

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour



May 2, 2026 • Maureen McGlinchy & Robbie Di Paolo

\$185 per person / \$170 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Today, the aqueduct must balance competing needs instead of exclusively serving one. Join two Mono Lake Committee hydrology and restoration staff for a focused, field-based investigation of the north end of the aqueduct system. We'll visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about their modern relationship with Los Angeles, Mono Lake, and its tributary streams. We will discuss past and present diversions and see how 20th century infrastructure is serving the 21st century water needs. This field seminar will provide a great overview of the Mono Basin system, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and a few of the historical, engineering, and ecological anecdotes that make up this fascinating water infrastructure.

Maureen McGlinchy is the Mono Lake Committee's Hydrology Modeling Specialist, and Robbie Di Paolo is the Committee's Restoration Field Technician. They are both involved with the Committee's cutting-edge restoration program and have deep knowledge of the complex aqueduct system, how water diversions affect Mono Lake and its tributary streams, and how the Committee is working to ensure a healthier future for the Mono Basin. Maureen and Robbie are skilled interpreters who will bring the story of the aqueduct to life while leading you

along the engineering seam that shapes the landscape of the Mono Basin with interesting stops that reveal the hydrology, ecology, and history of Mono Lake and the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

ITINERARY

Saturday, May 2, 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining (51365 Highway 395). After check-in and introductions, we'll spend about an hour in the Committee's gallery for a general orientation to the Mono Basin watershed and some general hydrology concepts. We'll look at old maps from the Mono Lake research library showing historic patterns of land ownership and water management.

We will then move outdoors to begin our field portion starting at the northernmost end of the Los Angeles Aqueduct at the Lee Vining Creek diversion facility, where some of the water first begins its long journey to the city, and where the rest of the water flows past modernized infrastructure for ecological and Public Trust benefits. We will then follow the path of the aqueduct south to visit each stream diversion site and discuss their historical and current significance.

After lunch at a shady spot with restrooms, we'll continue along the aqueduct path until we reach the holding site of all Mono Basin diversions, Grant Lake Reservoir. Here we will discuss how water can either be delivered to Rush Creek and Mono Lake or to Los Angeles. We will end the day down along the Rush Creek bottomlands to discuss stream restoration and the exciting developments with the State Water Board's Order 21-86, issued in October 2021. All along the way, throughout the day, we will not fail to notice relevant bits of natural and human history that accent this unusual water conveyance. The day will end around 5:00pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: EASY

This seminar's activity level: *easy*. We will be walking short distances from cars on mostly graded or well-established flat trails. There will be a few short off-trail sections in soft sand on relatively flat ground. Many locations are in full sun and the seminar will require quite a bit of standing.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Weather conditions can include everything from warm days to rainstorms to late spring snow showers. Relatively warm and sunny days are most likely, but prepare for cold, wet weather with layered clothing and a waterproof jacket. Average temperatures in May in Lee Vining are 67°F (max) and 39°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to lower elevations should not enroll.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

TO BRING

- lunch & snacks
- plenty of drinking water for the day
- day pack
- rain jacket
- personal sun strategy (hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, etc.)
- insect repellent
- binoculars/camera
- field guides/note-taking materials
- field chair or collapsible stool (optional but helpful)
- vehicle with high clearance to drive over uneven terrain (recommended, but not necessary)

SUGGESTED READING

- John Hart, *Storm Over Mono* (out of print but available online):
<http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=ft48700683&brand=eschol>
- E.C. Pielou, *Fresh Water*.
- William L. Kahrl, *Water and Power*.

SUGGESTED WEB BROWSING

- Current real time data, including flows and minimum flow rules:
monobasinresearch.org/data/mbrtdframes.htm
<https://wsoweb.ladwp.com/Aqueduct/realtime/monorealtime.htm>
- Historical resources:
monobasinresearch.org/historical/



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars