

# Restoration notes



Peak flow on Lee Vining Creek.

Photo by Arya Degenhardt

Mono Lake and its streams have been restored as required by the State Water Resources Control Board's 1994 decision protecting Mono Lake.

In addition, several technical aspects of restoration are pending. The Committee—with the help of its advisors—is participating in restoration's "adaptive management" (see Fall 1997 *Newsletter*) by reviewing and commenting on:

- when and how to reopen channels in Rush Creek's bottomlands based on several years' monitoring data on the creek
- which engineering retrofit of DWP's diversion facilities, among the alternatives recently proposed by consultants, will best allow sediments to pass downstream.

The Committee also is taking steps to resolve a lingering dispute between DWP and the California Department of Fish and Game over how to retrofit the Rush Creek return ditch in order to get high flows down Rush Creek (see page 10.) ↪

The 2000 field season is progressing with Mono Basin restoration activities begun in 1999 by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP). Much of the work this year will focus on monitoring—measuring the effects of flows on stream channels,

tracking vegetation recovery along the streams and in wetlands around the lake, and surveying waterfowl during the key migration months. The information derived from the monitoring will help shape future restoration activities and ultimately will be used to assess whether

## Bighorn protection

The U.S. Forest Service has proposed closing two domestic sheep grazing allotments—Bloody Canyon and Alger Lakes—in response to a disease that domestic sheep easily transmit to endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. The Forest Service is attempting to comply with the Endangered Species Act by removing the domestic sheep (and therefore the potential risk of disease transmission) from allotments that geographically border bighorn habitat.

The Sierra Nevada bighorn are a unique race of bighorn sheep that are found only in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Their current population includes approximately 125 individu-

als, and they are highly susceptible to the pneumonia that is transmitted through domestic sheep herds.

The Mono Lake Committee believes that the potential for high mortality rates to the bighorn poses a threat that is unacceptable given their precarious population numbers. Eliminating the threat (removing the domestic sheep) allows the bighorn a much stronger chance of surviving.

Removing grazing also will benefit the streams by allowing natural recovery of riparian corridors. The absence of domestic sheep will allow the banks to stabilize, vegetation to return, and a reduction in stream sedimentation. Since ungrazed meadows may not be



Photo by John Wehausen

irrigated, protecting the bighorn may lead to changes in previously irrigated areas that have become dependent upon water.