



Just another average runoff year

by Greg Reis

The runoff forecast for the Mono Basin for April 2000 through March 2001 (the 2000 runoff year) is 94% of average, or 115,000 acre-feet of water in Rush, Lee Vining, Parker, and Walker creeks. This is identical to the volume of the 1999 runoff year. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) will be allowed to divert up to 16,000 acre-feet of water again this year. Mono Lake is currently 0.3 feet lower than it was at this time in 1999—the first year since diversions have resumed that Mono Lake has dropped. Assuming average precipitation, the forecast calls for Mono Lake to be at 6384.5 feet above sea level by next April

1. The table below shows the changes in lake level since 1992.

Despite 2000 being a normal runoff year, Rush Creek is not likely to receive normal-year restoration flows this year (Rush Creek has not received restoration flows in four of the six past years). Rush Creek's 2000 peak flow is projected to be 222 cfs, significantly less than the 380 cfs required in the Water Board's 1998 restoration order. The reason is mechanical: Restoration flows can't be made available to Rush Creek because the Rush Creek return ditch, which delivers water to Rush Creek, needs work to improve its flow capacity. This work—which at the

latest must be completed by fall 2000—has been stalled for a year and a half due to a dispute between DWP and the Department of Fish & Game over habitat requirements and regulatory authority. Recently, there's been progress, however, and it is possible that DWP will complete the upgrades in time for the 2001 runoff season.

Average runoff doesn't mean it will be a boring summer. Summer is always an eventful time of year, and 2000 is no exception. Channel re-openings, monitoring activities, and highway construction will all be affecting the streams. Four to six trillion brine shrimp will thrive in Mono Lake's rich waters and 40–60,000 California Gulls will nest on the islands. One quarter of a million people will visit the lake, many for the first time. The buzz of life will fill the Mono Basin between cold winters. And the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts La Niña to end in August, which means that next winter

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information Specialist. During June he will be at Expo 2000 in Hanover Germany where he will be representing Mono Lake as part of the Living Lakes Partnership.

RUNOFF YEAR (Apr-Mar)	ELEV. CHANGE	VOLUME CHANGE	VOLUME CHANGE IN %	YR. END ELEVATION (Mar 31)	LADWP EXPORTS
1992	0	0	0	6374.6 ft	0
1993	+0.9 ft	+35,264 af	(+1.6%)	6375.5 ft	0
1994	+0.5 ft	+19,770 af	(+0.9%)	6376.0 ft	0
1995	+3.2 ft	+123,440 af	(+5.4%)	6379.2 ft	4,414 af
1996	+2.3 ft	+108,490 af	(+4.5%)	6381.5 ft	4,484 af
1997	+1.5 ft	+67,128 af	(+2.7%)	6383.0 ft	15,945 af
1998	+1.8 ft	+81,870 af	(+3.2%)	6384.8 ft	15,787 af
1999	-0.3 ft	-13,707 af	(-0.5%)	6384.5 ft	15,889 af

Mono Lake has risen 9.9 vertical feet since the Water Board decision in 1994. A runoff year is April 1 of the year stated to March 31 of the following year.

