

March 25, 2005

Land Subdivision No Longer a Threat at Mono Lake

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For Immediate Release

Last week, the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area announced that it completed a purchase of the Cunningham Property, a 120-acre parcel located on the west shore of Mono Lake within the boundary of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. While plans to subdivide and develop the property had been slowly moving forward with Mono County, Mammoth Mountain has indicated that it will not develop the property, and instead, intends to trade the property with the Forest Service. Geoffrey McQuilkin, Co-Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee says that, “the Committee is pleased that a large-scale development project no longer threatens the west shore of Mono Lake. I’ve been assured by senior management at Mammoth Mountain that their sole goal is to trade the property into public ownership.”

Prior to Mammoth Mountain acquiring the Cunningham property, a partial application had been submitted to Mono County to subdivide and build up to 30 resort-style homes on the property. The Forest Service declared this proposal to be detrimental to the

integrity of the Scenic Area in August 2003. While Scenic Area regulations allow property owners to make modest changes to their properties, the legislation clearly prohibits large-scale alterations such as subdivisions. “The Mono Lake Committee has been closely following this issue for several years” says McQuilkin. “Congress established the Scenic Area 20 years ago to protect the unique character of the lands surrounding Mono Lake, and the Committee opposes development projects that violate Scenic Area protections.”

Mammoth Mountain has indicated its interest in using the Mono Lake property as part of an exchange for Forest Service land beneath the Mammoth Mountain Inn and the associated parking lot. To date, no plans have been submitted to the Forest Service, which has said that any trade proposal will be subject to public review under the National Environmental Policy Act. According to McQuilkin, “the Mono Lake Committee supports an open and transparent process for land trades and will look to the Forest Service to lead a public process that assures that both ends of the land trade are positive.”

Photo 1: View of the 120-acre Mono Lake property taken from the County Park area, one of the key visitor areas at Mono Lake. Forest Service guidelines for private property development in the Scenic Area help to maintain the rural character of this scenic highway corridor. Photo by Bartshe Miller.

Photo 2: No longer for sale. The 120-acre Mono Lake property located along Highway 395 and the west shore of Mono Lake has been purchased by Mammoth Mountain Ski

Area. Plans to subdivide and build resort-style homes are no longer on the table. Photo by Arya Degenhardt.

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Photos of the Mono Lake area and the text of this press release are available for download from www.monolake.org/press

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The Mono Lake Committee is a nonprofit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas.