

# MONO LAKE

N E W S L E T T E R

Winter & Spring 2026



New LA Water

Exports Cause Lake's 2025 Drop

Rush Creek Restoration Delayed

Field Seminars

As I write this note for the *Winter & Spring Newsletter*, winter feels like a distant memory. Two weeks into an astonishing heat wave, the aspen trees are leafing out, the desert peach is starting to bloom, and Mono Lake's tributary streams are running as high as if it was late May instead of late March.

Life in Lee Vining has its own seasonality that also follows these cues of spring. Leafing aspens, desert peach blooms, and rushing streams mean it's time to transition to life with open mountain passes, more visitors, and all the excitement spring brings. While it may be a couple months early, it feels like the right time to remind you to plan a visit to Mono Lake.

Part of our job here at the Committee is to be the eyes and ears of the many thousands of people around the world who love Mono Lake. So, if a visit is not in the cards for you just now, we've got some great ways you can connect from afar. I love the webcams that show different views of the Mono Basin—the Benchmark photos in this issue (see page 11) are from a camera I checked every day when I was traveling over the winter. You can find all the webcams at [monolake.org/webcams](http://monolake.org/webcams).

You can also give us a call in Lee Vining any day—we'll look out the office windows and tell you what it's like to be in the Mono Basin at that very moment. You'll be able to watch spring roll into summer at Mono Lake, even from afar.

—Elin Ljung, Communications Coordinator



COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD ERB

AGREY HANINSH

January and February brought poconip fog to the Mono Basin, shrouding Mono Lake and the surrounding areas in a cold, icy cloud even with sunny skies above the fog layer.

### Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.



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# New water source could allow LA to pause Mono Basin diversions

*LA leader's "commonsense" plan links new local water with healing Mono Lake*

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Last fall the President of the Los Angeles Water & Power Commissioners made headlines in the *Los Angeles Times* when he proclaimed, "This is a solution with lots of winners," and that once the water starts flowing, "we won't need Mono Lake water to meet the supplies in LA." President Richard Katz was talking about the remarkable success of Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) engineers creating new, affordable, and local water that will soon supply the city.

Earlier this year, Katz, who has since retired, advanced his win-win proposal in a letter to the California State Water Resources Control Board. The proposal looks beyond traditional conflicts of water policy to a refreshing, mutually beneficial future built on the abundance of local water supplies DWP has successfully engineered for the City.

The Katz concept is simple: Use DWP's new local water supply to meet the needs of Los Angeles and pause DWP's Mono Basin water diversions to meet the needs of Mono Lake.

It's a compelling opportunity. Now, to make it a reality, the State Water Board must act.

## **Creating a new water source in LA**

Last October, to applause from the packed audience, DWP Commissioners approved a major expansion of the Donald C. Tillman Water Reclamation Plant in Van Nuys to recycle 40,000 acre-feet of water annually (see Fall 2025 *Mono*



GEORGE MCQUILKIN

*When the new local water source comes online in 2027, Katz told the State Water Board, DWP can easily pause Mono Basin diversions.*

*Lake Newsletter*), with construction already underway. The project benefits from substantial state funding that reduces ratepayer cost. When complete in 2027, it will provide an affordable supply of water at a cost lower than purchasing water from sources like the Bay Delta or Colorado River.

That additional volume is significantly more than what DWP diverts from Mono Lake. Katz underscored that this

*Continued on page 4*

## Update: State Water Board receives major report on Mono Lake

Shortly before this *Newsletter* went to press, the State Water Board had Mono Lake on its regular meeting agenda for the first time in decades. Although this was not the much-anticipated hearing at which changes to diversion levels can be made, it was a significant milestone.

The UCLA Center for Climate Science presented a new hydrologic model and climate analysis for Mono Lake at the meeting. Commissioned by the Board and informed by technical expertise from interested parties, the report is an additional tool for the Board to use in evaluating paths to achieve its healthy lake level mandate.

The report shows clearly that while climate change is a

factor, ongoing DWP water diversions are the main cause of the present-day low lake level. The report also shows that current diversion levels are unlikely to allow the lake to rise. However, Mono Lake recovery is still achievable if water diversions are reduced—a clear opportunity for meaningful action by the Board.

Following the presentation, an expert panel, and moving public comment, all five State Water Board members agreed that it was time to move forward with a hearing. The Board directed staff to develop a plan with the goal of initiating the decision-making hearing before the end of the year. See [monolake.org](http://monolake.org) for more information.

“new” local water means the City will certainly have the capacity to raise Mono Lake to the healthy, mandated 6,392-foot level by pausing water diversions from Mono Lake.

The DWP Commissioners discussed linking what Katz calls this “new water” with pausing Mono Lake diversions. The Mono Lake Committee supported the Commission’s approval of the funding. LA community members, organizations, and Eastern Sierra groups attended the meeting to voice support as well.

Bruce Reznik, head of Los Angeles Waterkeeper, deemed the project “a massive, massive achievement.” East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice leader mark! Lopez commended DWP for advancing the groundwater replenishment project, observing, “The next step is to heal the harm up at Mono Lake ... if we aren’t healing the harm then the good we are doing here is an empty gesture.”

The City of LA’s Ratepayer Advocate supported Commission approval, noting that producing local water improves resilience and will be cheaper than other options.

DWP Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of the project. Commissioner Nurit Katz thanked the numerous public commenters for “speaking so eloquently on the need for a new sustainable local water supply in Los Angeles,” and she highlighted that “this project exemplifies the best of what LA City can do.”

“We need to do it to heal our relationships with the folks in the Eastern Sierra who have been a victim of the city’s need for many generations now,” commented Commissioner George McGraw. “I very much hope that this project is the first in a long line of those that make LA completely water secure and independent.”

### ***Plan gives the State Water Board a fast, affordable path to heal Mono Lake and benefit LA***

Katz wrote to the State Water Board with the wide-angle perspective and wisdom gained from decades of leadership as a state legislator representing LA, years as a member of the State Water Board, and, most recently, as DWP Commission President. From this vantage point, he encouraged a “swift, straightforward, and impactful process that will decisively and at long last restore the lake level of Mono Lake.”

This year, the State Water Board plans to tackle the problem of ongoing DWP water diversions—the primary cause of Mono Lake’s failure to reach its mandated protection level. The Board is responsible for protecting the lake’s public trust resources at the 6,392-foot surface elevation, yet the lake is only halfway there and a decade overdue.

“The [State Water Board] hearing process in 2026 could be efficiently and cost-effectively focused on the implementation of the established lake level requirement by using the recycled water produced by the Tillman facility,” Katz argued in his letter.

“The [State Water Board] hearing process in 2026 could be efficiently and cost-effectively focused on the implementation of the established lake level requirement by using the recycled water produced by the Tillman facility.”

—Richard Katz

On the other hand, DWP attorneys have demonstrated the Department will respond with a combative approach to any State Water Board attempt to implement its longstanding Mono Lake decision, possibly by attempting to weaken the Board’s existing protective lake level mandate or even attacking the authority of the Board itself.

Katz said it doesn’t have to be that way. “...I believe it is in the best interest of Los Angeles and the State of California to avoid a prolonged contentious [State Water Board] hearing. There is a commonsense alternative for meeting the needs of Mono Lake and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power that can be quickly implemented by the State Board.”

### ***Mutual benefits from a win-win plan***

Pausing DWP diversions would allow more water to flow into Mono Lake, which is artificially and perilously low due to DWP’s many decades of water diversions. Adding more water will allow Mono Lake to finally rise to the healthy level mandated back in 1994. Katz highlighted that pausing diversions also serves the interests of LA. Healing the damage done at Mono Lake is a requirement of the City’s water rights—achieving compliance is the best way for the City to retain those rights and be able to access water in the future when the lake is above the required healthy level.

Katz’s theme is that LA and California can solve problems, meet people’s water needs, and protect the environment all at once—and that DWP is already building the durable projects that make this possible. Mono Lake, and the water issues of the LA Aqueduct up and down the Eastern Sierra and Payahuunadü, do not have to be battles framed in the same old ways as a zero-sum game.

The vision set forth by Richard Katz is both inspirational and realistic. Now, implementation is in the hands of the State Water Board. It is time to act—to raise Mono Lake, affordably meet the water needs of Los Angeles, and protect the Public Trust for the people of California. ❖

# DWP diverts despite strong local supply

*Stormwater capture and recycled water projects supply LA but Mono's only source of water still diverted*

*by Caelen McQuilkin & Teri Tracy*

“Roller coaster” and “whiplash” metaphors have dominated articles about California water and weather in recent months, but other elements of the water landscape are also noteworthy.

In Los Angeles, investments in local water supply resilience have been delivering strong returns. By focusing on increasing stormwater capture capability to recharge groundwater basins, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) was able to capitalize on heavy precipitation in the late fall and winter months. Between October 1, 2025, and mid-January, 56,000 acre-feet of stormwater were captured. By late February, stormwater capture exceeded 80,000 acre-feet. In other words, this past winter DWP captured five times the amount of water it diverts from Mono Basin streams from Los Angeles stormwater alone.

Since implementing the Stormwater Capture Master Plan in 2015, DWP has significantly expanded its stormwater capture programs, with plans to increase capacity to 150,000 acre-feet by 2035. In future wet years when that capacity can be maximized, stormwater capture alone will exceed Mono Basin stream diversions nine times over. DWP is also working to increase recycled water capacity, such as the expansion of the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant that is expected to supplement the city's water supply with 40,000 acre-feet of new water by 2027 (see page 3).

By mid-March of this year, concerns about unusually warm temperatures and rapid snowpack melt were a hot topic. But before that, the winter months brought

California plenty of water. Back in January, a DWP spokesperson called the state's drought-free conditions at the time “quite outstanding,” and the Los Angeles Board of Water & Power Commissioners described the status as “unbelievable.” Indeed, it had been 25 years since the last time there were no areas of drought in the state.

In February, DWP staff told the Commissioners that water conditions over the last three years “take the pressure off water supply.” As of late March, all major supply reservoirs in California sit at or above their historical averages. In Southern California, all major reservoirs remain at full capacity or above their historical average. For example, the Diamond Valley Reservoir, the biggest in Southern California, currently sits at 129% of its historical average. The drought-free good news has continued for California; while a few areas have recently appeared as “abnormally dry,” meaning they might move into drought conditions, the state

is still drought-free at press time.

Elements of water conditions and supply are a source of constant analysis and conversation, but DWP's Mono Basin operations reflect indifference. If DWP had not exported water, Mono Lake would have held its gains this year. While DWP claims to prioritize “the environment and the watershed in the Mono Basin first before a single drop reaches the City of Los Angeles,” the Department's strategy this year, and every year, is to “always try to maximize aqueduct deliveries to the city,” as DWP officials told *CalMatters* last year. And that maximization always happens at the expense of Mono Lake. ❖

*Caelen McQuilkin is a Committee Project Specialist. The north shore of Mono Lake is one of her favorite places in the world. Teri Tracy is the Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Coordinator. She is excited to hike some big mountains this summer with her family.*



*Eastern Sierra water flows down the Sylmar Cascades into the LA Basin. Despite plentiful stormwater capture in LA this past winter, as well as promising recycled water projects underway, DWP took its whole allotment of Mono Basin water again this year.*

GEORGE MCDONALD

# Wilson's Phalaropes advance toward endangered species protection

by Elin Ljung

Wilson's Phalaropes, the small shorebirds that rely on saline lakes like Mono Lake, have inched toward protection under the Endangered Species Act. In January the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a "positive 90-day finding," which advanced the species to the next stage of review to determine if they should receive protection under federal law. Wilson's Phalaropes depend on saline lake ecosystems like Mono Lake and Great Salt Lake for food, and the positive finding underscored the importance of implementing durable protection for these imperiled ecosystems.

The finding came in response to a petition, submitted in March 2024, that cited hydrologic and climatic evidence showing that chronically low lake levels at Mono Lake, declining lake levels at Great Salt Lake in Utah, and desiccated conditions at Lake Abert in Oregon—essential habitats for the migratory species—put the phalaropes at risk of extinction due to habitat loss. The Mono Lake Committee was a co-signer to the petition.

From the USFWS finding: "Based on our review of the petition and readily available information regarding freshwater diversion leading to declines in prey resources at primary fall staging habitats in California, Oregon, and Utah, and regulatory mechanisms to reduce this potential threat, we find that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing the Wilson's phalarope as a threatened or endangered species may be warranted."

The positive finding reinforces the need to protect saline lakes for phalaropes, which in turn adds helpful pressure to the regulatory agencies already tasked with protecting the lakes, like the California State Water Resources Control Board for Mono Lake and the Utah government for Great Salt Lake. Great Salt Lake has been lower than its healthy range since 2002 and may hit a record low this summer; Mono Lake is still nine feet lower than its healthy level.

The 2024 petition to list the phalaropes was submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity. Along with the Committee, co-signers included Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment, Utah Youth Environment Solutions, author Terry Tempest Williams, and scientists Ben Abbott, Ryan Carle, Ron Larson, Nathan D. Van Schmidt, and Kyriana Tarr.

Next, the USFWS will conduct its review of the phalaropes' status and threats, and whether they warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act, eventually reaching a decision on listing. Given that the "90-day finding" process took nearly two years, a decision about listing the birds could take many more. ❖

*Elin Ljung is the Committee's Communications Coordinator. She flew perpendicular to the phalaropes' path to India over the winter, where she enjoyed seeing Painted Storks, Saurus Cranes, and many other birds.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF HALIE COOK, HALIECOOK.COM

*Mono Lake is one of the few North American habitats that are critically important for Wilson's Phalaropes' migration and survival.*

# Policy notes

by Bartshé Miller

## **State Reserve boardwalk to be replaced this year**

The Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve boardwalk at Mono Lake County Park is moving toward replacement this year. In May 2025, the Inn Fire erupted above the park on Highway 395 and quickly burned the boardwalk. In July, the Mono Lake Committee, Mono County, State Reserve staff, and a cadre of energetic volunteers removed the damaged remains in hopes of a speedy replacement for the beloved lake access and birding spot (see Fall 2025 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).

The volunteer and partner support helped California State Parks leadership in Sacramento move quickly to initiate the boardwalk replacement. CEQA planning is nearly complete and the new boardwalk materials could be purchased as soon as this summer. Construction could begin as soon as the fall of this year, with a new State Reserve boardwalk open to the public for summer 2027.

The new boardwalk will be constructed from a fire-resistant composite material chosen for its durability for years of use at the popular site. The Committee is working closely with the State Reserve and is providing additional support by purchasing some materials with funds secured through a state grant and public donations.

## **Lee Vining streetscape project delayed**

A major California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) project planned to begin this spring in Lee Vining has been delayed until 2027. The Lee Vining Pavement Rehabilitation Project includes much-needed traffic safety, accessibility, and drainage improvements, as well as streetscape enhancements, which will benefit businesses, visitors, and residents alike (see Fall 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*).



*Mono Lake Committee and California State Parks staff met to plan for the replacement State Reserve boardwalk at Mono Lake County Park; construction is expected this year.*

The first round of project bids came in well over budget and Caltrans rescoped the project this past winter; it is now up for another round of bidding.

Mono County Supervisor Paul McFarland, Mono County staff, and Lee Vining locals have been working to save the much-needed project. The town has been working on a project with Caltrans for decades to address existing issues and upgrade the transportation corridor to improve safety for the community and visitors alike.

## **Winter rescue operation for starving wild horses**

In January, the Inyo National Forest rescued 24 wild horses trapped in the snow, east of Highway 395 in the Bald Mountain area, far from reliable forage and water. The horses are from the Montgomery Pass herd, which has expanded in size and range well beyond the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory, which is 30 miles east of Mono Lake along the California-Nevada border.

According to the Inyo, “Forest Service crews rescued 24 horses from snow-bound terrain using bait and water traps and transported them to a temporary holding facility in Bishop, California, for stabilization. One horse later died due to extreme emaciation,

and three horses were humanely euthanized because of critically poor body condition. An additional six horses were found dead in the field as a result of starvation and prolonged exposure. Severe winter conditions left the horses with no access to food or water after they became stranded outside their normal range.”

The horses were later transported to the Modoc National Forest to receive continued care and rehabilitation until they are eligible for adoption; recovery is expected to take up to ten months.

In February, the Inyo prevailed in a court ruling that attempted to halt a plan to gather wild horses roaming outside the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory and place them in the adoption program.

The number of wild horses has significantly grown in the Eastern Sierra over the last 12 years, causing significant negative impacts to Mono Lake wetlands that have displaced birds and other species. This was the second time in three years that deceased horses have been discovered after being trapped in deep snow and isolated from food and water. In March 2023, horses died along the shore of Mono Lake after record winter snowfall. ❖

# Experience Ambientalia keeps growing

by Ryan Garrett & Anna Christensen

**E**xperience Ambientalia has had a great start to its third year, with students on both sides of the hemisphere—at Mono Lake and Laguna Mar Chiquita, Argentina—participating in coordinated monthly environmental education and stewardship activities and the program’s leadership gathering in Argentina.

## Local environmental education

Between September 2025 and now, the local Ambientalia chapter has learned about the Mono Basin through monthly activities. For Coastal Clean-Up Day, the students did a canoe tour followed by a trash pick-up along the South Tufa shoreline. The next month, they participated in a bird banding demonstration with local biologist Katie Smith, who taught students how to properly handle birds, and about how birds migrate and nest throughout the Pacific Flyway.

On World Fisheries Day, students learned about the history and ecological importance of fish in the Mono Basin watershed while practicing ethical fishing techniques in local streams with guide and Beaver’s Sporting Goods owner Brad Beaver and Aaron Sturtevant of the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). On World Wetlands Day, students “built” a wetland ecosystem using an activity inspired by the card game *Ecologies*, searching for hidden species cards around Navy Beach and working together to organize the cards into trophic niches based on their role in the food web. Students most recently took part in a wildlife tracking workshop with CDFW biologist Phil Johnston.

## Environmental Leaders Forum

In December, Ambientalia alumni Yessenia Martínez and Diego Murguía, and Mono Lake Committee staff, traveled to Laguna Mar Chiquita to participate in an Environmental Leaders Forum hosted by our Argentinian colleagues.

The Forum brought together an inspiring network of partners from Mono Lake, Great Salt Lake, Walker Lake, and Manomet Conservation Sciences, alongside students, educators, and conservation leaders in Argentina’s Laguna Mar Chiquita area. Over three days, participants shared knowledge, explored the landscape, and reflected on the challenges and opportunities facing saline lake ecosystems.

Yessi and Diego were part of a panel with Argentinian



Ambientalia alumni Yessi and Diego with Environmental Leaders Forum volunteers at Laguna Mar Chiquita.

students and shared their perspectives on participating in Experience Ambientalia, how the experience has affected their lives, and what the current participants can expect as they prepare for college.

The event culminated in the inaugural Ansenusa Migratory Festival, a three-day celebration of community and migratory birds. Guided sunrise birdwatching, expert talks, hands-on art workshops, and a vibrant fair featuring local artisans and environmental organizations brought together science, culture, and community along the shores of Laguna Mar Chiquita.

Together, this growing network reflects a shared commitment to protecting saline lakes across the hemisphere, grounded in science, community, and the understanding that these ecosystems are more connected than they may appear.

## Eastern Sierra expansion

Three years in, the Experience Ambientalia program continues to spark increasing local interest and support. The Eastern Sierra chapter of Experience Ambientalia has now grown to include students and educators from three high schools in Mono and Inyo counties. It is clear that the program provides students with unique, and powerful inspiration. Seeing our program alumni help inspire and support the next class of students and being able to offer the experience to more students is extremely motivating as we work to provide an exchange with Laguna Mar Chiquita for our students this coming summer. ❖

*Ryan Garrett is the Committee’s Education Director and Anna Christensen is the Committee’s Operations & Philanthropy Director. While in Argentina this past December, they both logged miles of birding at Laguna Mar Chiquita and hours of connecting with Experience Ambientalia students, volunteers, and leaders.*

**E**xperience Ambientalia is made possible entirely through the generosity of Mono Lake Committee donors. If you would like to help support these hands-on environmental learning experiences and the upcoming student travel to Argentina, please give today at [monolake.org/ea](http://monolake.org/ea).

ANNA CHRISTENSEN



## Connecting with OEC partners in Los Angeles

The Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center (OEC) “off season” is an important time for the program to focus on visiting longtime and prospective new program partners. In the wake of last year’s Los Angeles wildfires, in-person outreach was not possible, making this year’s visits extra important.

We’re on track to host a record 30 groups between May and November of this year. In addition to our existing partners we have reconnected with several schools and added some new ones too. The OEC program is unique in that the trips are made possible by strong relationships with individual teachers and motivated group leaders. We are invigorated by the potential to offer the program to more groups this year.

We are ever grateful for the leaders and teachers who go the extra mile to make these trips possible for their groups. With the ongoing disruptions of the 2025 wildfires and increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity deeply affecting many communities and families, OEC students often express that the opportunity to come to Mono Lake with the program and experience the connection and perspective it offers is particularly beneficial for their well-being and outlook on life.

SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA



Members of longtime OEC partners, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, in their Mono Lake T-shirts.

## More on-site outdoor learning space in the works

In 2025, the Mono Lake Committee received a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency’s Youth Community Access Grant Program for planned improvements to the OEC. The grant supports youth access to natural resources with a focus on low-income and disadvantaged communities, and aims to help all Californians feel a sense of belonging in the outdoors.

Work is expected to begin at the OEC this summer on additions to the existing outdoor camping and gathering space. The plan is for sleeping platforms, an outdoor kitchen, a bathhouse, and shade structures to support the ability for more groups to cook, clean, and camp together. These activities are core to the unique nature and education goals of the OEC program and will improve our ability to offer more in-depth and inspired opportunities for the students to learn about every person’s role in water stewardship.



The mission of the Mono Lake Committee’s Mono Basin Outdoor Education Center 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](http://monolake.org/oec) [facebook.com/mono.oec](https://facebook.com/mono.oec)

## Streamwatch

# Roller coaster winter; preliminary Normal-year runoff forecast

by Greg Reis

The winter was wet, then dry, then wet, then dry. A wetter-than-average February doubled the snowpack in some parts of the Sierra and resulted in 91% of average Mono Basin snowpack on March 1, with Rush Creek snowpack much bigger than that of Lee Vining Creek. The preliminary snowmelt runoff forecast is 91% of average; however, it is declining quickly due to a dry and record-shattering warm March and a month-early start to the snowmelt season.

Due to the above-average precipitation and warm temperatures this winter, Grant Lake Reservoir is relatively full and, with the right

management, could spill this spring and provide Rush Creek with an ecologically valuable peak flow as it did in 2024 and 2025.

Due to a broken valve (see page 12), the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) cannot release required peak flows to Rush Creek from the reservoir, and it is expected to submit a Temporary Urgency Change Petition to the California State Water Resources Control Board. If approved that would deprive Rush Creek of peak flow. We hope to convince DWP and the State Water Board to avoid that type of management this year and keep Grant as

high as possible during the season when Rush Creek would naturally experience a peak flow.

DWP has not revised its May forecasting protocols, which we have documented are flawed. They ensure a lower May forecast than April in almost every year, even when a wet April should cause an increase. Until these methods are revised to increase accuracy and confidence, we can expect the final May forecast to be an under-forecast, which could result in a year-type that shortchanges Rush Creek of its essential, and required, peak flow. ❖

## Lakewatch

# Mono Lake's decline in 2025 entirely due to DWP's operations

by Greg Reis

The Mono Basin had a warm and wet November, and then a cooler wet period from Christmas Eve through the first week of January. The rest of January was dry with weeks of poconip fog. While the above-average precipitation was encouraging, the below-average snowpack was not. In late January, this pattern was concerningly looking like 1997 and 2022,

which started wet but became incredibly dry for the remainder of the winter season. This year,

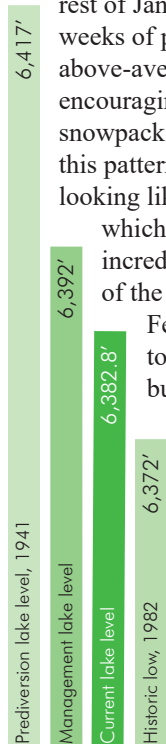
February storms seemed to save us from that fate, but a record-breaking

warm March is rapidly melting what would otherwise be a longer lasting snowpack for the season ahead. From October 1 to March 1, the relatively wet and warm winter season raised Mono Lake over half a foot to 6,382.8 feet above sea level.

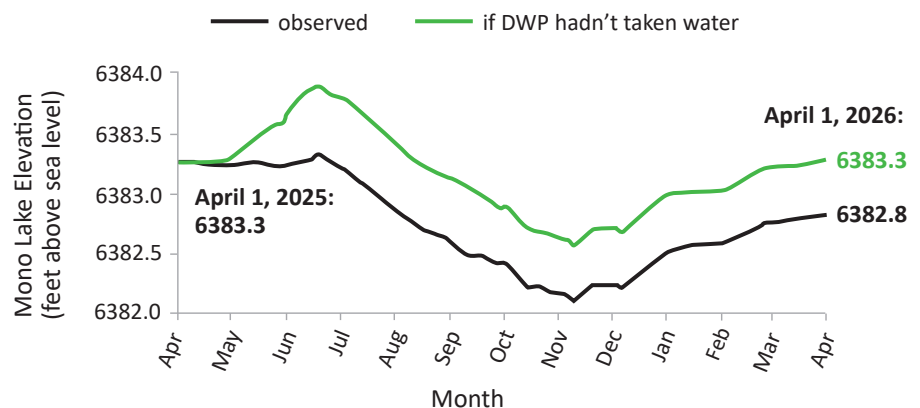
Mono Lake is expected to end the 2025 runoff year on March 31, 2026 about half a foot lower than at the beginning of the runoff year (April 1, 2025). DWP stream diversions and groundwater export totaled about half a foot of Mono Lake elevation, which means that if that diverted water had flowed to Mono Lake instead, Mono Lake would have risen slightly. By

diverting water from the Mono Basin, DWP is lowering the lake when it could be rising, keeping it at low levels, and preventing it from reaching the healthy management level of 6,392 feet. ❖

*Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He is looking forward to floating the newly un-dammed Klamath River this spring.*



## Mono Lake Level – 2025 Runoff Year



*If the water DWP exported from the Mono Basin this past winter had been allowed to flow to Mono Lake in a natural pattern instead, the lake would not have dropped over the past year.*

# Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin



ANDREW VOUSSEF

You can feel the grand hydrology of the Mono Basin in action when you walk along the sand at one of the deltas where energetic Sierra streams tumble into the great expanse of Mono Lake. The flow of freshwater elevating the surface of the unique, salty lake ecosystem is a water balance that stretches back a million years and more, far beyond our comprehension.

And even a simple balance of inflow and outflow can be complex. Which way will the balance tilt this summer? Will the lake go up? Or, as is often the case when diversions strip away inflow, will it go down? Such questions are the topic of hydrology models, and a just-released project by UCLA plugs climate change into the equation. The model provides tools to

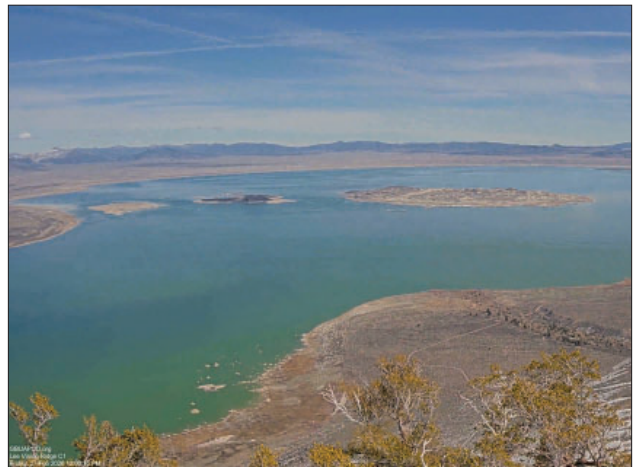
explore complex scenarios. Reassuringly, it also confirms what seems obvious standing at the lakeshore: Water diversions, the study concluded, are the major cause of the lake remaining low today—take less water out of the streams and allow more to flow to the lake and, yes, even with climate change, the lake will respond by rising.

We know intrinsically and scientifically that every inch the lake rises toward its required level makes the diversion-impaired ecosystem a little healthier. With wet feet, watching that water transition from stream to lake, it is exciting that here at Mono Lake we have the opportunity to heal damage of the past and protect the lake for the future. ❖

## Benchmarks



February 20, 2026: More than a foot of snow blanketed the Mono Basin, including Mono Lake's islands, after a four-day storm.



February 27, 2026: One week later, rain and unseasonably warm temperatures had melted most of the snow at lower elevations.

GREAT BASIN UNIFIED AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT, GBAPCD.ORG

# Rush Creek's required flows still delayed

by Bartshé Miller

Nearly 13 years have passed since the Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement promised an outlet for the Grant Lake Reservoir Dam to reliably deliver downstream flows to Rush Creek (see Fall 2013 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). Today, the wait for a reliable outlet continues.

At the end of 2024, the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) confirmed that it was changing its plans for the outlet design to siphons. This change, along with long-deferred maintenance on other critical, aging dam infrastructure means that delivery of the required Stream Ecosystem Flows (SEFs) vital to the restoration of Rush Creek remains severely impaired while the promised solution is, yet again, pushed back even further.

DWP's alternative plan, now called the Siphons Outlet Project, is replacing the Langemann gates originally studied and planned to reliably deliver SEFs to Rush Creek (see Winter & Spring 2025 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). According to a DWP report to the California State Water Resources Control Board this past January, the Siphons Project is at 60% design completion and plans have been submitted to the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) for approval.

The Siphons Project is one component of a larger, overall Grant Lake Reservoir Dam infrastructure project that is

divided into three parts: the Siphons Outlet Project, the Outlet Valve Replacement Project (to replace the damaged and failing rotovalve), and the Spillway Modification Project. The current proposed schedule indicates construction could begin as early as fall 2027 and continue through fall 2035. DWP stated that it was submitting a work plan sequence to DSOD by March 31, 2026.

While regulatory approval from DSOD is necessary, the Mono Lake Committee, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and California Trout, as well as the State Water Board require more information and assurance that the project will reliably deliver SEFs before the final design phase, bidding, and construction begin. The Committee is pushing for additional information and to resume collaborative meetings with the State Water Board as soon as possible. A DWP spokesperson said, "DWP will be prepared to discuss the work plan with [parties] once we have been provided some feedback from the DSOD on if our work plan sequence will be accepted."

While 13 years is far beyond the timeframe anyone imagined, moving forward with a new, replacement project that might not reliably deliver SEFs under the original Stream Restoration Agreement and subsequent State Water Board Order is a non-starter for the long-overdue restoration of Rush Creek. ❖

## 2025 Free Drawing prize winners

by Olivia Nelson

Mid-December marks a favorite tradition at the Mono Lake Committee: selecting the winners of our annual Free Drawing. This fundraiser wouldn't be possible without the incredible generosity of the prize donors, whose thoughtful contributions make the drawing exciting. We're grateful to our members whose support brings this event to life!

Bill Johnson of Fallon, NV won the iPad early bird prize. Mammoth & June Mountain Ski Pass: Teri Robbins of Aptos. Tamarack Cross Country Ski Pass: Theresa Carson of Bishop. National Park Grand Adventure: Rae Dawn Hirsch of San Rafael. Mountain Getaway in Mammoth: Kevin Kitz of Boise, ID. Eastern Sierra Getaway: John Zenor of Chico. Mono Lake Committee Bookstore Shopping Spree: Scott Garland of Windsor and John Williams of Mammoth Lakes. Mono Lake Trip for Two: Donna Thomas of Santa Cruz.

Yosemite Outdoor Experience: Greg Jacobs of Sebastopol. Mono Basin Fun in the Field: Rebecca Mills of Berkeley. A Day on the Bay: Richard Weaver of Apple Valley. Experience the Channel Islands: Karen Bleuel of Auburn. Mono Arts Council

Experience: Mike Paivinen of Bishop. Juniper Ridge Gift Set: Mark Nespeca of Poway. Mammoth Mountain Drinkware Box Set: Michael Quinn of Fontana. Canoe Adventure on Mono Lake: Patrick Hartman of Valencia and Bob Joy of Ridgecrest. Aquatic Experience: Polly Quick of Berkeley.

Camp Comfort Gift Pack: Melissa Nabors of Lancaster. Patagonia Gear: Judy Kay of Pacifica and Ann Linder of Woodacre. Patagonia Apparel: Mary Schinnerer of Albany and Kris Vyverberg of Port Orford, OR. Photographers' Favorites Book Bag: James Flaherty of Ukiah. Owens Valley Bird Festival Experience: Mary Ann Sullivan of Mammoth Lakes. Bodie Exploration: Bill Nownes of Pleasant Hill. Pentax Papilio Binoculars: Elizabeth Phillips of Ann Arbor, MI. San Diego Discovery Duo: Phillip Sanchez of Oceanside. Evening with Friends of the River: Susan Hatfield of Stockton. Reno Arts & Stars Package: Michael Bergamini of Sparks, NV. Lundy Lake Adventure: MaryAnne Hafen of Reno, NV. Cultural Discovery Package: David Hyman of North Hills. Parks Project Gift Bag: Carl Allamanno of San Leandro.

# 2026 Field Seminars



## Documenting the Range of Light

April 24–26 • Sarah Attar

\$410 per person / \$390 for members  
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Landscape photography provides a unique opportunity to capture and share your personal connection to a place, documenting a specific moment in time while reflecting who you are in that moment. This photography seminar is about bringing yourself into your images—infusing them with your vision and creativity. We'll dive into how composition, color theory, camera settings, gear selection, and editing all help to bring that vision to life. By the end of this seminar, you'll have a deeper connection to the Eastern Sierra, fresh perspectives on observing and documenting the world around you, and a greater understanding of how to “draw with light.”

## Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

May 2 • Maureen McGlinchy & Robbie Di Paolo

\$185 per person / \$170 for 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, and it continues to today. During this one-day seminar, we will visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about their modern relationship with Los Angeles, Mono Lake, and the lake's tributary streams. We will discuss past and present stream diversions and see how 20<sup>th</sup> century infrastructure is serving 21<sup>st</sup> century water needs. This seminar will provide an overview of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, together with historical, engineering, and ecological anecdotes that make up this fascinating water infrastructure.

## Wildlife Tracking in the Mono Basin

May 8–10 • Phil Johnston

\$310 per person / \$295 for members  
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Wildlife tracking is key to understanding the lives and behaviors of animals that are not so easily observed. From kangaroo rats to mountain lions, millipedes to roadrunners, all animals leave evidence of their activities on the landscape. During this science-based workshop, we'll learn to identify tracks, scat, nests, burrows, skeletons, and more. We'll also dive deep into the behavior of Mono Basin species and the unique roles they play in this ecosystem.

Field Seminar registration opens in February each year, and many seminars fill quickly. Register or join a waitlist at [monolake.org/seminars](https://monolake.org/seminars).

## Breeding Birds of the Mono Basin

May 22–24 • Nora Livingston

\$310 per person / \$295 for members  
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Late spring and early summer are the best times to find breeding birds in the Mono Basin—they are singing from the tops of trees and shrubs to declare their territory to rivals and to protect their mates. This seminar will visit local birding hotspots to learn about the many breeding birds that raise their families here. We will learn to identify these birds and observe their behavior as they gather food for their young or gather material to build nests. We will also delve into their migration patterns and conservation status.

## Avian Ecology of the Mono Basin

June 26–28 • David Wimpfheimer

\$345 per person / \$330 for members  
enrollment limited to 12 participants

The Mono Basin is one of the most diverse ecosystems on the continent; this seminar will provide 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 to higher elevation habitats. A major focus will be the identification and ecology of birds that breed here, and we will also enjoy a rich diversity of mammals, butterflies, wildflowers, and trees. 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



Learn about the fascinating natural history of the Mono Basin on a Field Seminar.

history discussion. A guided canoe tour of Mono’s south shore is included.

## Miwok-Paiute Basketry

July 10–12 • Lucy Parker, Dr. Julia Parker, & Ursula Jones

\$630 per person / \$605 for members  
enrollment limited to 12 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 group campsite near Lundy Canyon.

## Botanizing the Basin: Exploring Mono Lake’s Diverse Flora

July 17–19 • Steve Root

\$310 per person / \$295 for members  
enrollment limited to 15 participants

The Mono Basin supports an exceptional diversity of plant communities shaped by extreme soils, strong elevation gradients, and a dynamic history of fire, volcanism, and hydrologic change. We will focus on learning to read the landscape through its plants by practicing plant identification using observable traits, simple keys, and pattern recognition. This seminar will emphasize understanding why plants grow where they do, building confidence with field identification, and developing practical skills that participants can apply beyond the Mono Basin.

## Mono Basin Landscape & Dark Sky Night Photography

July 17–19 • Jeff Sullivan & Lori Hibbett

\$410 per person / \$390 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 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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE HERBERA

Discover Mono Lake's aquatic habitats during Avian Ecology of the Mono Basin, which includes a guided canoe tour of the south shore.

## Butterflies & Moths of the Eastern Sierra

July 24–26 • Paul Johnson  
 \$310 per person / \$295 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.

## High Country Marvels: Wildlife with an Altitude

July 31–August 2 • Beth Pratt  
 \$310 per person / \$295 for members  
 enrollment limited to 10 participants

During hikes to elevations of up to 11,000 feet, we will learn about (and hopefully meet!) resilient creatures such as pikas, Yosemite toads, alpine butterflies, fairy shrimp, yellow-bellied marmots, Clark's nutcrackers, and more. In this survey of alpine life, we'll discuss the unique geologic and climatic influences that define the distinctive types of plants and

animals that live in the Sierra high country and how climate change is impacting life at high altitudes.

## Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

August 7–9 • Greg Stock  
 \$310 per person / \$295 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.

## Traveling through Geologic Time in the Mono Basin

August 14–16 • Guleed Ali  
 \$310 per person / \$295 for members  
 enrollment limited to 15 participants

The Mono Basin is among the most dynamic geologic settings in North America, lying within an actively rifting basin where multiple processes converge. Lake waters reach extreme salinity and alkalinity with unusual rare-earth element chemistry. In this seminar, we'll discover how a once high-elevation plateau was dismantled and reshaped into a topographic sink, and then partially filled with sediment, pierced by magma from below, covered with glaciers above, and cut through or swept clean by streams and the lake at its center, Mono Lake.

## Communing with Lands and Waters

August 21–23 • 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).

## Falling for the Migration: Bridgeport, Crowley, Mono

August 21–23 • Dave Shuford  
\$310 per person / \$295 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. We will identify about 100 species by plumage and calls and also discuss migration strategies, behavior, and ecology to complement our field observations.

## Lee Vining Creek Crawl

August 28–30 • Hannah Ashby  
\$250 per person / \$235 for members  
enrollment limited to 15 participants

In this field seminar, we will follow Lee Vining Creek, one of Mono Lake's tributary streams, to learn about the ecosystems surrounding the water as it drops 3,600 feet from its headwaters to Mono Lake, and the human interventions that have changed its course. As we meander our way to Mono Lake, we will discuss various perspectives through which moving water has been managed, appreciated, and utilized, while also learning about the flora and fauna that call the creek home.

## Cuentos y Cantos al Desierto

September 4–6 • Blanca 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



Learn about the stories behind the unique geology of the Mono Basin on a Field Seminar.

[monolake.org/seminars](https://monolake.org/seminars) or (760) 647-6595 to register

voice practices. This bilingual seminar is specifically designed to create a space for native and heritage Spanish-speaking participants.

## Natural History at the Edge of the Sierra

September 18–20 • Nora Livingston  
\$310 per person / \$295 for members  
enrollment limited to 14 participants

Natural history pays attention to all aspects of nature and widens our view whether 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 envelop us in this amazing place.

## Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

September 25–27 • Greg Stock  
\$310 per person / \$295 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.

## Fall Colors of the Mono Basin

October 10 • Hannah Ashby  
\$185 per person / \$170 for members  
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Fall in the Mono Basin brings a spectacular but fleeting display of color, making the “hunt” for fall colors an exciting one. In this one-day field seminar, we will learn about the science behind these brilliant displays and venture to local hotspots that give us the most dramatic shows of color with opportunities for birding, botanizing, art, and photography along the way.



ANDREW YOUSSEF

Each fall, changing aspens light up the Mono Basin in brilliant hues.

## Field Seminar Information

Please visit [monolake.org/seminars](http://monolake.org/seminars) to register for a Field Seminar, join a waitlist, find complete itineraries, and see cancellation and refund policies. You can also join the Field Seminar email list for registration reminders.

*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](mailto:fieldseminars@monolake.org) or call us at (760) 647-6595.

# Staff migrations

by Anna Christensen

As winter rapidly departs the Mono Basin and the pace of the season shifts, the Mono Lake Committee marks a familiar rhythm of change as three staff members travel on to new opportunities.

**Deja Charles-Tomkins**, who served as the Committee's Operations Coordinator, helped strengthen the systems that keep the organization running smoothly. She organized the volunteer work days on the State Reserve boardwalk and shared her expertise in shaping the Committee's seasonal staff hiring. We are glad that Deja remains a close neighbor in her new role as Operations & Administration Coordinator with the Mammoth Lakes Foundation.

Project Specialist **BreeLynn Butler** brought an educator's perspective to her work, supporting a variety of projects and connecting thoughtfully with visitors. BreeLynn headed south to the San Diego area to work as a substitute teacher. We are grateful for the care and curiosity she brought to her time at Mono Lake and wish her the best in the seasons ahead.

## A special retirement recognition

From Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin: **Gary Nelson** has retired after leading the Committee's canoe program for 37 years, which is to say he has been at the core of the program's founding, growth, and great success in sharing the wonders of Mono Lake from a watery perch with visitors from far and wide. When I started as an intern with the Committee in 1990, Gary was already on the scene, spending hours after his day job to advance the program. We memorably met my first morning of work, in the intern house kitchen, where Gary was rustling up chocolate chip cookies for a lake adventure; soon I was gliding across salty

waters, visiting new places and learning Mono Lake lore.

Year after year, morning after morning, through muck, over rock, and through many pairs of salty footwear, Gary navigated canoe tours alongside guides he'd expertly trained in the art and science of unfurling the Mono Lake story and humans' role in its future while floating safely on its saline waters.

Gary remains in the Mono Basin, is part of Mono Lake activities, and spends time advocating for our saline sister Walker Lake, one watershed away. Generations of Mono Lake Committee advocates have been lucky passengers in Gary's canoe, readers of his insightful essays, and witnesses to his quiet, humorous, unwavering dedication to Mono Lake. Thank you Gary—you inspire us to keep saving Mono Lake, and to enjoy the lake while we're doing it. ❖



Gary Nelson retired after 37 canoe tour seasons, during which he made countless friends and advocates for Mono Lake.

## Join the Mono Lake Volunteer Program

Love Mono Lake and the Mono Basin? Consider sharing that enthusiasm by joining the Mono Lake Volunteer Program.

Mono Lake Volunteers serve as ambassadors for this unique place, welcoming visitors from around the world and helping them understand what makes the Mono Basin so special. Volunteers contribute hundreds of hours each year supporting education, conservation, and visitor experience.

Opportunities include answering visitor questions and encouraging resource protection at popular sites like South Tufa and Panum Crater, helping visitors at the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center, and assisting with restoration work such

as removing invasive plants. Volunteers also help with Mono Lake Committee events and projects throughout the year.

Volunteer training will take place June 5–7, 2026, and includes field sessions exploring visitor areas around the Mono Basin with local experts. Participants are asked to contribute at least eight hours of volunteer time per month during the summer season.

If you enjoy meeting people, sharing knowledge, and helping protect the Mono Basin, we would love to have you join the volunteer community. Go to [monolake.org/volunteer](http://monolake.org/volunteer) to learn more.



# From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Leslie Redman

## In honor

Russell Acker of Albany gave a gift in honor of **Sophie Acker**. **Brian Barr** of Jacksonville, OR donated in honor of **Linda Robb**. **Arde Bedjanian** of Rolling Hills Estates contributed in honor of **Dorothy Martinez**. **Stephen Bowlus** of Woodland gave a gift in honor of **Russell Bowlus**. **Veronica & Mickey Cafiero** of Rolling Hills donated in honor of **Daria Walsh & Bruce McNamara**. **Kirk Dixon & Peggy McKie** of Gardnerville, NV contributed in honor of **Morgan Taylor**. **Christina Filippone** of Smithtown, NY gave a gift in honor of **Joan Egrie**.

**Liliane Gersh** of Durango, CO donated in honor of the **Mono Lake Committee staff**. **Aaron Kelly** of Decatur, GA contributed in honor of **Raquel Horowitz-Kelly**. **Wendy Mandel & Allan Emkin** of La Quinta gave a gift in honor of **Sarah Taylor**. **Aaron & Annika Peterson** of Walnut gave a gift in honor of OEC Manager **Santiago Escruceria**. **Donna Pozzi** of Sacramento donated in honor of **Judge William H. Alsup**. **Ronald Rutowski** of Tempe, AZ contributed in honor of **Pat Rutowski**, **Lauren Mitchell**, and **Amanda Mitchell**. **Kristen & Paul Schmidt** of Irvine gave a gift in honor of **Ed Martinez**. **Meryl Sundove** of Corte Madera donated in honor of **Sally Gaines**.

## In memory

**Deborah & Robert Alberti** of Atascadero donated in memory of **Dorothy P. Millerd**. **Bob Battagin** of Woodacre, **Gordon Bennett & Kate Carolan** of Inverness, and **Robin Leong** of Vallejo contributed in memory of **Rich Stallcup**. **Jeff Bryant** of Fresno gave a gift in memory of **Richard & Billie Jean Wiebe**. **Jackie Chen** of San Francisco and **Patricia Kirshner**

of Carmel donated in memory of **James Kirshner**. **Rick & Susan DiSalvo**, **Theodore King, Jr.**, and **John & Karen Novak** of Blacksburg, VA contributed in memory of **James Marchant**. **David Getts** of Scottsdale, AZ gave a gift in memory of **John Getts**. **David Kaplan** of Oakland donated in memory of **Daniel Kaplan**.

**Alan Lawson** of Brea contributed in memory of **Jorge Zavaleta**. **Dan Lepore** of Austin, TX gave a gift in memory of **Pamela H. Dewey**. **Donald Lewis** of Lafayette donated in memory of **Bob Schitz**. **Olga Levin** of Oakland, **Jeannine Perlman** of San Diego, and **Yvonne Sams** of Oakdale contributed in memory of **Charles Smith**. **Jacob Lowenstern** of Portland, OR gave a gift in memory of **Wes Hildreth**. **Jay & Marilyn Marks** and **Rohit Shukla & Bell Orestes De Souza** of Los Angeles, **Sherryl & Tony Taylor** of Mammoth Lakes, and **Mal Warwick Donordigital** of Berkeley donated in memory of **Jamie McQuilkin**.

**Steve Matuszak** of Santa Rosa contributed in memory of **Vera Matuszak**. **Susan Worden McClain & Phil McClain** of Boise, ID gave gifts in memory of **Stephen G. Worden**. **Jim Oeland** of Medford, OR donated in memory of **Caroline Erickson**. **Breffni O'Rourke & Erica Scott** of Bishop contributed in memory of **Peggy Hobson**. **Claudia Pinter-Lucke** of Claremont gave a gift in memory of **James Pinter-Lucke**.

Bookstore Manager **Mara Plato** of Lee Vining donated in memory of **Sigi Plato**. **Kristen & Thomas Powers** of Lincoln, NE, **Michael & Mary Rust** of Hemet, and **Sue Weis** of Bishop contributed in memory of **Bill Carson**. **Rose Reis-Jackson** of Fair Oaks gave a gift in memory of **Charles Owen**

**Reis**. **Carole Lembi Ross** of West Lafayette, IN donated in memory of **Dolores Taylor**. **Sue Sage** of Truckee contributed in memory of **Larry Sage**. **Lisa & Scott Schoneman** of Port Townsend, WA gave a gift in memory of **Lyle K. Gaston & Lynne M. Foster**. **Bob & Uta Silverman** donated in memory of **Bill Dickey**. **Ted Zukoski** of Boulder, CO contributed in memory of **Ed & Joan Zukoski**.

## Farewell to Janet "JB" Barth

Mono Lake Volunteers and Mono Lake Committee staff were saddened to learn of the passing of longtime volunteer **Janet "JB" Barth** in January following a tragic car accident. JB brought a lifelong spirit of service and environmental advocacy to the Mono Basin, volunteering with the Committee on projects ranging from greeting visitors at Navy Beach to removing invasive plants. We are grateful for JB's dedication to Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierra community. She is deeply missed.

## Remembering Dale Burger

In January, longtime Mono Basin resident and friend of the Committee, **Dale R. Burger** passed away. In 1943, Dale's father purchased 160 acres of Sierra land that had once been a fishing retreat in what later became the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. Dale generously managed the property as a sanctuary—for family, friends, wildlife, and migratory birds. In 2025, with support from the Eastern Sierra Land Trust and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the land was returned to the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, making it the first land the Tribe has owned in 200 years (see Fall 2025 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). We will miss Dale's keen intellect, thirst for knowledge, and his credibly incredible stories. ❖



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## Join the Mono Lake Volunteers!

Learn more on page 18 and at [monolake.org/volunteer](http://monolake.org/volunteer).