

Lee Vining Creek Crawl



Lee Vining Creek headwaters. Photo by Hannah Ashby.

August 28–30, 2026 • Hannah Ashby

**\$250 per person/ \$235 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants**

Lee Vining Creek, one of Mono Lake's tributary streams, runs for 16 miles from its headwaters in the High Sierra to its outlet at Mono Lake. Along the way, this waterway drops around 3,600 feet in elevation and passes through eco-zones ranging from alpine meadows to montane forests to desert sagebrush-steppe. In addition to the natural landscapes along this waterway, Lee Vining Creek is shaped by human infrastructure like dams and diversion pipelines. In this field seminar, we will closely follow Lee Vining Creek to learn about the ecosystems surrounding the water, as well as the human interventions that have changed its course. As we meander our way to Mono Lake, we will discuss the various perspectives through which moving water has been managed, appreciated, and utilized. Of course, we will also take a close look at the flora and fauna that call the creek home, so be sure to bring your binoculars and field guide if you have them!

Hannah Ashby is the Mono Lake Committee's Education Coordinator. She has over eight years of experience as an outdoor educator and guide and has been lucky enough to explore hundreds of miles of waterways and ridgelines in the Sierra. She hopes that this seminar will bring about new perspectives for understanding waterways and our connections to them. Hannah is a Certified Interpretive Guide, Wilderness First Responder, and holds a B.A. in Biology from Cornell University.

ITINERARY

Friday, August 28 at 7:00pm: Meet in the gallery at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. After introductions, we will discuss the Lee Vining Creek waterway and the ecosystems it passes through to help frame the weekend.

Saturday, August 29 at 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. We will spend the day traveling to the top of the Mono Basin watershed and work our way to Saddlebag, Tioga, and Ellery Lakes, focusing on the headwaters of Lee Vining Creek. The day will end around 4:00pm.

Sunday, August 30 at 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore. We will spend the day traveling to Lee Vining Creek at its lower elevations, leaving the subalpine environment and ultimately ending at the shores of Mono Lake. The day will end around 2:00pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

This seminar's activity level: *difficult*. We will be walking up to four miles a day, some of which will be over uneven terrain, off trail, and will include stepping up and over obstacles. This type of walking requires good balance, some agility, and stamina. Creek crossings and immersing in the water will be optional but encouraged.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in summer will be hot during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in August in Lee Vining are 83°F (max) and 52°F (min). Temperatures will be cooler as we travel to higher elevation.

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,200 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.

MEALS

Please be sure to pack a sack lunch and snacks for each day; we will have lunch while out in the field.

TO BRING

- clothes you can hike in
- boots or supportive shoes
- daypack
- extra warm layers

- raincoat, just in case
- hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses
- refillable water bottles
- snacks and lunch

Optional items:

- sandals or water shoes
- field guides
- binoculars
- portable water filter
- field journal

RECOMMENDED READING

- *The Home Place* by J. Drew Lanham
- *The Water Remembers* by Amy Bowers Cordalis
- *Is a River Alive?* by Robert Macfarlane
- *The California Naturalist Handbook* by Greg De Nevers, Deborah Edelman, and Adina Merenlender
- UC Davis Water Management Cooperative Extension – watermanagement.ucdavis.edu
 - Many resources here, read what you are interested in/have time to!



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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