

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour



June 23–25, 2017 • Greg Reis

**\$165 per person / \$150 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 15 participants**

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of Los Angeles in 1941. Today, the aqueduct must balance competing needs instead of exclusively serving one.

Join Mono Lake Committee Information & Restoration Specialist Greg Reis for a weekend-long field investigation of the north end of the aqueduct system. We'll visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin, and learn about their modern relationship with Los Angeles, Mono Lake, and its tributary streams. We will look at the changes coming from a recent stream restoration agreement with Los Angeles, discuss past and present diversions, and see how 20th century infrastructure is serving the 21st century water needs. This field seminar will provide an overview of the Mono Basin system, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and historical, engineering, and ecological anecdotes that make up this fascinating water infrastructure.

Greg is the perfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex plumbing—he has over 20 years of experience in Mono Basin hydrology and restoration and keeps close track of Mono Basin water management. On Saturday he will lead you along the engineering seam that shapes the waterscape of the Mono Basin with interesting stops that reveal the hydrology, ecology, and

history of Mono Lake and the changing purposes of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. On Sunday he will take you to explore the recovering streams and see the reason for the need to modify the infrastructure and operations.

ITINERARY

Friday, June 23, 6:30pm: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. After check-in and introductions we'll get oriented to the Mono Basin watershed and some general hydrology concepts. We'll look at old maps from the Mono Lake research library showing historic patterns of land ownership and water management, which will set us up for the field exploration of the next two days. ***We will conclude around 8:00pm.***

Saturday, June 24, 8:00am: Explore the aqueduct. Meet again at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining to carpool to the northernmost point of the LA Aqueduct, where a portion of the waters of Lee Vining Creek are diverted into an underground concrete conduit. We will follow the buried conduit on good 2WD dirt roads, making stops at siphons, sand traps, and the Walker Creek and Parker Creek diversion dams. We'll see where the conduit empties into Grant Lake Reservoir, the second-largest surface water reservoir in the LA Aqueduct system.

After a restroom break, we'll stop for lunch in a shady spot along Rush Creek upstream of the reservoir. After lunch, we'll see how water gets out of the reservoir and into lower Rush Creek on its way to Mono Lake, and discuss the construction to begin this year on a new outlet. Then we will travel to the site of West Portal, once a thriving boomtown, located at the northwestern entrance to the Mono Craters Tunnel, where diverted water exits the Mono Basin and flows under an active chain of young volcanoes. Throughout the day, we will notice relevant bits of natural and human history that accent this unusual water conveyance. ***We will officially conclude the day at 3:30pm.***

Sunday, June 25, 8:30am: Explore the diverted streams. Meet again at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore for a walk down the Lee Vining Creek Trail. We will walk through mature riparian forest, encounter areas still desiccated from past decades of excessive water diversions, and discover the restoration and recovery of the Lee Vining Creek ecosystem. We will discuss how evolving restoration philosophies since the 1990s have resulted in a variety of projects, how we ended up with the recent restoration agreement, and what the expected results are for this rare and valuable deltaic bottomland.

At about 11:30am we will head back uphill to town, where restrooms, drinking water, shade, and food are available. Or, you are free to bring your lunch and stay down at the creek, returning by 1:00pm.

At 1:00pm, those who wish to see Rush Creek below Grant Lake Reservoir—once a trophy trout stream and the focus of current restoration efforts—will meet again at the Mono Lake Committee for the afternoon trip. We will make short stops at Walker Creek and upper Rush Creek. We will examine the black cottonwood trees and Jeffrey pines that the Mono Lake Committee has planted and study their growth response to hydrologic conditions. We'll talk about what's happening next as the restoration agreement between the Mono Lake Committee, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, California Trout, and Los Angeles is implemented.

At our optional last stop of the day—a highlight of the 2015 seminar—we will put on waders or water shoes and get our feet wet in order to see how the Rush Creek bottomlands are performing after many years of work and preliminary restoration flows. *We will carefully wade across the creek, braving a jungle of willows*, to see the “Channel 10” area, rewatered 22 years ago, and arguably Rush Creek’s greatest success story. We will check on recent beaver activity, look for fish, and listen for Song Sparrows and Yellow Warblers. ***We will officially conclude the day at 4:30pm.***

Altitude and Dehydration Cautions: Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Also, the sun is rather fierce at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

Hiking: On Sunday morning we will be hiking a short distance (2 miles) with minimal elevation gain; however, there will be short sections of steep, rugged, and uneven terrain.

TO BRING

- ___ lunch & snacks for both days
- ___ plenty of drinking water each day
- ___ daypack
- ___ rain jacket
- ___ personal sun strategy (hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, etc.)
- ___ binoculars/camera
- ___ field guides/note-taking materials
- ___ shoes or sandals that can get wet or waders (optional)

SUGGESTED READING

- John Hart, *Storm Over Mono* (out of print but available online): <http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=ft48700683&brand=eschol>
- William L. Kahrl, *Water and Power*.

SUGGESTED WEB BROWSING

- Historical resources: monobasinresearch.org/historical/
- Current real time data, including flows and minimum flow rules: monobasinresearch.org/data/mbrtdframes.htm
- Mono Lake Committee Streamflow Center, including links to Synthesis Report and Settlement Agreement: <http://www.monolake.org/today/category/streamflows/>



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars