

# DWP Commissioners visit the Eastern Sierra

*Future collaboration invited—will there be a new relationship?*

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

**O**n April 24<sup>th</sup>, a delegation of Los Angeles leaders arrived in Mammoth Lakes. Their goal: begin building a new relationship between the city—particularly the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP)—and the Eastern Sierra.

Lead by DWP Commission President Mary Nichols, the group included three of the five Commissioners, the DWP General Manager, the Los Angeles Deputy Mayor for Energy and the Environment, and many other senior DWP staff members. In the 102 years that Los Angeles and the Eastern Sierra have been intertwined by issues of water, the visit was the first time DWP Commissioners have ever made such a group effort.

The goal of the visit was to “open a dialogue” said Commissioner David Nahai. Recognizing the decades of contentious and often bitter relations between DWP and the region, Nahai added that “the trip here is to overcome a lack of trust.”

“There are real opportunities,” said Commissioner Nichols, “to build relationships between the city and the ranchers and open space and rural communities that are the Eastern Sierra.” Nichols promised to return frequently to the



*DWP Commissioners listen to Tony Taylor from the Eastern Sierra Land Trust at the public meeting held on April 27.*

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area. In fact, she has done so once already.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa “wants to make LA the greenest city in the country,” said Deputy Mayor Nancy Sutley, “and he recognizes the unique relationship with the Eastern Sierra.”

The delegation met with Mono County leaders and citizens, including holding a public meeting focused on discussion of how DWP’s current land management policies—

which preclude development of tens of thousands of acres of Eastern Sierra land owned by the city of LA—might be transformed into a long-term, mutually beneficial commitment. Afterward, the delegation continued on to two days of meetings in Inyo County.

The Mono Lake Committee was well represented during the visit. The Committee has long sought to build a productive relationship with DWP and is pleased to see that DWP’s new leadership is looking in the same direction. One visit, of course, cannot dispel a hundred years of history. The signs are positive, and the real proof will be in the next steps. Stay tuned to see if these good intentions can translate into real, long-term projects, commitments, and dialogues. ❖

## *Air quality from page 5*

City expects the national ambient air quality standards to be protective of public health, as mandated by the Clean Air Act.”

Last, but certainly not least, the Mono Lake Committee produced a 22-page comment letter developed by staff, attorneys, and Mono Lake dust experts. The Committee laid out detailed scientific and legal evidence in the letter. In summary, the letter:

- Argued that the EPA must recraft the NAAQS to equal or exceed current coarse particulate matter standards in the Mono Basin and Owens Valley nonattainment areas.
- Presented evidence showing that this is the only way to bring the NAAQS into accordance with the facts and the mandate of Congress.
- Demonstrated that the air quality degradation that occurs in the vicinity of Mono and Owens lakes is unarguably a threat to human health by virtue of the extreme particulate

concentrations and toxic particulate content.

- Argued that the lack of any analysis by the EPA of the Mono and Owens dust storms is a serious flaw of the NAAQS.
- Pointed out that Congress has specifically called for the Mono Basin and Owens Valley dust storms to be regulated.

What does all this add up to? Certainly a clear and consistent call for the EPA to abandon its flawed approach to revising the standards. What will the EPA actually do? That’s unknown. What we do know is that the EPA must issue the final standards in late September. If they fail to protect public health again, litigation is certain, and the Committee will be ready to represent Mono Lake’s interests in that process.

The complete Mono Lake Committee comment letter is available online at [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org) or by request; contact Geoff ([geoff@monolake.org](mailto:geoff@monolake.org)) at (760) 647-6595. ❖