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Last Tamarisk in the Mono Basin Are Being Removed

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For Immediate Release

Tamarisk (*Tamarix sp.*) or salt cedar, is a non-native invasive plant that grows in wet areas in the deserts of the southwest United States. It crowds out native vegetation, provides less habitat diversity for native animals, and uses large amounts of water, seriously impacting surrounding plant species. Tamarisk infestations have been periodically removed from the Mono Basin, and are very close to being eradicated. The last large tamarisk tree was removed from the banks of Rush Creek in June of 2002. In August 2002, the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve conducted a survey for tamarisk along Mono Lake's 50-mile shoreline by boat. In September 2003, with assistance from Larry Ford of the U.S. Forest Service and Dave Marquart of the State Reserve, the German Living Lakes Work Camp--five young German volunteers--spent three weeks in the Mono Basin helping to remove known infestations of

tamarisk. Living Lakes is an international nongovernmental partnership started in 1998, linked around the world by a common interest in saving and protecting endangered lakes and waterways. The Mono Lake Committee, representing Mono Lake, is a charter member and hosted the German Living Lakes Work Camp.

Botanist John Bair took the work camp group to a tamarisk location on the Lee Vining Creek delta and River Gates of PRBO Conservation Science provided directions to tamarisk sighted east of Navy Beach on the southern shores of Mono Lake. The work camp group also visited the location on Rush Creek where the Mono Lake Committee had focused its eradication efforts during the past few years. At seven of the eight locations visited, the work camp was able to find tamarisk. The group pulled small trees and used a weed wrench (on loan from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power) to uproot the medium-sized trees. For the larger trees, the stems were cut, the flowers and seeds removed and stored in bags to be safely disposed of, and the remaining stumps noted with GPS coordinates and given to the responsible agency that manages the lands where they are located. Specialists will be sent out to treat these stumps with a herbicide that should prevent them from re-sprouting. One tamarisk found at Lee Vining Tufa had 28 annual rings!

It is likely that more tamarisk exists in unknown locations, and it is possible that some of the areas the work camp visited will have new seedlings coming up next spring, making it necessary to continue efforts at finding new infestations, looking for sprouts in old areas, and removing them. In fact, since

the end of the Work Camp, two small plants were found along the shore, and one was removed by Ranger Marquart.

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