

# Mill Creek return ditch passes test

*Possible solution to returning diverted water back to Mill Creek*

*by Lisa Cutting*

In an effort to explore ways to return water to Mill Creek and therefore satisfy its legal obligations, Southern California Edison (SCE) released water from the Lundy hydroelectric plant into the Mill Creek return ditch last September, successfully returning water to the creek (see Fall 2017 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The return ditch has been part of the hydropower system for a century. SCE was motivated to do this flow test because of the languishing problem of how to comply with Mill Creek water rights.

Prior to releasing water into the ditch, SCE evaluated the system and did routine maintenance to stabilize the earthen banks. SCE staff were on site during the test to monitor flows and record flow measurements. During the 61-day test, flows reached 16 cubic feet per second and the return ditch performed quite well.

SCE's efforts and this successful test bode well for Mill Creek, which has been suffering for decades due to infrastructure limitations that result in over 75% of the creek's flow being diverted. Once Mill Creek's water can be successfully returned to Mill Creek, consistent with water rights, the restoration process can

begin—especially in the lower reaches where insufficient flow has been detrimental to streamside vegetation.

The Committee continues to work to find a solution that provides flows necessary for Mill Creek's health in compliance with long-established water rights. ❖



*The Mill Creek return ditch carried flows of up to 16 cubic feet per second during a 61-day test last fall, returning water to the creek consistent with long-established water rights.*

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## Mono Lake Committee supports Proposition 68

*by Geoffrey McQuilkin*

The Mono Lake Committee is encouraging California voters to support Proposition 68, the California Clean Water & Safe Parks Act, in the upcoming June election. The measure was created with bipartisan support in the legislature and provides \$4 billion to address important park, water, and natural resource needs.

Among many statewide benefits, including important clean water and parks access provisions for underserved communities, Prop 68 contains components that are important for Mono Lake.

Funding for existing State Parks could improve infrastructure at the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve and funding dedicated to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will

benefit resource management in the Mono Basin. There is funding for climate change planning, habitat resiliency, and watershed restoration projects, which will support priorities that the Committee sees as critical to protecting Mono Lake's long-term health.

At the southern end of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Prop 68 would provide funding to advance urban water-wise strategies that the Committee has long promoted as solutions to protect Mono Lake, including water recycling, groundwater planning, and stormwater capture. Prop 68 will also help stabilize the Salton Sea, which provides vital migratory habitat for Mono's Eared Grebes. More information on Prop 68 can be found at [yes68ca.com](http://yes68ca.com).