documents record nest failure last year, signaling serious trouble for the gull colony as chronically low lake levels and continuing stream diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) are damaging the lake's ecological health.

A legacy of gull research

Research on California Gulls at Mono Lake began five decades ago as excessive water diversions came dangerously close to eliminating the gull colony. Public and scientific concern intensified around DWP's damaging exports that had pushed the lake lower, to the brink of ecosystem collapse. In 1979, the low lake level exposed a landbridge enabling coyotes to prey on thousands of chicks on Negit Island, routing the gulls away from their native colony. As an indicator of Mono Lake's plight, gulls became a rallying call for the protection of the lake, and the impetus for gathering important population data.

RUSS TAYLOR

California Gulls migrate east from the coast to nest at Mono Lake; historically, upwards of 40,000 gulls nested on Negit Island. Last year they suffered record nest failure.

The issue was, literally, explosive at the time. The California National Guard attempted to blast a channel into the landbridge to protect the gulls from coyotes (see Summer 1979 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The detonations were dramatic but did not make a difference in the landbridge. However, they did make a difference in news coverage and public attention toward birds and Mono Lake. The potential loss of gulls and the lake's ecosystem were motivating reasons for the founding of the Mono Lake Committee in 1978.

Explosions failed, as did early attempts to fence out coyotes. In the chaos and disruption of coyote predation, the gulls moved to nearby islets that remained isolated from the landbridge and surrounded by deeper water. Early monitoring began during this traumatic time for the gull colony, and consistent annual monitoring was essential to understanding if the gulls would survive. In 1983, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (now Point Blue Conservation Science) began that work, which is now in its 43rd consecutive year and among the longest studies on colonial waterbirds. The continuity of the research is impressive, and a testament to the importance of California Gulls in the Great Basin and Pacific Flyway. The gull study continues to provide a detailed barometer of gull nesting success at Mono Lake and its connection with the lake's health and productivity.

Decades of gull research has chronicled change—a journey from near collapse of the colony to rebounding populations. But the data now show a spiraling population and reproductive decline.

Lakewide nest failure

In 2024, Point Blue's monitoring detected an alarming collapse in chick hatching and survival. Thousands of California Gulls arrived to nest at Mono Lake like they do each season, reuniting with their partner in the same scrape of ground as the previous year. Like other

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California Gulls from page 3

species of gulls, California Gulls depend on stable, predator-free nesting habitat and reliable food to raise their young. But unlike many other species of gulls, California Gulls have an ecological history of migrating inland to breed. Mono Lake and Great Salt Lake have historically been home to the largest native California Gull colonies within the birds' range.

Nest monitoring at the end of May 2024 indicated that thousands of birds were nesting. The gulls were incubating eggs in nests and preparing for chicks that usually hatch during June. Researchers returned in July to once again survey the colony with specially permitted drones to take high-resolution imagery. A few chicks were visible, but the researchers noticed something was different—there appeared to be fewer nests and chicks and some of the surveyed islets unexpectedly had few, if any, gulls. After a thorough analysis of the imagery and data, a sobering picture emerged: there was a near total nesting failure. Over 20,000 adult gulls fledged just 324 chicks lakewide. The year before, in 2023, approximately 11,000 chicks were produced. According to Point Blue's 2024 report, "This total chick production is by far the lowest we have ever documented at Mono Lake."

Reproductive success for the year is measured in the number of chicks fledged per nest. The long-term average through 2023 is 0.83 chicks per nest. In 2024 this number was 0.032 chicks per nest—the lowest figure ever documented at Mono Lake, and lower by nearly a factor of three compared to the previous record low of 0.09 in 2022. The overall success rate has declined an average of 0.013 chicks fledged per nest per year, or 500 fewer fledglings per year since the study began in 1983.

The nesting failure in 2024 is ominous, and the long-term trend in gull numbers at Mono Lake is not reassuring either. Fewer and fewer gulls are returning to nest because it's becoming increasingly difficult to raise chicks and maintain the population. The estimated 20,258 California Gulls that came to breed at Mono Lake in 2024 was an all-time low based on 10,129 nests counted—well below the 1983–2023 average of 42,575 adults.

Gulls have been able to rebound from the occasional bad year of nesting as long as sufficient food and predator-free conditions prevail. But recent nesting data and observations reveal that uncertain food timing and productivity and recurring coyote predation—all due to low lake levels—are likely causing disruption. Gulls are having more difficult years for nesting, which is causing a decline in the overall population at Mono Lake.

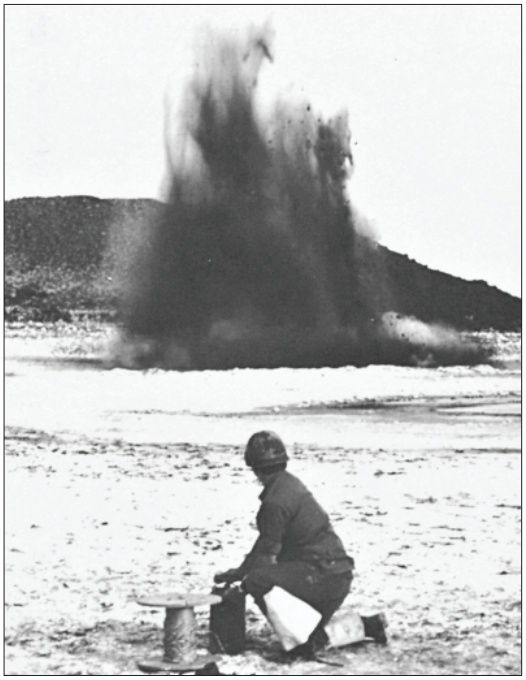

PHOTO FROM STORM OVER MONO

In 1979 the National Guard attempted to blast a channel in the landbridge to protect the gull colony.

According to Ryan Burnett, the lead gull researcher and Sierra Nevada Group Director for Point Blue, commenting on the gulls' downward trend, "When it's good, it's never as good as it used to be, and when it's bad, it's worse than ever."

Gulls need a healthy lake

For three decades Mono Lake has cycled up and down in elevation, all the while failing to achieve net progress toward the level that the State Water Board recognized would ensure the protection of California Gulls, ecosystem health, air quality, and recreational and scenic values. Each time the lake rises up from a low level, the ecosystem is vulnerable to persistent stratification. Each time the lake declines, the gulls are faced with the threat of predation. The longer the cycle continues, the longer the gulls must wait to return to nest on Negit Island, and the longer they must cope with transient habitat that is getting overrun with invasive weeds.

The gulls are caught in a doom loop of compromised lake productivity,

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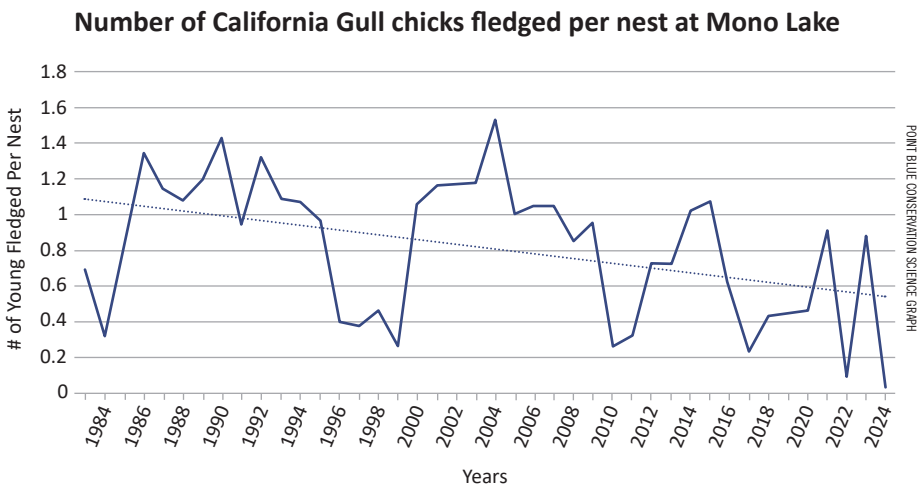

The estimated number of chicks fledged per nest at Mono Lake from 1983 to 2024. The overall success rate has declined by 500 fledglings every year, on average, with precipitous collapses in 2022 and 2024.

California Gulls from page 4

predation threats, and weeds—all the result of DWP's water exports under diversion rules that clearly need revision.

Low food supply linked to gull nesting failure

For nesting gulls to succeed, they must have sufficient caloric energy to invest in egg laying, feeding their chicks, and feeding themselves. Brine shrimp are a critical food source for the gulls each spring, and if the shrimp don't appear in sufficient numbers and size at the right time for the gulls, it impacts nesting success. A condition called meromixis, or persistent stratification of the water column, influences the productivity of algae and shrimp, which in turn influences the food chain all the way up to the top predator—gulls. While the relationship is not absolute each year meromixis occurs, it is a statistically significant factor in predicting annual nesting success.

What is meromixis? In simple terms, it's a water density stratification that continues for multiple years. Mono Lake goes through chemical and thermal stratification cycles annually, but meromixis occurs when a less dense, "fresher" lakewide lens of water persists on top of denser, hypersaline water below. When Mono Lake is chronically low, it's more vulnerable to meromictic events, especially after a big winter, when substantial snowmelt in the spring flows into the lake. Large inputs of stream water do mix with the lake, but the upper layers of the lake remain less saline overall. The deeper, more saline water ends up temporarily trapping nutrients that would otherwise cycle throughout the lake in a year with closer to average runoff. This means that the following year the algae has less available nutrient mass to incorporate for growth, reducing its overall productivity. Brine shrimp feed on the algae and are also negatively impacted by the temporary loss of nutrients within the lake ecosystem.

Gulls famously take advantage of many food sources throughout the year, but they depend on abundant brine shrimp when nesting. According to the 2024 Point Blue report, "The production of chicks at Mono Lake is almost certainly directly tied to the lake's production of food resources the gulls rely on." If shrimp productivity is lower, or shrimp growth is underdeveloped or delayed, the colony is significantly impacted. The report continues, "the lake conditions that resulted in these patterns in the shrimp population were not compatible with the gull's ability to raise young, leading to a near-complete breeding failure in two of the last three years." Simply put, in 2024 the gulls nested. They laid eggs. And then, it appears, they found there were not enough brine shrimp in the lake to sustain the final stage of hatching eggs and raising chicks.

Mono Lake is currently meromictic after the significant 2023 runoff year, which was close to 200% of average. How long stratification persists, and the rate at which it breaks down is related to a host of variables, including wind, weather, drought, diversions, and the level of Mono Lake.

The higher the level of Mono Lake, the less vulnerable it is to large inputs of fresh water causing stratification. Before DWP's diversions began in 1941, Mono Lake was much larger and less saline, allowing it to reliably mix each year even with large inflows of fresh water from big winters.

Since the early 1980s when meromixis was first detected in Mono Lake, there have been six documented multi-year episodes. This has affected algae, brine shrimp, and gulls repeatedly (and likely other birds like Eared Grebes), and these events are emerging as a new, dysfunctional ecological pattern as Mono Lake fluctuates ten feet below its mandated, 6,392-foot

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California Gulls need bare, rocky ground that is free of vegetation to nest successfully.

An invasive weed, Bassia hyssopifolia*, has increasingly overrun the gulls' last-resort nesting grounds, but little is present on Negit Island, where gulls nested before diversions began.*

PHOTOS BY SARA MATTHEWS

California Gulls from page 5

level. Decades of maximized diversions damaged the lake's ecosystem, and now the current level of diversions allowed since the 1994 State Water Board Decision are preventing recovery and likely causing additional harm the longer they continue.

Invasive weeds, too

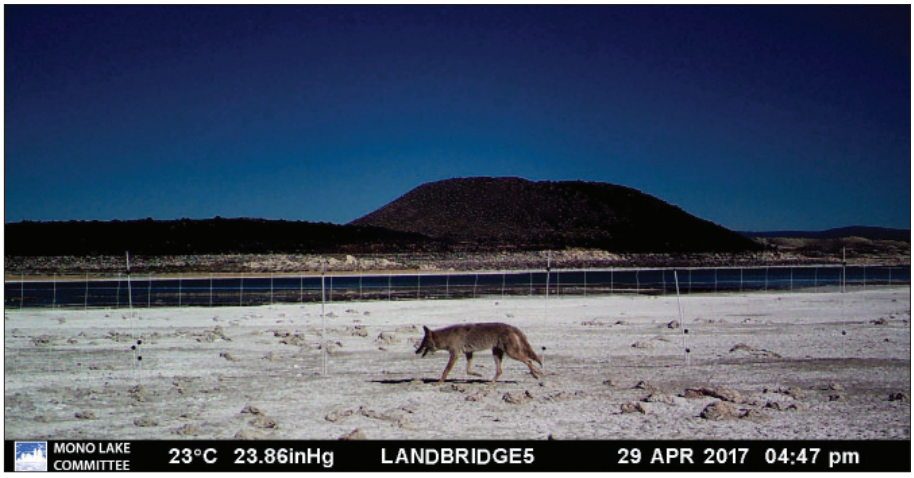
California Gulls remain displaced from their native nesting habitat on Negit Island. Since 1979 gulls have nested on nearby islets where they have managed until recent years. Now, as the islets' rocky and sandy habitat has been exposed to five decades of precipitation, salts have been reduced from the soils, making them more hospitable to invasive weeds. One weed, called *Bassia* or smotherweed (*Bassia hyssopifolia*), has become widely established and is diminishing available nesting habitat.

Bassia has been documented in the Mono Basin since the 1950s, but only since 2012 has it reached and invaded the Negit islets. The problem with *Bassia* is that it grows up to four feet tall and, while it is an annual weed, its skeletal structure remains from year to year rooted in large mats or stands that reduce open nesting habitat for California Gulls. Gulls nest on the ground in open, sandy, rocky terrain. *Bassia* chokes off nesting habitat, leaving the gulls with less space and fewer options.

ROBBIE DI PAOLO

In early 2020 the Inyo National Forest successfully cleared Bassia *from Twain Islet using a prescribed burn. However,* Bassia *has now returned to the gull nesting areas.*

The Mono Lake Committee and the Inyo National Forest worked cooperatively to burn *Bassia* from Twain Islet in February 2020 (see Winter & Spring 2020 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The burn was extremely successful for the gulls, resulting in an increase of 3,000 new nests on Twain the following nesting season. However, *Bassia* returned after well-above average precipitation in 2023. Committee staff and volunteers have worked to hand-pull and clear the weed, prior to and after that year's nesting season, which helped. Unfortunately, *Bassia* has rebounded in treated areas and another burn may be necessary.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE WILDLIFE CAMERA

In spring 2017 Mono Lake was low enough that the Mono Lake Committee installed a temporary electric fence to prevent coyotes from reaching the gull nesting colony via a landbridge with the mainland.

The only long-term viable nesting option for the gulls is to return to their original nesting habitat on Negit Island, where *Bassia* does not dominate. For that to happen, Mono Lake must rise to the healthy level required by the State Water Board.

Coyote roulette

While meromixis and weeds put significant pressure on the gulls, coyotes remain an acute threat. DWP lowered Mono Lake so dramatically that coyote predation remains a critical, periodic danger to nesting California Gulls. The fluctuating lake level remains below what is needed to effectively submerge the landbridge. The State Water Board recognized in its 1994 decision to protect Mono Lake that, "a lake level of 6,384 feet would protect the gulls from coyote access to Negit Island and nearby islets and would maintain a buffer for continued protection during periods of extended drought. A water level of 6,390 feet would completely inundate the landbridge between Negit Island and the shore and would provide additional deterrence to potential terrestrial predators."

Yet Mono Lake's 25-year average elevation remains two feet below 6,384 feet, and a full ten vertical feet shy of the healthy management level. Nesting

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DWP plans to maximize water export, and impacts to Mono Lake—again

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Mono Lake Committee and Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) staff members met at the edge of Mono Lake on April 1 for the annual joint lake level reading. With binoculars and cameras focused on the lake gauge, the collaborative affair produced, as usual, a consensus on the precise surface elevation of Mono Lake: 6,383.29 feet above sea level.

But in downtown Los Angeles, far from the shores of Mono Lake, DWP leadership advanced an uncommon view of what the lake level means, and what to do about it.

Misleading press release from DWP

Mono Lake friends know well that, after years of study, the California State Water Resources Control Board established a management level for the lake of 6,392 feet above sea level—a level chosen in order to protect numerous Public Trust resources, including ecological health, air quality, scenic and Tribal resources, and unique, internationally significant habitat for millions of migratory and nesting birds.

Yet in a press release about the April 1 lake level reading, DWP avoided mention of the 6,392-foot lake level requirement, or the fact that the lake is only halfway to the requirement and a decade behind schedule in getting there.

The DWP headline declared that the lake remains at a "steady and encouraging" level. It's unclear what is encouraging, and behind the scenes, plans for water exports were being made without regard to their direct effect of lowering Mono Lake.

DWP's press release also quoted a senior manager saying, "While every other Western terminal lake continues to decline in elevation, Mono Lake has, on average, been trending up for the past 30 years." However, the near collapse of sister saline systems like Great Salt Lake is hardly consolation.

BARTSHÉ MILLER

DWP uncharacteristically brought photographers to the April 1 lake level reading; it subsequently published a misleading press release.

As questions about the DWP quote rolled in, the Committee was quick to calculate that due to rapid lake rise in the 1990s the DWP statement was mathematically correct. However, it is equally true that the level of Mono Lake has trended down for the past 25 years with DWP maximizing its diversions every year. And that is the problem at hand: Mono Lake is not on track to recover from decades of excessive DWP water diversions, present-day DWP diversions are suppressing recovery, and it's time to do something about it.

DWP plans to maximize water export

Two weeks later, DWP released its draft operations plan for the 2025–26 runoff year and a water diversion and export plan that showed no regard for the level of Mono Lake.

Last year, the annual operations plan said "planned export is 4,500 acre feet," reflecting the commitment of the mayor of Los Angeles to keep water diversions at the same level as 2022 and 2023 in a voluntary effort to help the lake heal. DWP, however, in late 2024 decided to break that promise and proceeded to export 250% of the planned amount (see Winter & Spring 2025 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

This year, DWP's plan states the agency will maximize water export and take the full 16,000 acre-feet that is possible—but not required—under its water licenses. That volume of water is equivalent to a third of a foot for Mono Lake, meaning DWP water diversions will cause Mono Lake to be lower on April 1, 2026 than it should be. An additional 5,000 acre-feet of Mono Basin groundwater will be captured by DWP's Mono Craters Tunnel and delivered to LA as well. These impacts on the level of Mono Lake are real, and they add up over the years; indeed, this is why the 25-year trend in lake level is not positive.

State Water Board hearing is crucial

With recent history confirming that DWP is not willing to take any voluntary steps to meet the State Water Board's Public Trust requirement to protect biodiversity at Mono Lake, what can be done? All eyes remain on the State Water Board, which is planning for a hearing to review and modify diversion rules, given that its mandate hasn't been met after 31 years.

The timeliness of Board action is critical. For all its beauty, Mono Lake is ailing while it waits for its water to rise to a healthy level, a situation starkly illustrated by the California Gulls having their worst year of reproduction on record (see page 3). This is the year to speak up for Mono Lake, to call for action, and to set the stage for real, measurable rise and recovery. ❖

Broken Grant valve threatens restoration

Mono Lake Committee proposes reasonable mitigations to achieve required Rush Creek flows

by Robbie Di Paolo

Since 1941, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) has used Grant Lake Reservoir to collect, store, and divert fresh water from Mono Basin streams to the City of Los Angeles. The reservoir is located on Rush Creek, the largest tributary to Mono Lake.

For decades, DWP dried up Rush Creek to maximize water exports, imposing a great cost on the downstream fishery, miles of riparian habitat, and Mono Lake. Thanks to subsequent decades of successful litigation and California State Water Resources Control Board action, DWP is now required to deliver water to Rush Creek below Grant—and restore the damage done—as a condition of diverting water in the Mono Basin.

And yet, in 2025, for the second year in a row, DWP proposed waiving important springtime restoration flows to accommodate difficulties with its malfunctioning 89-year-old aqueduct intake valve. The Mono Lake Committee argued in response that if DWP manages its own reservoir properly there would be no need to impair the restoration of Rush Creek.

The need for restoration flows and the ability to deliver them

The required flows for Rush Creek below Grant Lake Reservoir are specific. Defined in DWP's licenses as Stream Ecosystem Flows (SEFs), SEFs set the timing, magnitude, and duration of flow releases for the four creeks that have been historically damaged by DWP's stream diversions. SEFs were developed from 15 years of extensive scientific stream studies; they seek to match natural runoff patterns to maximize stream restoration and stream health.

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Use of the Grant Lake Reservoir spillway can mitigate DWP's inability to deliver required Rush Creek restoration flows because of a broken 89-year-old aqueduct intake valve located 80 feet underground.

But for as long as SEFs have been a requirement in DWP's stream diversion licenses, infrastructure constraints at Grant Lake Reservoir have impaired DWP's ability to fulfill the flow requirements for Rush Creek. That's why in 2021 the State Water Board required DWP to construct a new—and now overdue—outlet to ensure reliable flow release (see Fall 2021 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

How to work around failing infrastructure

In 2023, a new infrastructure failure at Grant Lake Reservoir—a broken aqueduct intake known as the rotovalve—further impaired DWP's ability to fulfill restoration objectives for Rush Creek as required by its licenses. The failure could have been prevented; regulators had indicated the rotovalve was at the end of its service life and a replacement valve was purchased by DWP back in 2018 but never installed (see Winter & Spring 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

Now, the broken rotovalve means that DWP cannot release more than 175 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water from Grant into Rush Creek, a far cry from the 200–750 cfs peak flows required by the Rush Creek SEFs, which scale with the year-type to mimic natural hydrology. In 2024, despite DWP's limited 175 cfs release capacity, Rush Creek flows exceeded the minimum 380 cfs prescribed peak flow for the year for one reason: the reservoir spilled. Specifically, a peak flow exceeding 500 cfs flowed down Rush Creek because the reservoir started the 2024 runoff year nearly full. This allowed upstream flows to spill over the dam's spillway and into Rush Creek during the period when runoff naturally swells for the season.

Noting this positive outcome under challenging and unaddressed infrastructure constraints, the question is—can Grant be managed for beneficial spill in future years?

DWP's water export worsens the situation

Back in May 2024, DWP's annual Mono Basin operations plan indicated that it planned to divert 4,500 acre-feet of water from Mono Basin streams. This was a voluntary reduction from DWP's allowed diversion amount and was the result of the Mono Lake Committee and coalition of California-based groups requesting that LA Mayor Karen Bass not increase diversions.

Had DWP stuck to the operations plan, Grant Lake Reservoir would have almost certainly spilled this year. However, DWP unilaterally decided to export nearly three times what was planned, breaking that voluntary export commitment. The increased diversion means less water for Mono Lake. It also lowered Grant, significantly reducing the possibility of a beneficial spill in 2025. Without a spill, DWP

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DWP withdraws petition for Rush Creek flow waiver

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

On April 15, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) requested permission to waive Rush Creek spring high flow requirements, sparking concern across the state. Hundreds of comment letters called for DWP to do better to ensure that Rush Creek recovery is not set back by DWP's own failing infrastructure (see page 8).

The public attention had a big impact. Three weeks later, and just 24 hours ahead of the close of the public comment period, DWP withdrew its request.

Strong support for Rush Creek & Mono Lake

Mono Lake supporters spoke up, sending hundreds of letters to the California State Water Resources Control Board. Eloquently written personal stories illustrated strong, ongoing concern about the damage done in the Mono Basin by excessive DWP water diversions, and support for the State Water Board's restoration program. Many pointed out that Rush Creek restoration shouldn't be interrupted just because DWP has run its aqueduct infrastructure to the point of failure.

The public concern underscored the overarching problem with DWP's request: DWP asked for authorization to reduce restoration flows without offering to mitigate impacts or overcome its malfunctioning equipment limitations.

In a lengthy comment letter, Mono Lake Committee attorneys highlighted that DWP has a responsibility to take additional steps to ensure its failing valve problems do not impair restoration, writing "the [State Water] Board should not reward DWP's lack of diligence and poor stewardship of Rush Creek by giving it a free pass" with a flow waiver. The letter set forth eight major mitigation measures that DWP should undertake, including the Committee's detailed proposal to achieve annual restoration flows with proactive management of Grant Lake Reservoir.

Detailed letters from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife and California Trout also argued that restoration responsibilities must be met and that there must be requirements established that mitigate the ecological impacts of DWP's failing rotovalve.

More requests for free passes to come

The Committee is confident DWP could have managed its reservoir to deliver springtime high flows via the spillway, had DWP not exported so much water last year. Notably, the amount exported exceeded the Los Angeles mayor's 4,500 acre-foot voluntary commitment.

Looking ahead, DWP's own repair plan shows that it will be unable to reliably deliver SEFs to Rush Creek until at least 2030. That means we can expect another flow waiver request—known as a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP)—in 2026 and subsequent years. In April 2025, the Committee proposed an interim reservoir management plan designed to maximize the potential for reservoir spill. This would mitigate the impairment of Stream Ecosystem Flows (see page 8) caused by the malfunctioning valve. DWP has plenty of time to implement proactive management strategies like this to demonstrate a commitment to Rush Creek restoration and fulfill its obligations, even while working on its rotovalve repairs.

Thank you to the Mono Lake Committee members and supporters who sent many hundreds of letters to the State Water Board spotlighting DWP's short-sighted plan. DWP ended up withdrawing its flow waiver request because of the pressure you generated asking the Board to ensure that Rush Creek's restoration isn't set back.

DWP adds a twist

When DWP withdrew its TUCP, it added a twist to the operations plan for the year. DWP stated that it had revised its runoff forecast for the year, resulting in a drier forecast. The prediction of a drier year type eliminated the peak flow requirement for Rush Creek. And those lower flows can be met even with the reduced capacity of DWP's malfunctioning rotovalve.

It seems convenient for DWP that it is solely responsible for forecasting the snowmelt runoff and thus holds the power to make such a revision. But indeed, that is how the process works. The question now, of course, is whether the forecast revision is valid.

In our watchdog role, Committee expert staff routinely do forecasting and cross-checking of DWP's work. In the Committee's evaluation, the effort DWP invested in its reforecasting "twist" is uncharacteristic—despite our advocacy for May updates, we've seen few significant May revisions in recent years. The revised forecast is plausible but uncertain, as it involves extrapolation from adjacent watersheds. We will be tracking the actual runoff this summer and throughout the year to see if DWP correctly forecasted what happens in the real world. Either way, the revised forecasting highlights the Committee's longstanding call for DWP to deploy better, modern forecasting tools so that all parties have greater certainty about the Mono Basin snowpack and runoff (see page 12). ❖

Federal downsizing, local consequences

Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra's vast public lands lose federal employees and essential services

by Bartshé Miller

Earlier this year the Trump Administration slashed staffing of federal agencies, including those that manage federal lands around the country and in California and the Eastern Sierra. Nationwide, the Administration has cut ten percent of the US Forest Service workforce.

The Inyo National Forest, home to Mono Lake and the third largest National Forest in California, covering nearly two million acres, has lost positions up and down the agency from maintenance positions to wildlife biologists to recreation staff. The Inyo has long suffered from declining budgets and resource allocations, and the agency was stretched thin before the firings, buy-outs, and voluntary early retirements. Now, with the recent loss of permanent staff in addition to the ongoing freeze on all seasonal staff hiring, the Eastern Sierra will experience a year entirely without wilderness rangers, trail maintenance staff, off-highway vehicle rangers, and interpretive and front desk staff at visitor centers.

Cuts may impact visitors' experience

The loss of staffing will mean reduced resource protection, recreation services, maintenance, and visitor center services. The employee reductions and funding restrictions could result in the reduction of essential services such as maintenance and cleaning of trailhead bathrooms, trash removal, and maintenance of buildings, trailhead signs, kiosks, and other Inyo infrastructure.

In recent years, the Inyo's partner organizations, including Mono County, have stretched to pay for placement and pumping of portable toilets at trailheads and popular visitor sites around the forest. The Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center currently has only one Inyo National Forest employee available to keep the building open. Mono Lake Volunteers and staff from California State Parks, the National Park Service, Sierra Forever, and the Mono Lake Committee will help staff the Visitor Center; however, the ability to keep it open through this summer and fall, plus provide the same level of clean and functioning visitor services compared to past years, is uncertain.

Spending limitations delayed Visitor Center opening

This spring, the Mono Basin Visitor Center fire alarm panel failed—a sophisticated, costly piece of equipment that is essential for personnel and building safety. Unfortunately, the federal administration's cuts have restricted the Inyo from spending above a specific threshold and hamstrung its ability to fully contract out the much-needed repairs. The Inyo's cooperating non-profit partner, Sierra Forever, paid a portion of the total contract cost—helping to implement a solution that allowed a workaround for federal spending limitations that would otherwise have prevented the Visitor Center from opening and meeting basic building safety requirements.

Agencies cope under strain

Mono Basin seasonal firefighter jobs have not been cut and the number of functioning interagency engines and crews in the Mono Basin appears to be consistent with last year. However, the number of engines and crews on the rest of the Inyo is reduced compared to earlier years. Regardless, the Inyo is implementing long-planned prescribed burns, including up to 2,193 acres of Jeffrey pine forest in the Mono Lake and Mammoth Ranger Districts.

The National Park Service, including Yosemite National Park, has also experienced the firing of seasonal and probationary employees, staff buy-outs, and early retirements. Seasonal staff firings were eventually reversed for those who had not already moved on, but the staff reductions have brought chaos and a loss of institutional knowledge within Yosemite, including specific maintenance expertise in dealing with things like wastewater system operations in Tuolumne Meadows.

Throughout the Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra, trailheads, park entrances, and visitor centers will all be open, but fewer remaining agency staff will be burdened with a greater workload. Visitors may be coping with longer wait times for permits and entries, as well as more trash, backlogged trail maintenance, fewer serviced facilities, and reduced resource protection. ❖

MAUREEN MCGLINCHY

Even more than in previous years, volunteers are helping to keep federal sites like South Tufa open this year.

Watershed moments

news from the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center

by Santiago M. Escruceria

It's OEC season

The 2025 Outdoor Education Center (OEC) season has 27 groups registered for multi-day watershed education in the Mono Basin between April and October. Notably, 22 of these groups originate from the Los Angeles area, with 14 from within the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) service area. These groups are represented by seven of the 15 Los Angeles City Council Districts, including Districts 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 14, and 15. The OEC program also serves the wider Southern California area and includes groups from the northern and west side of the Sierra.

Many groups are returning—with new participants introduced to the wonder of the Mono Basin thanks to the dedication of teachers, group leaders, and chaperones. In the OEC program in particular, the group leaders are essential to making the trips happen. In order to keep costs down, each group is responsible for their own transportation and food, which makes it possible for more students to participate, and also adds responsibilities for the leaders. From fundraising to van-wrangling to permissions to food, gear, and safety preparation, the leaders are truly unsung heroes, with many stepping up for years and even decades to make the trips possible for their students.

Dedicated leader, Dean Zrucky of POLAHS

For 15 years now, Dean Zrucky, a science teacher at Port of Los Angeles High School, has been bringing students from south LA to Mono Lake for five-day OEC programs. Dean is an educator who believes in challenging his students with experiential learning to develop skills and critical thinking that prepare them for the complex and challenging realities of their futures. He's also the kind of teacher that is willing and able to tackle the formidable logistics necessary to make the experience possible for his students. We surprised Dean (pictured above, back row, center) by marking his 15th year with a certificate and ceremony with his students.

OEC gets a demonstration greywater system

This year the Outdoor Education Center emerged from its winter hibernation to some significant landscape changes and educational upgrades. Not only do we now have a new ultra-efficient washing machine that can wash three sleeping bags at a time, but it simultaneously waters the trees in the backyard through a greywater system (see photo below).

Our friends at the sustainable landscape design group Watershed Progressive installed extensive cardboard and mulch systems to help contain the greywater longer in the soil around the trees. This type of residential greywater system is simpler to install and more user-friendly than you might imagine. It's great to be able to showcase this water conservation in action for the students at the OEC.

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/oec *facebook.com/mono.oec*

PHOTOS BY SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA

Streamwatch

2025 slightly drier than 2024

by Greg Reis

2024 runoff was 80% of average. The same runoff was forecast in April for 2025; however, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) uncharacteristically revised it in May to 69% (see page 9). The new forecast makes 2025 a Dry-Normal I year-type, which does not require a peak flow on Rush Creek and results in lower releases to Lee Vining Creek.

DWP's runoff forecasts have been averaging 25% too high (ranging 12–46%) the last six years in a row—a dramatic shift from the prior decade, when they averaged only 14% too high. Despite the Mono Lake Committee's urging, DWP has yet to take advantage of remote sensing technologies coupled with snowmelt forecasting models—a practice that is now standard in almost all California's other snowmelt watersheds, which better adjusts to the changing climate.

The Dry-Normal I year-type designation removes DWP's obligation to deliver a Rush Creek peak Stream Ecosystem Flow (SEF) in 2025. However, the failing Grant Lake Reservoir aqueduct intake rotovalve, unable to deliver peak SEFs, is a longer term problem. While it is being repaired during the next five to ten years, other ways of delivering Rush Creek's peak SEF are needed. Earlier this year, DWP submitted a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP) to the California State Water Resources Control Board so that it would not have to try to deliver the peak flow (see page 8). But alternatives exist—in the past, DWP has installed temporary pumps or siphons to move water. The simplest way to attempt to achieve a higher flow is to spill Grant, which was successful in delivering last year's peak SEF, although it requires keeping the reservoir level higher each year.

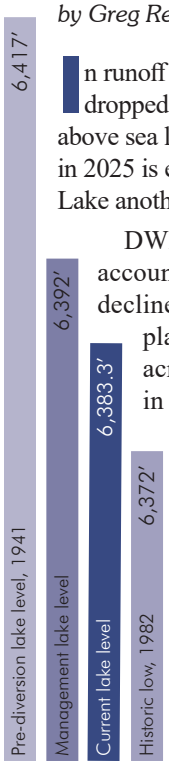
Instead of allowing DWP to apply to waive its responsibility to Rush Creek for half a decade or longer, in April the Committee proposed to the State Water Board that higher Grant levels be required to address a long list of changed conditions: the broken rotovalve, lack of a high flow outlet, current knowledge of Rush Creek temperatures, Southern California Edison operations upstream, and current knowledge of Mono Lake's delayed recovery to its management level.

Committee members supported our proactive proposal in early May, with hundreds of comments sent to the State Water Board. DWP ended up withdrawing its proposal for 2025 (see page 9), but we know the same issues will be a problem again next year. ❖

Lakewatch

Mono Lake dropping due to water exports and below-average runoff

by Greg Reis



In runoff year 2024, Mono Lake dropped 0.4 feet to 6383.3 feet above sea level. Slightly lower runoff in 2025 is expected to drop Mono Lake another 0.8 feet this year.

DWP's water exports account for most of the lake's decline in the past year. DWP planned to export 4,500 acre-feet of surface water in runoff year 2024 (April 1, 2024–March 31, 2025); however, it chose to abandon that commitment and exported 11,000 acre-feet. That 6,500 acre-foot increase in exports caused Mono Lake to decline an additional 0.14 feet. DWP's groundwater exports raised total exports to a grand total of 16,000 acre-feet for the 2024 runoff year, which accounts for a ⅓-foot decline in Mono Lake. In other words, 75% of Mono Lake's drop in 2024 was due to DWP's water exports.

The City of Los Angeles agreed to limit surface exports to 4,500 acre-feet last year, recognizing that exports from Mono Lake have slowed down the lake's recovery to the 6,392-foot management level—31 years into this transition the lake is only halfway to the goal. DWP unilaterally decided not to stick to that limit, and only reduced exports below the 16,000 acre-foot trajectory after the 4,500 acre-foot plan was surpassed. DWP failed to explain why it abandoned the City's promised consideration of Mono Lake's level when it conducted 2024 exports the way it did, but it is clear that it never supported the voluntary reduction agreed to by the City.

This year, DWP is not pretending to be interested in a voluntary solution to meeting its requirements for raising Mono Lake. DWP plans to take 16,000 acre-feet of surface water, the maximum allowed (see page 7). DWP's groundwater exports will raise that number to a total of 21,000 acre-feet of water. That volume of water export has been shown by hydrology modeling to be ineffective at raising Mono Lake to its management level, both under the climate of the last 30 years and also under likely future climate scenarios. The State Water Board hearing cannot come soon enough. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He started at the Mono Lake Committee as an intern 30 years ago.

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Living in the Mono Basin provides the hourly opportunity to experience the push and pull of the seasons. Seldom is the transition clear cut in the spring; often cold, overcast winterlike days with blowing snow oscillate with calm, warm, blue-sky days.

The delicate pink flowers that envelop the low-lying branches of desert peach shrubs are always a true sign that spring is, on the whole, winning the tug of war with winter. And yet, as we saw this year, flurries of snow can collect among the stamens and weigh down the petals with accumulations of equally delicate, cold and fluffy frozen flakes.

Mono Lake's restoration should be as inevitable as winter giving way to spring, with ups and downs on a journey that the world has celebrated as an overall return to health. And yet, unlike winter changing into spring, it is the choices we humans make that control the outcome. Deliver water to the lake? Or divert it into the LA Aqueduct? The woes of today's low levels show us, again, that the lake needs to rise. To make that happen, it will take all of us working together with the strength of the seasons. ❖

Geoff McQuilkin is the Committee's Executive Director. He has been enjoying kayaking on Mono Lake with his daughter, who gathered Secchi disk visibility measurements for her local science fair project.

Benchmarks

ROBBIE DI PAOLO

October 2020: After a prescribed burn and hand-pulling effort, Twain Islet was nearly free of the invasive weed Bassia*, allowing many more California Gulls to nest on the islet.*

ANDREW YOUSSEF

March 2025: Five years later, the Bassia *has rebounded on Twain, limiting the amount of nesting space available for California Gulls on the islet.* *Read more on page 3.*

Naturalist notes

by Hannah Ashby

In February, at Old Marina, a covey of California Quail frantically shuffled from one sagebrush to another, weaving between patches of snow. Cottontail and mouse tracks served as a reminder of the life that exists beneath the sleepy surface of winter. Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shovelers, and American Coots found refuge in DeChambeau Ponds while wind whipped and churned Mono Lake's water into foam. At County Park, Northern Flickers and American Kestrels flew between the cottonwoods, apparently unbothered by the freezing temperatures. Observant drivers between June Lake and Lee Vining might have caught sight of a Bald Eagle flying over the icy water, a rare sign of life in the otherwise frozen loop.

As the storms gave way to sunshine in March, hints of spring appeared. The chatter of Steller's Jays echoing through the conifers served as an alarm clock. On an evening walk, a dozen Mountain Chickadees were clinging to the cones of a Jeffrey Pine, seemingly enjoying a meal together. Robins appeared, breaking up the squawks of the Steller's Jays with a more melodic tune. Hairy Woodpeckers drummed up attention, and at lower elevations in town, Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsuckers made their appearance. Slowly but surely, the Mono Basin was coming to life.

On a sunset visit to the Rush Creek delta, the sky swirled in pink and orange hues, perfectly reflected on the lake's glassy surface. Western Meadowlarks sung and flew from perch to perch, throwing their voices around the willow thickets. Efforts to follow their movements were interrupted by the glimmers of light off the wings of Violet-green Swallows. Dozens performed an acrobatic display of agility and speed to earn their dinner.

Now, as summer approaches, the change of the season picks up pace. Each week brings new trees in bloom and birds in flight. New green leaves on aspens emerge and transform the dull gray groves into bright reminders of spring. Desert Peach blossoms add sparks of color to the muted tones of sagebrush and greasewood. Mules Ears and Paintbrush dot the hillside with yellow and scarlet hues.

Mono Lake itself has begun to bloom, too. The lake is tinted green with algae, a preamble to the explosion of brine shrimp and alkali flies to come. California Gulls have arrived in anticipation of this feast, and Eared Grebes are beginning to follow suit. The lake that has been a silky mirror for sunsets is now teeming with life that contrasts with its winter stillness. It's undeniable—summer is on its way!

As someone who loves the sunshine, it's easy to rush toward the coming season. I love the high country and lush alpine meadows that come to life each summer. Hiking over granite peaks, seeing wildflowers in bloom, watching a pika run across the talus with a mouthful of hay—it's easy to daydream about the season's arrival. In these moments of anticipation and impatience, I remind myself that these magical months ahead wouldn't be possible without the storms, the quiet, and the rest of the off-season. ❖

Hannah Ashby is the Committee's Education Coordinator. She is excited to spend her first summer in Lee Vining and is looking forward to canoeing on Mono Lake for the first time.

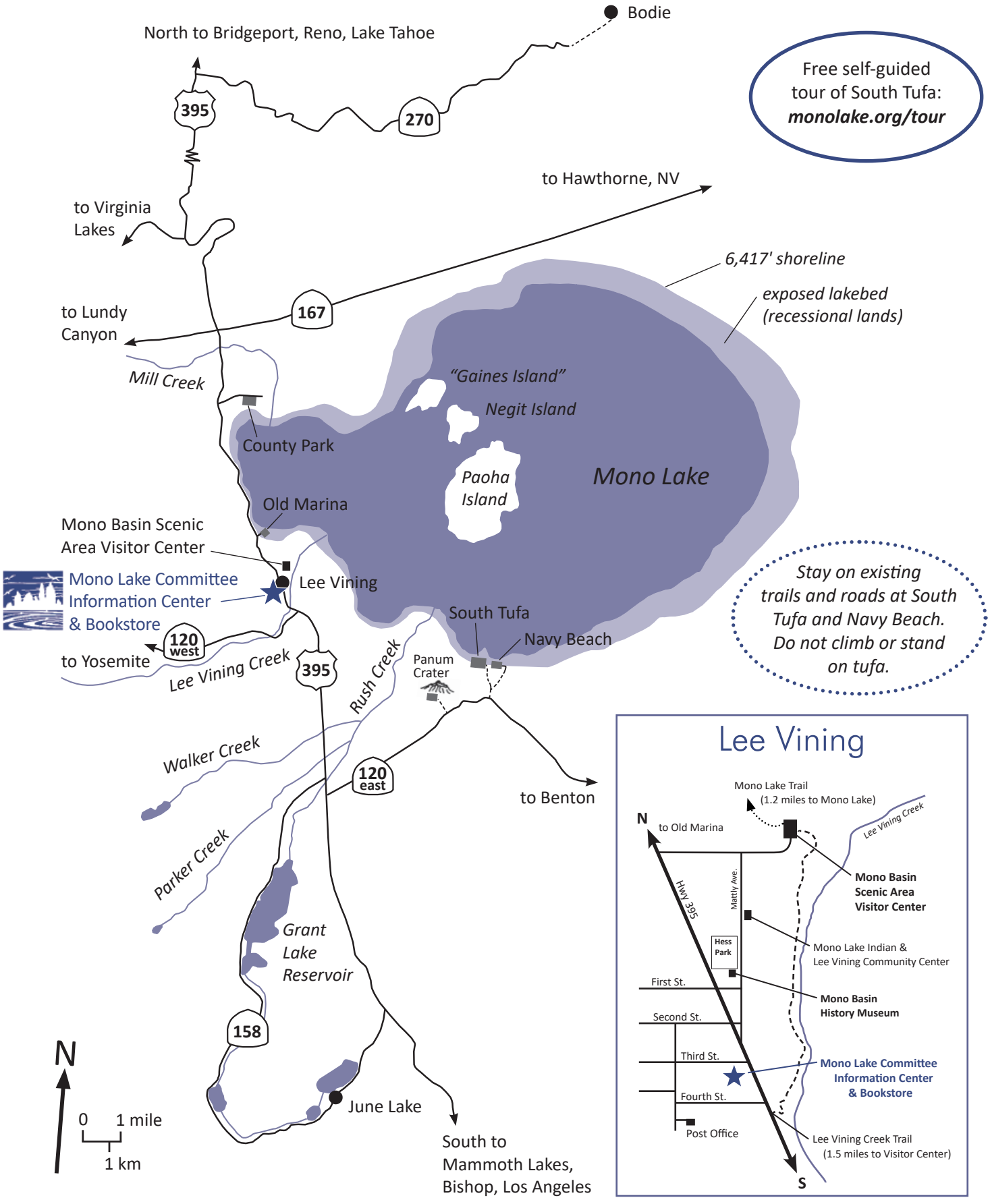
ELIN LJUNG

Snow on blooming bitterbrush above Mill Creek and Mono Lake.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRY TAYLOR

A Violet-green Swallow perched on a tufa tower.

Mono Lake map



Free self-guided tour of South Tufa: ***monolake.org/tour***

Stay on existing trails and roads at South Tufa and Navy Beach. Do not climb or stand on tufa.

Lee Vining

Visiting Mono Lake

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

The Mono Lake story

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 in 1978 in response to the threat of ecological collapse of Mono Lake. The Committee set up headquarters in the old aqueduct workers' dance hall in Lee Vining and went to work spreading the word about Mono Lake. The Committee took the City of Los Angeles to court, arguing that DWP had violated the Public Trust Doctrine, which the Supreme Court of California described in 1983 as "the duty of the state to protect the people's common heritage of streams, lakes, marshlands and tidelands..."

In 1994, after more than a decade of litigation, the California State Water Resources Control Board ordered DWP to reduce diversions and raise Mono Lake to a healthy level of 6,392 feet above sea level—twenty feet above its historical low. This was truly an environmental victory. Now, thirty-one years after the State Water Board's historic decision, the lake is still eight feet short of the healthy management level because of DWP's ongoing water diversions.

ELIN LIUNG

Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore

- *Open daily 9:00AM–7:00PM during the summer*
- monolake.org/shop *and (760) 647-6595*

See detailed displays about Mono Lake's political history and the current work of the Mono Lake Committee, "The Mono Lake Story" film, an art gallery, a comprehensive selection of books on natural and local history, T-shirts, maps, and locally made artisan gifts. This is also the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce.

Mono Lake's recovery depends on decreased water use in Los Angeles, and the Committee has created solutions to the demand for water by implementing conservation and recycling programs in LA that have saved more than enough water to share with Mono Lake. Today LA is one of the most water-conscious cities in the United States, and the Committee works statewide to promote wise water use.

AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY

Canoe on Mono Lake

- *Saturdays and Sundays at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00AM*
- *June 14, 2025 through September 1, 2025*
- *Tours last one hour*
- *$35 per person; $20 for children ages 4–12*
- *Sorry, no children under the age of 4 and no pets*
- *Reservations required:* monolake.org/canoe *or (760) 647-6595*

Guided canoe tours provide a unique look at the ecology and geology of Mono Lake. Discover bubbling springs, alkali flies, brine shrimp, underwater tufa towers, and migrating birds from the vantage point of a canoe. No canoe experience is necessary and all equipment is provided.

You are part of the Mono Lake story

GABRIELLE RENTERIA

Free naturalist tours at South Tufa

- *Daily at 10:00AM and 6:00PM**
- **Reservations recommended:* monolake.org/freetour *or (760) 647-6595*
- *Tours are free, but there is a $3 per person entrance fee to the South Tufa area*
- *Meet at the kiosk at the South Tufa parking lot*

Find out why Mono Lake is salty, make tufa, taste alkali fly pupae, and see migratory and nesting birds on this fascinating hour-long tour. (If you can't make a scheduled tour, you can take a self-guided tour on monolake.org/tour.*)*

The Mono Lake story is not over

The Committee works in the areas of public policy, ecological protection and restoration, education, and scientific research. We continue to strive for solutions that balance the water needs of people and the environment.

Protection. The Committee defends existing Mono Lake protections to ensure that established rules, orders, agreements, and victories remain active and strong. We make sure that DWP complies with existing rules while also advocating for better rules that will allow the lake to rise. In addition to demands for water, challenges facing Mono Lake also include poorly-planned development, increasing recreation pressures, underfunded management agencies, and climate change.

Restoration. The Committee works to restore the ecological functions of Mono Lake, its tributary streams and waterfowl habitat, and the watershed as a whole. Our restoration programs work to heal the damage caused by 50 years of DWP's past excessive water diversions. As a result of historic litigation, DWP is required to fulfill its restoration obligations in the Mono Basin as ordered by the State Water Board. The Committee plays a critical role as a monitor to transform the restoration requirements into measurable restoration progress.

monolake.org *@monolakeca*

@monolake.org *Mono Lake Committee*

Education. The Committee offers hands-on programs to share the sense of wonder that Mono Lake evokes. South Tufa tours, activities for school groups, Field Seminars (see page 18), custom guided trips, and the annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua all provide ways to learn more about Mono Lake. The Committee's Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center brings students from Los Angeles to learn about the source of their water, educating the next generation of California policymakers.

Science. Scientific research is the basis of our policy work, a guide for restoration, and an inspiration for understanding Mono Lake. The Committee supports and works with researchers, hosts a comprehensive research library, and runs the Mono Basin Field Station to enhance the scientific knowledge of Mono Lake, its tributary streams, and the surrounding lands.

Get involved at Mono Lake

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 work for Mono Lake and your voice will help convince decision makers to make sure lake restoration is accomplished.

Join us on a walking tour, Field Seminar, or custom guided trip. Check out Mono Lake online at *monolake.org* to stay connected to Mono Lake and help ensure its protection for generations to come. ❖

ELIN LJUNG

Free birding tours

- *Fridays and Sundays at 8:00AM at Mono Lake County Park*
- *Saturdays at 8:00AM in Lundy Canyon*
- **Reservations recommended:* monolake.org/birdtour *or (760) 647-6595*

Magic is flying and flitting through the air in the Mono Basin. Join a resident expert to see everything from shorebirds to songbirds on this free tour for birders of all levels. Bring binoculars and a bird book if you have them (not required).

2025 Field Seminars

TERI TRACY

Avian Ecology of the Mono Basin

June 27–29 • David Wimpfheimer
$315 per person / $300 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

The Mono Basin is one of the most diverse ecosystems on the continent; this seminar will be an overview of the varied habitats found here. One of the best ways to gain an appreciation for Mono Lake's drama and productivity is to explore its shores and then proceed higher in elevation to other habitats. We will enjoy the rich diversity of mammals, butterflies, wildflowers, and trees, and a major focus will be the identification and ecology of birds that breed here. In sagebrush meadows and riparian and conifer forests, the seminar will explore a number of sites intensively, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion. A guided canoe tour of Mono's south shore is included.

Brush & Bloom

July 11–13 • AnnaLisa Mayer
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Field illustration is a powerful tool to develop a deep understanding of an ecosystem and encourages us to slow down and pay attention—the first step in developing a natural history practice. In this seminar, we will embark on a journey of discovery amid the wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra, honing our ability to read a landscape through its flora and practicing plant identification through artistic expression. We will have ample opportunity to utilize botanical illustration techniques to learn more about the flowers we encounter, cultivate playfulness and curiosity in the cataloging of our findings, and even experiment with ethical harvesting to incorporate foraged materials into our sketchbooks.

Ashes to Avalanches: The Mono Basin in Recovery

July 18–20 • Todd Wanner
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

The Mono Basin is a fascinating place to observe the ongoing impacts—both beneficial and damaging—of natural disturbances. A warming climate is precipitating periodic intense wildfires in a variety of plant communities. Additionally, in the winter of 2022–2023, the Mono Basin experienced 100-year snowfall with highly damaging avalanches in sub-alpine plant communities, upper montane forests, and in some places these avalanches slid almost to Mono Lake. The focus of this seminar will be to visit these

To sign up for a Mono Lake Committee Field Seminar please visit *monolake.org/seminars* or call (760) 647-6595.

various disturbance sites and to observe and evaluate the current health of the plant communities. Along the way, we will enjoy birding, botanizing, nature journaling, and reflecting.

Butterflies & Moths of the Eastern Sierra

July 25–27 • Paul Johnson
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

More than 100 species of butterflies and perhaps 20 times as many species of moths live in the Eastern Sierra. With this incredible diversity of species, there is always something new to be found by the careful observer. Most butterflies and moths have close relationships with the few plant species their caterpillars can eat, and various biological needs drive them to visit flowers, mud puddles, hilltops, and more. This seminar will explore these habitat preferences and then use this knowledge to guide our searches at various butterfly-rich locations. We will likely see some day-flying moths along the way and we'll also reconvene at night and use black lights to attract nocturnal moths that might otherwise go unnoticed as they go about their lives in the darkness.

Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

August 1–3 • Greg Stock
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

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.

BREELYNN BUTLER

Field Seminars are an excellent way to learn about the rich natural history of the Mono Basin with an expert instructor.

This seminar, consisting of field visits to the premier sites, will present in understandable fashion the geologic stories of the Mono Basin.

Cuentos y Cantos al Desierto

August 8–10 • Stacey Villalobos
$40–80 per person, sliding scale
enrollment limited

La tierra es testigo de nuestras ofrendas, ¿cómo podemos honrar nuestra relación con la naturaleza a través de nuestras voces? Over the course of this bilingual seminar, participants will be guided on a series of outings that will explore reciprocity as an offering through stories and song. Exchanges with plants, animals, and the elements will inform our relationship with the lands, people, and communities we call home. Activities may include hiking, birdwatching, botany, meditation, journaling, storytelling, singing, and embodied voice practices. This bilingual seminar is specifically designed to create a space for native and heritage Spanish-speaking participants.

Mono Basin Landscape & Dark Sky Night Photography

August 15–17 • Jeff Sullivan & Lori Hibbett
$380 per person / $360 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Summer is a special time in the Mono Basin with Sierra Nevada peaks catching morning alpenglow and afternoon cloud formations lighting up at sunset, often yielding to clear skies for Milky Way night photography. This seminar will cover best practices for composing and capturing stunning landscape and night sky photographs. We'll also spend time learning how to anticipate and plan for great sunrise and sunset shots and how to use composition and light for greater impact in every photograph. When we're not out photographing in the field, we will have discussions and demonstrations on post-processing indoors to refine our skills.

Falling for the Migration: Bridgeport, Crowley, Mono

August 22–24 • Dave Shuford
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

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, August is the time of year to see late summer migrants and early arriving wintering birds in the Mono Basin, Bridgeport Valley, and Long Valley. Beginners as well as experts will enjoy this introduction to the area's bird life found in a wide variety of habitats, from the shimmering shores of Mono Lake to lofty Sierra peaks.

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

We will identify about 100 species by plumage and calls and also discuss migration strategies, behavior, and ecology to complement our field observations.

Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 22–24 • Lucy Parker, Dr. Julia Parker, & Ursula Jones
$600 per person / $575 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

During this seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a small Miwok-Paiute basket using a twining method. Basket weaving requires time and desire, plus patience, especially with yourself, as you practice a new skill. Your instructors are excellent guides, and we encourage you come to this workshop open to learning about weaving and native cultures. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group at a peaceful private campsite near Lundy Canyon.

Communing with(in) Nature

August 29–31 • Bree Salazar
$40–80 per person, sliding scale
enrollment limited

This seminar will visit the varying ecosystems of Kootzagwae (Mono Basin) and Payahuunadü (Owens Valley) to learn about local natural history, regional environmental/Indigenous-led movements, and ways to feel more connected to and grounded on the land. Activities may include hiking, birding, nature journaling, forest bathing, meditation, and community building. Whether it's your first time or your hundredth in the area, by the end of this seminar we will feel more confident and empowered to step beyond just recreation and into responsibility, while honoring each other's identities. This seminar is specifically designed for participants who self-identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Natural History at the Edge of the Sierra

September 12–14 • Nora Livingston
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

Natural history pays attention to all aspects of nature and widens our view when out in the forest or high desert. In this seminar, we will make our way up the east slope from Mono Lake to Tioga Pass, stopping at several locations to observe all that we find, which may include wildly colorful butterflies like the lustrous copper, hidden Sierra rein orchids in pristine meadows, and plenty of birds, from warblers to rosy-finches. This is the quintessential seminar in the field with a naturalist, where we will ponder the grandeur and the minutiae that envelops us in this amazing place.

TERI TRACY

Field Seminars span a range of activity levels from easy walking to strenuous hiking.

Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

September 26–28 • Greg Stock
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

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 of field visits to the premier sites, will present in understandable fashion the geologic stories of the Mono Basin.

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

Foraging in the Eastern Sierra

October 3–5 • Mia Andler
$290 per person / $275 for members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Learn about the edible and useful plants of the Eastern Sierra in an active, multisensory, and fun way. This seminar is a hands-on course in plant identification and use. We will search for plants, cook some of what we find, make plant-based products, get creative with field journaling, and get closer to plants by practicing nature awareness techniques. While the seminar will focus on foraging in the Eastern Sierra, much of the knowledge participants will learn will help them forage in other areas too.

Mono Basin Fall Photography

October 8–10 • Robb Hirsch
$380 per person / $360 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

In autumn, spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter to photograph. Seminar participants will learn how to refine their own vision and best interpret it through the camera. Explore shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and grand overviews of the Mono Basin in this seminar.

ELIN JUNG

Capture the stunning beauty of the changing aspens in the Mono Basin on a photography Field Seminar.

Field Seminar Information

Please visit *monolake.org/seminars* to register for a Field Seminar, find complete itineraries, and see cancellation and refund policies.

No pets are allowed on any Field Seminars. Please consider this in advance and find boarding accommodations for your pets or leave them at home; do not leave pets in your car during seminars. Service animals assisting people with disabilities are allowed on seminars and must be leashed.

Field Seminars are open to all, but Mono Lake Committee members may register early and receive discounts. All instructors are experts 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 Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

All Field Seminars and custom trips operate under Inyo National Forest and California State Parks permits.

Questions? Email *fieldseminars@monolake.org* or call us at (760) 647-6595.

Martha Guzman honored with award

by Geoff McQuilkin

On the evening of May 8, one hundred Eastern Sierra friends, community members, and agency and organization partners gathered at Mammoth Mountain's Parallax Restaurant to celebrate passionate engagement in community and the land, and this year's Andrea Lawrence Award honoree, Martha Guzman.

Martha was chosen for the award for engaging key partners on the issue of air quality violations at Mono Lake in her role as Region 9 Administrator for the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Last fall, Martha came to Mono Lake to make progress on the longstanding air quality violation issue. She gathered representatives from ten regional, state, and federal agencies, along with the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, and the Mono Lake Committee for presentations on the condition of the lake, a roundtable discussion about how water exports are perpetuating air quality violations, and a group trip to the lakeshore.

Martha's leadership sparked dialogue and efforts at collective problem solving—things she knew would make an impact in elevating the issue before the State Water Board.

The effort to protect Mono Lake has been shaped by people coming together to achieve big things that no one individual could accomplish alone. Martha embodies this spirit that Andrea Lawrence personified and so fiercely advocated.

Andrea 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 14th Andrea Lawrence Award Dinner was made possible by the generous support of the Lawrence family and Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Proceeds support the Mono Lake Committee's Andrea Lawrence Fund, which is used to encourage collaboration and to inspire young people to become environmental leaders, specifically through the Committee's Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center and Experience Ambientalia programs. ❖

SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA

Award recipient Martha Guzman, center, with the Mono Lake Committee's Geoff McQuilkin and Martha Davis.

Plan to remove wild horses near Mono Lake approved

In March, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service approved a plan to gather and remove wild horses roaming outside the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory near Benton on public and private lands, including the shore and wetland habitats at Mono Lake. The planned management action is in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burros Act of 1971.

"This plan will allow the Inyo National Forest to gather horses beginning summer of 2025 from high-priority areas outside the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory, where wild horses are causing impacts to sensitive wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and tufa geological formations; where there are safety concerns for motorists; and areas where private landowners have requested their removal," said BLM Bishop Field Manager Sherri Lisius.

A 2024 aerial survey estimated 699 horses with the majority outside the territory in areas not designated for their management. The Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory can support up to 230 horses.

The plan authorizes horses to be gathered and transported to Forest Service off-range corrals, where they will be checked by a veterinarian and prepared for adoption and sale programs. The US Forest Service's Double Devil Wild Horse Corrals may receive the horses—this relatively new facility on the Modoc National Forest is well-known for its highly successful adoption program.

More details can be found at the BLM National NEPA Register under the project name "Removal of Wild Horses Outside the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory."

Hap Dunning, champion of the Public Trust

by Arya Degenhardt

In March, the Mono Lake community lost Harrison "Hap" C. Dunning—a renowned legal scholar and professor, steadfast advocate of the Public Trust, and insightful thinker who sought a balanced and sustainable approach to water rights law.

Starting in the 1970s, Hap became a leading voice for California water law reform. In 1980 he organized a law conference on the Public Trust that would later prove incredibly influential for the future of Mono Lake.

As the story goes

Broadly speaking, the Public Trust is the concept that certain lands and resources belong to all people, and that the government has a continuing duty to manage these natural resource commons for the benefit of current and future generations.

Hap's writings helped frame the legal understanding of the Public Trust as a dynamic and evolving obligation—a living principle that required the state to act as a guardian of natural resources. His work provided both intellectual legitimacy and moral grounding to the idea that nature's intrinsic value could, and should, be recognized in the legal system.

Hap saw that the Public Trust Doctrine and the traditional Western water rights system were on a collision course. And he wasn't alone—in 1980, 650 people joined his conference "The Public Trust Doctrine in Natural Resources Law and Management" at the University of California, Davis, which helped to put the issue on the intellectual map.

The California water law impact of Hap's Public Trust symposium can't be overstated. It set the framework for the Public Trust Doctrine to be applied to California water allocations, starting with the National Audubon/Mono Lake Committee decision by the California Supreme Court.

In the book *Storm Over Mono* John Hart wrote, "On February 17, 1983, the California Supreme Court broke its silence. The plaintiffs found it had been worth the wait. In a six-to-one decision written by Justice Alan Broussard, the court declared that the public trust existed at Mono Lake; that it has not been properly considered in the past; that it should be considered now; and that Los Angeles's water rights were subject to revision."

A lasting connection with Mono Lake

The California Supreme Court's 1983 decision laid much of the groundwork for State Water Board Decision 1631, issue in 1994, which transformed the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's water rights and detailed the ongoing protection and restoration requirements we see at Mono Lake today.

In 2014 the Mono Lake Committee honored Hap with the Defender of the Trust award for his extraordinary work defending the Public Trust and protecting the public's natural heritage at Mono Lake and its tributary streams (see Fall 2014 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

Beyond the courtroom and the classroom, Hap's impact was deeply human. He mentored generations of lawyers, judges, and environmental advocates, instilling in them a respect for law as a tool of public service and ecological stewardship.

Hap was nothing if not devoted to his family. We recently learned that last fall, one of Hap's granddaughters took a trip with her elementary school to the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center, where she and her classmates learned the Mono Lake story. It's one of those almost unbelievable full-circle moments, because the Public Trust principle that Hap developed establishes that protection is an obligation of the state to future generations. Hap's son Thad wrote, "I am proud that my dad's work helped contribute to the wonderful, shared effort to restore the lake."

Hap's work helped make the world, and Mono Lake, better. He leaves an inspired legacy that will continue to shape water law and natural resource policy for generations. ❖

ELIM LIMG

Hap Dunning, right, received the 2014 Mono Lake Defender of the Trust award.

Juana Gutierrez, matriarch of the Outdoor Experiences Program at Mono Lake

by Arya Degenhardt

Los Angeles and Mono Lake lost a fierce advocate, role model, partner, and friend with the recent passing of Juana Beatriz Gutierrez in late April. As remembrances of Juana's life poured in, we shared in the celebration of her life and the legacy of her passion that lives on here at Mono Lake.

Mothers of East Los Angeles–Santa Isabel

In 1994, money from Assembly Bill 444 was being used to implement a voluntary water conservation program in Los Angeles to benefit the ecosystem of Mono Lake. Community groups, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), installed low-flush toilets in the DWP service area. Community groups were trained in toilet installation and given free toilets to distribute in their neighborhoods. One of those groups was Mothers of East Los Angeles–Santa Isabel (MELASI), co-founded by Juana.

Part of a greater effort to show that the people of LA could easily conserve more water than was needed to save Mono Lake, the toilet retrofit program was both popular and successful. Together with MELASI, the Mono Lake Committee envisioned an idea to better bridge the gap between Los Angeles youth and the origins of their water.

Juana and her husband Ricardo brought a group of MELASI families from LA to Mono Lake for four days of camping and immersive watershed exploration. Reflecting on the impact this trip had on her group, Juana said in 1994, "In time these young people will become involved in the struggle to keep these places alive."

That trip was the spark that launched what is now the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center program, now in its 31st season. "Doña Juana was an early advocate for brown people and minorities, both those living in her local community and those who enjoyed and recreated on our shared public lands. She made the watershed connection between LA and Mono Lake come to life while providing life-changing opportunities for people in underserved communities," said Santiago Escruceria, Outdoor Education Center Manager.

Honoring Doña Juana

On May 6 the Los Angeles City Council adjourned in memory of Juana with multiple moving statements about her accomplishments and positive impact. In mid-May hundreds of people came to her memorial gathering in Los Angeles.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Juana Gutierrez, left, was a co-founder of the community and environmental justice group Mothers of East Los Angeles–Santa Isabel.

Following her passing, members of Juana's family came to Mono Lake and gathered for a three-generation celebration of her life on Rush Creek where Juana and Ricardo first planted trees in the 1990s to help restore the streamside forests lost to DWP's excessive water diversions. Son Gabriel Gutierrez, grandson mark! Lopez, and great granddaughter Luna Boj-Lopez, all advocates in their own right, stood in the shade of trees she helped plant—now towering, vibrant, and strong. ❖

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Juana, top row, second from left, and her husband Ricardo brought a group of families from East LA to Mono Lake in 1994 for a camping trip that started the Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center program.

California Gulls from page 6

gulls are continually in jeopardy when low lake levels allow coyotes to cross shallow water and the landbridge. The birds have suffered repeated predation events on the Paoha and Negit islets, further eroding their population at Mono Lake. Coyote predation in 2015 and 2016 resulted in fewer nesting gulls.

In 2017 the Committee installed a temporary electric fence across the landbridge to prevent coyotes from reaching vulnerable nesting gulls after the 2016 predation event (see Summer 2017 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The fence worked and the gulls were protected, but it was only through a significant dedication of time and resources and some luck that the effort succeeded. The lake rose significantly in 2017 after the gulls nested and the fence was dismantled. Installing a fence is not a long-term, tenable management strategy that can replace a higher lake level. Waiting for the benefit of a wet year remains frustratingly futile for managing coyote predation—doubly so when DWP water exports routinely erode the wet-year lake level gains that could otherwise protect against both predation and meromixis.

Are we running out of time for the gulls?

California Gulls are resilient, but they are not invincible. They have, remarkably, weathered the predation-induced trauma of the initial big drop in lake level caused by DWP diversions. After that, gull numbers sharply rebounded, indicating that if healthier ecological conditions and predator-free conditions were available, they could thrive.

Mono Lake is only halfway to the State Water Board's healthy level requirement and the lake level is insufficient to maintain a long-term, sustainable nesting population of California Gulls. If the lake does not achieve constant progress toward its management level soon, the Mono Lake Committee is concerned that the second largest California Gull colony in the Great Basin may slip away.

What the gull situation shows us is that climate change and increasing extreme precipitation volatility are not the problem here. The problem is DWP's continuing, maximized diversions that remove inches a year and feet per decade from Mono Lake, keeping the lake low and vulnerable to a permanent loss of biodiversity.

Ironically, as the size of the gull colony has diminished, the water supply portfolio of DWP has grown to be more efficient, and resilient as Los Angeles enjoys the lowest per-capita water use in its history. The city only draws 1–3% of its water from the Mono Basin, but DWP continues to gamble away Public Trust values and biodiversity while maintaining that everything is fine at Mono Lake.

The California Gulls are telling a different story—and it is not a hopeful one for the other birds and organisms that are also hanging on for a long-overdue healthier Mono Lake. ❖

Broken Grant valve from page 8

can't fulfill peak flow SEFs on Rush Creek.

Short-term planning like this—diverting water without consideration for cumulative impacts down the road—feels like a return to DWP's historic practice of maximizing water exports at great cost to the downstream ecosystem.

Two contrasting solutions

2025 is not the first time Rush Creek restoration will rely on Grant spilling, and it won't be the last. In fact, DWP has proposed a ten-year plan for infrastructure repair that will impair streamflows until at least 2030—if there are no delays.

DWP's solution? In April DWP requested an annual variance from the State Water Board to waive springtime SEF peak flow requirements and delay Rush Creek restoration. The variance request is called a Temporary Urgency Change Petition (TUCP), but DWP's repair timeline suggests it will be unable to deliver SEF peak flows to Rush Creek until at least 2030, that is, without reservoir spill. Requesting a TUCP every year for the next five or more years is not what the *temporary* in TUCP was intended for. As Mono Lake Committee attorneys have pointed out in a letter to the State Water Board, "the TUCP process is designed to address urgent, one-off situations that cannot be avoided through the exercise of due diligence."

In contrast, the Committee's solution is to simply do what worked in 2024. Starting runoff seasons with a reasonably full Grant Lake Reservoir while the rotovalve remains broken is prudent, and doable with good planning. High reservoir levels will generate beneficial spills, which is currently one of the only feasible mechanisms—and easiest—for achieving SEFs in Rush Creek. For this reason, in mid-April 2025 the Committee submitted to the State Water Board a proposal for a multi-year TUCP mitigation that requires DWP to manage Grant higher during the time that infrastructure constraints threaten to slow Rush Creek restoration. The Committee's analysis demonstrates that DWP would always improve peak flows and sometimes achieve peak SEFs on Rush Creek with a little thoughtful planning and foresight.

While DWP continues to delay critical infrastructure repairs and shirk downstream restoration obligations to Rush Creek and Mono Lake, the Committee will continue to coordinate with resource managers, restoration scientists, and regulators to illuminate feasible, effective strategies for protecting and restoring Rush Creek—and Mono Lake too. ❖

Robbie Di Paolo is the Committee's Restoration Field Technician. In May, he had his first performance with the Eastern Sierra Chamber Orchestra and is excited to next play Pops in the Park for the Fourth of July in Mammoth Lakes.

Staff migrations

by Leslie Redman

Another quiet winter and spring have come and gone here at the Mono Lake Committee headquarters in Lee Vining. Now that warmer weather has returned, we are ready to start hiking in the mountains, paddling canoes on Mono Lake, and peering through our binoculars at a variety of migratory birds. The arrival of summer means that we also have some new folks and fresh energy in the office.

This spring we bid farewell to hardworking Project Specialists **Karis Sabraw** and **Kinsey Warnock**, who spent several months advancing the work of the Committee. Karis set off to the San Francisco Bay Area to study philosophy, while Kinsey returned to her Field Crew Leader position with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition.

Prior to the arrival of our seasonal staff, we welcomed Operations Coordinator **Deja Charles-Tomkins**. Deja comes to us most recently from the American Conservation Experience, where she managed the National Park Service Academy program, which supported the development of a more representative workforce in the national parks. She has a robust background in interpretation, administration, and mentorship and a deep connection to the Eastern Sierra.

Returning for another summer are Project Specialists **BreeLynn Butler** and **Chris Hamilton**. BreeLynn recently graduated from Cal Poly, Humboldt, with a degree in Wildlife Conservation & Management and Chris is a recent graduate of California State University, Monterey Bay, with a degree in Global Studies & Journalism. As former Mono Lake Interns, they have hit the ground running.

Canoe Coordinator **Brendan Peralez** spent the past several years as an outdoor educator in the San Diego area and sea kayak guide in Alaska. He is excited to share his love of Mono Lake by creating unforgettable canoe tour experiences this summer.

ANDREW YOUSSEF

This spring the Committee had a staff ski day at June Mountain Ski Area with views of Mono Lake the whole time.

Patience Brennan, Information Center & Bookstore Assistant, is a recent graduate of Cal Poly, Humboldt in Wildlife Conservation & Management. Originally from Los Angeles, she is looking forward to sharing the story of Mono Lake with visitors in the bookstore.

Information Center & Bookstore Assistant **Judith Goddard** joins us after a long career as an engineer and consultant. Judith lives in Mammoth Lakes where she enjoys skiing, backpacking, and mountain biking. She is excited to devote her time to the Committee's meaningful work.

Birding Intern **Roberto Terrones** comes to the Committee after graduating from Cal Poly, Pomona in Environmental Biology. As a future conservation ecologist, Roberto can't wait to study the birds of the Sierra Nevada and lead bird walks all summer long.

Alkali Fly Research Technician **Steve Root** is working toward a master's degree at the University of Vermont. No stranger to non-profit and conservation work, Steve served as a Peace Corps volunteer and has also worked with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.

Field Monitoring & Reporting Intern **Sarah Lampley** has spent the past several seasons working with the Department of the Interior in Yosemite National Park and Alaska and is excited to track restoration programs in the Mono Basin ecosystem this summer.

If you visit the Mono Basin this summer to attend a program or just to stop through to see what's new in our bookstore, Mono Lake Interns **Jazmin Morenzi**, **Diego Murguia**, **Remy Perry**, and **Ana Wanner** will likely be the friendly faces you meet.

Jazmin is a junior at Williams College majoring in Geosciences and English. Her research focuses on the intersection of minerology, petrology, and art history, which will undoubtedly come in handy when educating visitors about the history of the Mono Basin.

Diego returns to the Committee for another season as a Mono Lake Intern from the University of California, Davis, where he majors in Geology. He looks forward to expanding his understanding of Mono Lake with a geologically focused lens.

Remy is a junior at Williams College majoring in Geosciences and Environmental Studies. As a bird lover, Remy can't wait to experience her first Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua and teach visitors about the Mono Lake ecosystem.

Ana is a recent graduate of Westmont College with a degree in History and Education. A Lee Vining local from an early age and a future teacher, Ana is excited to share her deep love of the Mono Basin with others.

Be sure to stop by and say hi to our new staff members if you're driving through town this summer! ❖

From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Leslie Redman

Summer interpretive and educational programs give us the opportunity to share our passion for Mono Lake with first-time visitors and those who return each year because of their love for the Eastern Sierra. As we inspire new advocates to join the cause, we look back and fondly reflect on those who have supported us through the years. With the unpredictability of the world today, we are so grateful to count on the support of members and friends of Mono Lake—thank you for making our work possible.

In honor

Martha Brown of Minneapolis, MN gave a gift in honor of the **Carle family**. **Thomas Cerny** of Sunnyvale donated in honor of **Judith Cerny**. **Charles Hepperle** of Claremont contributed in honor of **Mary Ann Ruiz** and **other members of the Sierra Club**. **Bob Hermann & Dan Joraanstad** of San Francisco gave a gift in honor of **Randy Arnold**.

Bart & Debby Jones of Cornwall Bridge, CT donated in honor of Information Center & Bookstore Manager **Mara Krista Plato**. **Mary & Terry Redman** of Walden, CO contributed in honor of Membership Coordinator **Leslie Redman**. **Doug Rion** of San Luis Obispo gave a gift in honor of **Karl Dixon**.

In memory

David Allen of Sacramento donated in memory of his brother **Jerry Allen**. **Jerry Deibert** of La Mesa contributed in memory of **Jayne Deibert**. **Patrick D. Garvey** of Redondo Beach gave a gift in memory of **Geneva P. Martin**. **Mary Harrington** of Minneapolis, MN donated in memory of **Alex Kayda**. **Joanne Hatchett & Beth Merrill** of Davis contributed in memory of **Melissa Salmonds**. **Bill & Pam Herrera** of Boulder, CO gave a gift in memory of **Bob Frane**. **Lauri Kemper** of South Lake Tahoe donated in memory of **Mike Plazniak**.

Jeanie Minor of Berkeley contributed in memory of **Helen Green**. **Jerry Olson** of Roseville gave a gift in memory of **Linda Watts**. **Steve & Margy Rubinstein** of Carlsbad donated in memory of **Juana Beatriz Gutierrez**. **Michael Seers** of Torrance contributed in memory of **Clearance Witt**. **Wendy Sibray** of Santa Cruz gave a gift in memory of **Willis & Mary Ellen Sibray**. **Mary Schinnerer** of Albany donated in memory of **Marvin Schinnerer**. **John Turmes** of Lakewood contributed in memory of **Martha Meade**. **Mar Villegas** of Glendora gave a gift in memory of **Joe Hernandez**. **Joan Williams** of Clovis donated in memory of **Carolyn Tassey**.

We received gifts in memory of **Steven Sherwood** from **Sue Addleman** and **Christine Bertko** of Pacific Grove, **Amy Blackstone** of San Francisco, **Cherie Campbell** of Carmel Highlands, **Shirley Chapman** and **Tom & Eileen Fukunaga** of Monterey, **June B. Dawson** and **Carol Dodson** of Carmel Valley, **Vicky & David Duke** and **Donna Jennings** of Salinas, **Kim Forsberg** of Marina, **Donita & Robert Grace** of San Jose, **Debbie Griego** of Granite Bay, **Jacqueline Hall** of Merced, **Nan Johnston** of Pacific Grove, **Carol Ligda-Wong** of Comstock Park, MI, **Alexanne Mills** of Carmel, **Lauren Mokhtarian** of Morgan Hill, **Jill Sardeson** of Hayward, and **Shelley Sazer** of Princeton, ME.

Remembering Helen Green

Longtime Mono Lake champion **Helen Green** passed away in November 2024. She joined the Mono Lake cause when a 1979 Sierra Club notice alerted her to the formation of the Mono Lake Committee.

Helen's energy for Mono Lake encompassed multiple LA to Mono Lake Bike-A-Thons, in which she rode or drove a support vehicle, as did her husband Paul and, over the years, many generations of the Green family. In addition to raising funds for the Committee, she was an avid birder, volunteering to help count California Gulls at Mono Lake and leading field trips to the Mono Basin for the Golden Gate Audubon chapter.

Helen served on the Committee's Board of Directors from 1986 until 1992 and then as Director Emerita—we will miss her sage guidance and steadfast support.

Farewell to Ted Beedy

Acclaimed ornithologist **Ted Beedy** passed away suddenly in March 2025. Ted had been planning to lead trips at this year's Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua; this would have been his 19th Chautauqua.

Ted authored the wildlife chapters of the Mono Lake Environmental Impact Report and testified at the 1994 State Water Board hearing. His work at Mono Lake was one of many projects in which he combined methodical science with conservation advocacy for birds in diverse regions of California. He was the co-author of two guidebooks about Sierra Nevada birds that are perennial bestsellers in the Committee bookstore. ❖

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