Mono Lake Newsletter

Winter & Spring 2025

DWP Abandons Export Commitment | State Water Board Hearing | Hydro Relicensing | Field Seminars

Did you know there's a tiny mammal (see photo below) in the Mono Basin that had never been photographed alive until last fall?

Mono Lake and the Mono Basin are full of wonders that inspire that type of question. The first-time visitor reports back to their family, "Did you know there's a lake with limestone pillars growing out of it? They're called tufa towers." The college student asks their roommate, "Did you know Los Angeles gets some of its water from a saline lake ecosystem hundreds of miles from the city?"

The Mount Lyell shrew inspired a flurry of questions in our office. "Did you know about the shrew? How cool to see those photos." Some of us have lived here for decades and know a great deal about this place, but there are always new things to learn.

When we work to protect Mono Lake we're thinking of a third-grader watching brine shrimp swim around in a plastic cup at South Tufa—"Did you know most shrimp are brown but some are turquoise?" The high-schooler from Los Angeles who learns about the source of their water—"Did you know the water you drink at home comes from right here, from Rush Creek?" The retired couple pulling the motorhome over at Old Marina—"Did you know this lake smells like the ocean?"

In the pages that follow, you'll see our work to preserve the chance for anyone to come to Mono Lake and learn something astonishing. First-time visitors, longtime fans, students of all ages—everyone should be able to return home from this remarkable place and say, "Did you know ...?"

—Elin Ljung, Communications Coordinator

COVER PHOTO BY GEOFF MCQUILKIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISHAL SUBRAMANYAN, PRAKRIT JAIN, & HARPER FORBES

*Despite being identified by science more than 100 years ago, the Mount Lyell shrew (*Sorex lyelli*) was photographed alive for the first time here in its Mono Basin habitat last November.*

Mono Lake Committee Mission

The Mono Lake Committee is a non-profit 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.

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DWP abandons Los Angeles' commitment to Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Much of 2024 was full of celebration that the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) had committed to a new collaborative approach to restoring Mono Lake (see Fall 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). But the optimism abruptly ended in November, when DWP quietly reversed its plan and began maximizing water exports.

DWP began taking water in October, initiating what was expected to be an export of 4,500 acre-feet of water, the same as 2023 and 2022. But exports didn't stop, and the total volume exceeded the planned 4,500 acre-foot amount before Thanksgiving, hit 6,000 acre-feet in early December, and was more than 9,500 acre-feet in February. All indications are that water will keep flowing through the Mono Craters tunnel until March 31, 2025, which is the end of the runoff year.

When the Mono Lake Committee pursued information about the unexpected export activity, dozens of inquiries to multiple DWP staff went unanswered for weeks. Finally, after discussing the problem with DWP's CEO, Janisse Quiñones, in her Los Angeles office, pieces of information were shared. It is now clear that DWP aqueduct operators, despite the commitments of City leadership, had no collaborative plan in mind for Mono Lake.

A promise made but not kept

DWP's annual operations plan specified that exports would total 4,500 acre-feet of water—the same as in 2023 and 2022—a meaningful voluntary commitment. Holding exports steady at the same level as the prior two years would have helped preserve recent wet year lake level gains, showing commitment to reaching the overdue, state-mandated healthy level for Mono Lake, while also providing a stable level of Mono Basin water to the city.

"Planned export," DWP wrote to the California State Water Resources Control Board in May, "is 4,500 acre-feet."

As DWP prepared to abandon its 4,500 acre-foot plan, it did not communicate with the State Water Board, the Committee, or other Mono Lake parties like the California Department of

Continued on page 9

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Robbie stands at 6,392 feet above sea level, the state-mandated healthy lake level requirement for Mono Lake. Hannah and Maureen are distantly visible near Mono Lake's current shoreline, approximately half a mile away.

Wildfires in Los Angeles

by Elin Ljung

Although here in the Mono Basin we're no stranger to wildfires, we watched in horror as catastrophic fire tore through Los Angeles in early January. We kept in touch with family, friends, and Mono Lake Committee members as threats of evacuation loomed for days on end. Many of our neighbors were doing the same—checking on loved ones in the midst of disaster.

Los Angeles is home to thousands of the Mono Lake Committee's 16,000 members—we are thinking of all those whose homes were caught in the fires.

The fires, igniting after months with near-zero precipitation in Southern California, were fueled by low humidity, a buildup of vegetation from prior wet years, and hurricane-force Santa Ana winds, an unusual combination representing a changing climate in California. With 29 deaths, over 40,000 acres burned, more than 12,300 structures destroyed, and hundreds of billions of dollars in damages, they rank among the most destructive fires in the state's history.

Questions about water supply and delivery began immediately and astute Committee members inquired whether the situation had increased demand for water from the Eastern Sierra. The short answer is no—LA's water supply was at record-high levels before the fires began (see page 12).

Fire is always a reminder of the importance of water—in the right place, in the right amounts, at the right time. Our hearts are with everyone who has been affected.

State Water Board to hold Mono Lake hearing in 2025

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The California State Water Resources Control Board plans to schedule its long-awaited hearing about Mono Lake and implementation of the Board's mandated, healthy 6,392-foot surface elevation level in 2025. Agency officials shared the plans in recent meetings.

In a multi-agency meeting in December, State Water Board staff accelerated the hearing schedule after expressing surprise and disappointment about the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) surface water exports exceeding the planned 4,500 acre-feet. DWP's reversal of its commitment to voluntarily limit water diversions has now undermined the potential for solution-oriented collaboration.

The State Water Board had been considering facilitating a series of pre-hearing collaborative discussions to see if voluntary agreements could be reached that would streamline the hearing process. However, DWP's abandonment of the City's collaborative approach caused the Board to cancel those plans and accelerate the schedule for the hearing itself.

In the meeting, DWP was unable to explain why there was no consideration given to the impact on Mono Lake of its increased diversions, nor why it had failed to communicate with the State Water Board about its decision to abandon the City's commitment to maintaining the same diversion amount as the prior two years. The meeting included the Mono Lake Committee and parties that are concerned about the lake's current low level and will be present at the hearing, including the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, California Trout, the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, California Air Resources Board, US EPA, and California State Parks.

The hearing will focus on the lake's transition to the management level required by the Board in 1994. The 6,392-foot lake level, once achieved, will protect numerous Public Trust resources at Mono Lake, including ecological health, air quality, scenic and Tribal resources, and unique, internationally significant habitat for millions of migratory and nesting birds.

The hearing will consider actions needed to achieve the lake's recovery from the impacts of decades of excessive water diversions by DWP.

Mono Lake friends know the lake is only halfway to the required level and a decade late in getting there. Modifying stream diversions to deliver more water to the lake to implement the overdue protections all parties agreed to in 1994 will be at the top of the Committee's goals for the hearing.

The hearing process begins with a formal notice, expected this spring. The notice will describe the hearing topics and questions and will set the schedule for several months of major document submittals, including expert witness testimony, research studies, and legal position statements. The in-person portion of the hearing, likely four to six months after the notice, will allow for testimony and cross-examination of witnesses.

Thirty years ago, the State Water Board acted to protect Mono Lake for the people of California and to preserve and restore the remarkable ecosystem we know and love. There are many signs that DWP's attorneys are preparing to fight against water diversion changes that benefit Mono Lake at the hearing (see page 5), and the Committee is preparing accordingly to strongly make the case for achieving Mono Lake's long-awaited protection. True success for Mono Lake comes when it reaches the healthy level of 6,392 feet, with a thriving ecosystem, safe bird habitat, clean air, and a secure future. ❖

ANDREW YOUSSEF

In 2025 the State Water Board plans to schedule its long-awaited hearing about Mono Lake and implementation of the Board's mandated, healthy 6,392-foot surface elevation level. The Board accelerated its hearing plans after DWP began maximizing Mono Basin exports.

DWP preparing aggressive hearing strategy

Will Los Angeles choose to use it?

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

The Mono Lake Committee is actively preparing for the upcoming California State Water Resources Control Board hearing in 2025 about Mono Lake's low level, its unfulfilled protection mandate, and modifying the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) stream diversions to achieve implementation. The work includes a wide range of activities, such as staff research, working with expert witnesses, running hydrologic models, talking with allies, and preparing legal presentations.

The Committee's position is straightforward: In 1994 the State Water Board required that a sustainable 6,392-foot management level for Mono Lake be achieved by approximately 2014. That hasn't happened, so water diversion changes are necessary to put implementation back on track.

Those facts are clear, so the question often arises: What position and arguments will DWP present?

While DWP hasn't produced any written hearing submissions yet, a number of things indicate DWP attorneys are preparing an aggressive strategy to ignore the 6,392-foot mandate, claim Mono Lake's impaired condition is just fine, and argue for no changes to water diversions.

DWP is investing a large amount of money in hearing preparation. Several years ago, DWP hired outside counsel at a prestigious Sacramento law firm to represent it on an undisclosed budget, indicating its intent to heavily engage in the hearing.

More recently, DWP authorized $960,000 in 2023, which it said in budget documents was for gathering "valuable insights that will improve the hydrogeologic model of Mono Lake, which is vital for preparation for the State Water Resources Control Board hearing pertaining to LADWP's water rights license." That work involved an intensive aerial survey with a low-flying helicopter towing a large hexagonal frame 100 feet above the ground to electromagnetically map groundwater resources (see Fall 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The flights, which generated substantial local attention and concern, produced data that has neither been discussed nor shared.

DWP is also investing in conducting its own parallel studies, most likely with the intent to argue that long-established Mono Lake issues like air quality and ecological productivity aren't a concern.

In 2024 DWP obtained permits from the Bureau of Land Management to "install, operate, and maintain meteorological and particulate matter monitoring equipment" at two sites on federal land east of Mono Lake. However, there's already a long-running and well-established dust monitoring program conducted by the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEN CHAWKINS

Last fall the Los Angeles City Council reaffirmed its commitment to Mono Lake in a resolution establishing September 28 as Mono Lake Day. From left to right, mark! Lopez of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, Mayor Karen Bass, and Mono Lake Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin with the resolution.

District, the legal authority implementing the Clean Air Act. DWP's investment appears to be intended to dispute Great Basin's conclusions about toxic dust that blows off the exposed bed of Mono Lake—dusty alkali flats that will be underwater when the lake reaches the 6,392-foot mark.

DWP also contracted an outside firm to conduct studies on Mono Lake's alkali fly population. We've seen the boats, extensive equipment, and divers working at the lake, but DWP is holding the project close to the vest. The relationship between lake level, salinity, and impairment of alkali fly productivity was well-established by the State Water Board, informing the 6,392-foot mandate (see page 7). DWP presumably plans to use the data it gathers to argue against that record and in favor of lower Mono Lake levels—just as it did, unsuccessfully, at the original State Water Board hearing.

The studies support a theme that DWP launched in arguments presented at the State Water Board's public

Continued on page 24

Acres of dusty lakebed will be exposed by DWP exports

Air quality violations likely to increase

by Maureen McGlinchy

In 1994 the California State Water Resources Control Board issued Decision 1631, mandating a Mono Lake elevation of 6,392 feet above sea level that balanced protection of Public Trust resources and continued delivery of water to Los Angeles. Air quality is one of those protected resources jeopardized by a low lake. The exposed lakebed is a source of PM-10 pollution—particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter—and for decades the Mono Basin has ranked among the worst dust emissions in the country.

Mono Lake remains well below its mandated level but the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) insists the lake is healthy and that there is no need to adjust its water exports.

Air quality regulators disagree.

Regulating agencies visit Mono Lake

Last October Martha Guzman, Regional Administrator of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, convened a meeting here in Lee Vining to discuss the issue of air quality violations at Mono Lake. Representatives from ten regional, state, and federal agencies, along with the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe, DWP, and the Mono Lake Committee participated in presentations about the condition of the lake, a roundtable discussion about how water exports are perpetuating air quality violations, and a field trip to the lake.

The tone of the meeting was optimistic, as participants maintained that raising the lake to the Public Trust lake level will resolve many present-day concerns. Guzman highlighted benefits to not only air quality, but also the overall health of the ecosystem, the traditions of the Kootzaduka'a Tribe, and scenic and recreational values. The meeting concluded with an agreement for further collaboration to investigate solutions to the challenge of raising the lake.

BARTSHÉ MILLER

In October 2024, Committee Executive Director Geoff McQuilkin spoke at South Tufa with EPA Regional Administrator Martha Guzman and State Water Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel.

Unfortunately, in subsequent weeks DWP's failure to uphold its plan to not increase exports this year (see page 3) and its lack of communication signaled an end to the collaborative spirit. The State Water Board set aside its plans to facilitate the proposed collaboration and reaffirmed the intention to schedule a hearing in 2025.

Each year of water exports affects air quality

Mono Lake Committee analysis shows that, at Mono Lake's current elevation, 16,000 acre-feet—DWP's maximum allowable export—exposes approximately 75 acres of emissive lakebed along the northern and eastern shorelines. While it is the combination of emissive soil and wind that causes dust events, anyone who has spent time in the Mono Basin knows that strong wind is a regular feature of our climate. Therefore, increases in emissive land are expected to lead to increased air quality violations.

Had DWP exported only 4,500 acre-feet of surface water, as originally planned, 20 acres of lakebed would be newly exposed. While still damaging to air quality, the reduced export would leave more than 50 acres—the equivalent of 40 football fields—protected under water. DWP argues that its annual export from the Mono Basin has minimal impact on the lake system but every year stream diversions expose measurable acres of dust-emitting soil that negatively affect air quality.

The nature-based solution of submerging the emissive lakebed under a higher lake level that was outlined in Decision 1631 is still the most effective plan to address the air quality issue at Mono Lake. DWP's exports limit lake rise year-by-year; the cumulative effect of reduced water to Mono Lake has caused decades of Clean Air Act violations. DWP has shown that voluntary commitments to raise Mono Lake are not enough. This year's State Water Board hearing must constrain DWP's water exports to protect the Public Trust resources in the Mono Basin. ❖

Maureen McGlinchy is the Committee's Hydrology Modeling & Membership Specialist. She was fascinated to learn that the Mount Lyell shrew is an insectivore, not a rodent.

Lowering salinity by raising Mono Lake is key to ecosystem health

Productivity of alkali flies, brine shrimp, and birds threatened by increased salinity

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

Water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) began more than 80 years ago, depriving Mono Lake of water and upending the hydrologic balance between inflow and evaporation. The lake shrank rapidly, losing half its volume and declining 45 vertical feet by 1982.

As the lake shrank, the salts and minerals that make it unique remained abundant. And as a result, for every foot that diversions lowered the lake, salinity increased.

Mono Lake's endemic brine shrimp and alkali flies are specially adapted to thrive in the lake's salty waters which were 50 grams per liter (g/l) when diversions began. These two species, which each number in the trillions at Mono Lake, are a critical food resource for vast numbers of nesting and migratory birds, making the lake a site of international importance for bird migration. But as water diversions caused salinity to increase, the productivity of these essential species declined.

That's why the California State Water Resources Control Board carefully considered ecological studies of the relationship between salinity and the health of brine shrimp and alkali flies in establishing its Mono Lake mandate. And though the status of Mono Lake is most often represented by lake level (6,383 feet above sea level this February), every foot of lake level has a corresponding lake salinity (81 g/l in February) that is directly relevant to ecosystem health.

DWP often claims the lake is healthy, an assertion it also made in the 1990s when the lake was at 100 g/l salinity. In doing so, DWP overlooks the history of lake diversions and the subsequent doubling of salinity DWP originally caused.

The State Water Board's conclusions, however, are based on a comprehensive look at the relationship between salinity and productivity. Alkali fly studies are critical to this understanding.

Mono Lake expert entomologist Dr. David Herbst presented the conclusions of decades of work in several forums recently, recapping these core concepts. Alkali flies are well adapted to saline habitats, but the systems by which they filter salts from their bodies have to work harder as salinity increases, leaving less energy for other processes.

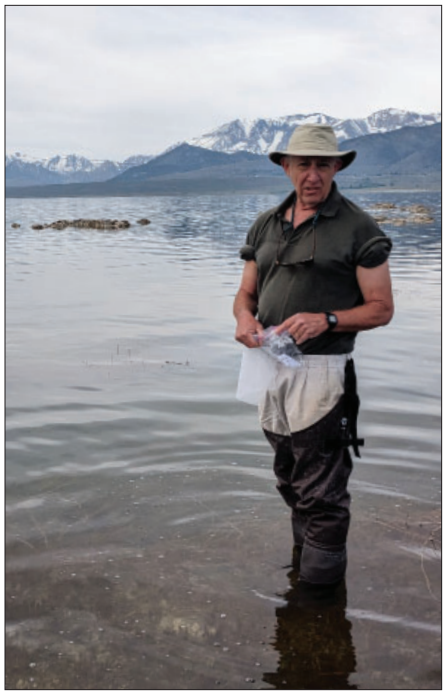
Herbst's work shows that this leads to a number of negative consequences. At higher salinities flies have reduced rates of larval growth, reduced larval survival, and prolonged development periods. Pupae and adult flies also have smaller body sizes. Adult fecundity and reproductive success is impaired. Add it all up and the studies show that alkali fly population productivity decreases significantly as salinity increases.

Herbst's work has quantified these impacts for different lake salinities and associated lake levels. A key takeaway: As impressive as the bands of alkali flies you might see today at South Tufa are, their size and numbers are far smaller than they were before DWP water diversions began.

Productivity of the alkali flies is a key consideration of the Public Trust lake level established by the State Water Board.

In the 1990s, the State Water Board learned that fly productivity was less than half of what it had been before diversions. Ultimately the Board determined in its decision that a lower salinity (corresponding to a higher lake) was necessary to "maintain the aquatic productivity of the lake in good condition."

The Board's requirement that Mono Lake be managed at a healthy lake level is as much a salinity requirement as it is a physical elevation requirement. When you visit the lake, the yet-to-be achieved mandate for the surface to be averaging 6,392 feet above sea level is noted on trailside signs and not too hard to imagine. That translates to a lake salinity of about 68 g/l. When the day comes that the lake has recovered to that level, out in the briny waters, alkali flies will be able to put more energy into growing faster, getting bigger, and reproducing more successfully than we've seen in many a decade. ❖



ROBBIE DI PAOLO

Entomologist Dr. David Herbst's decades of research have shown that alkali fly productivity increases when Mono Lake is higher and therefore less saline.

Hydropower in the Mono Basin is undergoing relicensing

by Robbie Di Paolo

The long-awaited California State Water Resources Control Board hearing expected to occur in 2025 will be a critical moment for reviewing the significant environmental issues tied to the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) water exports in the Mono Basin. However, as the Mono Lake Committee prepares for that hearing, another important environmental review process is occurring simultaneously. There are three Mono Basin hydropower projects currently under review, and though their effects are very different from the issues associated with DWP's water exports, they have important long-term implications for stream health.

Mono Lake's three largest tributary streams—Rush, Lee Vining, and Mill creeks—are invaluable ecological and recreational resources. Flowing from alpine and subalpine headwaters through mixed conifer and pinyon-juniper woodlands to create expansive riparian and meadow habitats in their bottomlands and deltas at the shores of Mono Lake, these streams serve as desert oases that sustain a rich diversity of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Each creek also has hydropower projects owned and operated by Southern California Edison (SCE) and all three projects are undergoing federal hydro relicensing.

This once-in-a-generation opportunity, occurring every 30 to 50 years, gives interested parties a process for addressing impacts caused by hydropower operations. The Committee is involved in the relicensing processes for all three creeks—encouraging SCE to adjust operations in specific ways that reduce environmental impacts, support ecosystem health in restoration areas, maintain public recreation, and improve data sharing.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE HERRERA

The effects of hydropower operations, though different from the issues associated with DWP's water exports, have long-term implications for stream health.

Participating meaningfully in these hydro relicensing processes requires a major investment of time and effort. Each relicensing process spans five to seven years, during which time SCE develops technical materials, engages interested parties on key issues, and solicits feedback on studies and proposed operations. This information is then submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which produces an environmental report in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. FERC uses this process to decide the terms for renewing each project license and has the ability to impose operational requirements if there are clearly documented benefits.

For parties like the Committee, this process entails attending regular meetings, reviewing detailed technical documents, and submitting formal comment letters to FERC within tight deadlines. With three relicensing processes simultaneously underway, the undertaking is significant.

While the environmental impacts of SCE's hydropower operations on the creeks may be more incremental and less immediately apparent than the effects of DWP's water exports, they still require careful attention. Hydropower operations alter streamflow patterns—changing the timing and magnitude of flows—in ways that can disrupt aquatic habitats and harm riparian ecosystems. Fish populations, aquatic insect

Continued on page 25

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Federal hydro relicensing is underway for the three largest Mono Lake tributaries: Rush, Lee Vining, and Mill creeks.

DWP abandons commitment from page 3

Fish & Wildlife and the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe. Nor did DWP communicate its new intentions in a timely way, not even in response to dozens of inquiries from the Committee and concerned agencies.

After inquiries from Los Angeles leaders and significant pressure from the Committee, DWP water operations staff finally revealed, on December 16, that DWP intends to take 16,000 acre-feet of water by March 31. This is the legal limit, and the same old maximization approach to taking Mono Basin water that has chronically impaired Mono Lake's ecological health and kept it well below the 6,392-foot Public Trust lake level.

DWP now intends to take nearly four times as much water as planned. Which nearly quadruples the impact on Mono Lake.

In total, DWP's maximized water diversions this year will artificially lower Mono Lake a quarter-foot. Losses like this add up, and history shows this is exactly how progress in restoring the lake is lost. Lowering the lake increases salinity, undermines the health of the lake ecosystem, negatively impacts biodiversity and millions of migratory birds, and diminishes scenic and Tribal resources at Mono Lake.

Coalition requested export reduction

Last spring, Los Angeles leadership responded positively to a call from a large coalition led by the Mono Lake Committee (see Summer 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). The coalition asked Mayor Karen Bass to consider the low level of Mono Lake and voluntarily not increase water diversions in order to preserve recent gains and make progress toward the state-mandated, healthy 6,392-foot lake level requirement. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the decision as an environmental win in June, quoting Deputy Mayor Nancy Sutley saying, "Mayor Bass has been clear that building a greener Los Angeles is one of her top priorities and protecting water resources certainly falls into that."

The group asking for action with the Committee included leaders like Mark Gold and Ed Begley, Jr., community groups like Communities for a Better Environment, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, and Pacoima Beautiful, alongside groups like the Sierra Club, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, and LA Audubon. Gold called the commitment "the first major environmental accomplishment for water in the Bass administration."

Disappointment in DWP's abandonment of the commitment runs far and wide, from Los Angeles community groups to resource agencies to the State Water Board. EPA Regional Administrator, Martha Guzman, in a December meeting, called DWP's action "surprising and discouraging."

After DWP abandoned the 4,500 acre-foot commitment, Melanie Paola Torres, representing LA community environmental justice organization Pacoima Beautiful, spoke at a DWP Board of Commissioners public meeting, saying: "These diversions jeopardize the recovery of the lake, harm its ecosystem, and worsen air quality in the surrounding region. Mono Lake is more than just a body of water. It is a living classroom and a source of inspiration. When our community visits, they see what's at stake, they return home with a deeper understanding of environmental justice and the urgency to care for our shared resources. But if LADWP continues taking water, the lake's recovery will stall and we risk losing this vital place forever."

Important questions about the surprise DWP action remain unanswered and the Committee has been in communication with Los Angeles leaders to determine what this means for the City's outlook on Mono Lake. Most have been just as surprised. The top question on the list: What does Mayor Bass make of her commitment being abandoned?

Continued on page 24

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

In order to help visualize the effects of this year's increased diversions, Mono Lake Committee staff are standing at what would have been the approximate shore, had DWP not maximized water exports this year and let that water flow to Mono Lake instead.

Policy notes

by Bartshé Miller

Siphons to replace gates in revised plans for Grant Lake Reservoir

The Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) continues to develop a multi-phased project focusing on Grant Lake Reservoir infrastructure. The project includes the long-overdue modification to the Grant spillway needed to provide the required Stream Ecosystem Flows (SEFs) mandated by the California State Water Resources Control Board and agreed to under the 2013 Stream Restoration Agreement (see Fall 2013 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). However, with the additional problem of a malfunctioning rotovalve (see Summer 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*), dam safety and infrastructure upgrades have added to the delay and the scope of the original spillway modification.

According to DWP's December 30, 2024 report to the State Water Board, DWP is abandoning the original outlet design of Langemann gates (see Fall 2023 *Mono Lake Newsletter*) in favor of siphons. DWP plans to bury four 48-inch diameter siphon pipes, encased in concrete, adjacent to the existing spillway. The siphons will begin at the reservoir and extend 1,700 feet into the unlined portion of the spillway.

Siphons were considered in 2013 as a design option during negotiations ahead of the Stream Restoration Agreement, but at the time DWP had operating concerns about the concept. However, in recent years, DWP installed siphons along the Los Angeles Aqueduct at Tinemaha Reservoir south of the town of Big Pine, and it is now advancing a siphon outlet system at Grant. The new system, in combination with the existing Mono Gate One Return Ditch, will need to reliably provide sufficient SEFs to Rush Creek across all runoff year-types. According to DWP, the siphon system would also serve as a reliable outlet for the reservoir during subsequent replacement of the rotovalve and future reservoir management.

For years DWP has been concerned about the rotovalve; its replacement was purchased more than six years ago. In 2023, the rotovalve began to malfunction, and questions regarding dam safety superseded the original reservoir modification plan to deliver the reliable SEFs needed to restore Rush Creek. According to DWP's December 2024 report, the siphon system is tentatively scheduled for completion in late 2029 or early 2030. The work to replace the rotovalve may extend into 2034.

DWP has moved slowly on the modification to the Grant spillway and it's not clear why the rotovalve, a fundamental piece of dam safety, wasn't prioritized for replacement years ago. There is an ecological cost to Rush Creek when the reliable delivery of SEFs is delayed, and this was why the State Water Board set deadlines for outlet modification with construction to begin in 2024. Deadlines were extended last year and will now need to be extended again.

The Mono Lake Committee is working to make sure that DWP reports to the State Water Board and principal parties in the design, planning, and permitting process. The goal is to expedite the work ahead and confirm that the siphons will successfully deliver the required SEFs that Rush Creek needs.

TERI TRACY

DWP is changing the original outlet design of Langemann gates built into the Grant Lake Reservoir spillway to siphons that will be buried adjacent to the spillway.

Tribal Beneficial Uses designation delayed

After a historic hearing in spring 2024 to consider Tribal and public testimony related to the proposed designation of Tribal Beneficial Uses (TBU) for Mono Lake and its tributary streams (see Summer 2024 *Mono Lake Newsletter*), action to designate has been delayed.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board had proposed an agenda item for their November 2024 board meeting to adopt TBU designations for Mono Lake and its tributary streams. That agenda item was canceled ahead of the meeting, but all indications are that TBU adoption remains a priority.

The Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe is the lead proponent of the applicable range of TBU designations for Mono Lake and its tributary streams. According to the Tribe, the legal standard that required consumption of 4.5 fish per

Continued on page 25

Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe formalizes preferred spelling

by Caelen McQuilkin

Last fall the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribal Council established one official spelling for the Tribe's name: Kootzaduka'a. This spelling better represents the word's pronunciation in the Kootzaduka'a language.

The phonetic spelling is more accurate to the sounds in the word and preserves its pronunciation, the Tribe shared. Because some of those sounds do not exist in the English language, people often mispronounce the word by replacing unfamiliar sounds with ones from the English language. In the end, this can erode the word into more English-adjacent pronunciations, and the revised phonetic spelling was chosen to help avoid this.

The name Kootzaduka'a comes from the word *kootzabe* (alkali fly pupae) and the word *duka* (the verb 'to eat'). The a'a at the end of the word indicates somebody who 'does' the verb, like adding –er to a word in English, turning a word such as 'paint' to 'painter.' A'a is also an emphasizer, which intensifies the word, making it more like an identity or title than simply a reference to any person who eats alkali fly pupae. The apostrophe indicates a glottal stop sound, which further emphasizes the end of the word.

Pronouncing the name of the Tribe as closely as possible to the Kootzaduka'a language is an important part of preserving and respecting the Tribe's culture. Assuming that English is the default language in the Mono Basin can erase Kootzaduka'a culture and overlook the fact that their language has been spoken here since time immemorial, thousands and thousands of years before English was ever used in this region.

Previously, the Tribe officially used the spelling "Kutzadika^{a}," and there are also several variations of the spelling in common use. The "Kutzadika^{a}" spelling derived from a more formal linguistic representation of the Tribe's name using the international phonetic alphabet, which has more than 100 special characters representing a wide variety of precise sounds of speech. However, these special characters are not easily reproduced on standard keyboards, and the "Kutzadika'a" spelling is a simplification that replaces the special characters with similar-looking English letters that do not convey the correct pronunciation as well as the new spelling. The Mono Lake Committee previously used the spelling "Kutzadika'a," and now, following the Tribe's lead, has switched to using the Tribe's established, preferred spelling.

A valuable way to learn the correct pronunciation of the Tribe's name is to hear it spoken by a native speaker of the language. Kootzaduka'a elders presented at the State Water Board workshop on Mono Lake's low level in early 2023; go to *monolake.org/Tribename* to hear their pronunciation. ❖

This article was written in collaboration and with approval from members of the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe. Their website, *monolaketribe.us*, has lots of resources, information, photos, and history.

ANDREW YOUSSEF

The Tribe's official spelling, Kootzaduka'a, better represents the word's pronunciation in the Kootzaduka'a language.

Southern California entered the water year with record water storage

DWP seeks to maximize aqueduct deliveries anyway

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

In October the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP) Commissioners received a supply conditions update from DWP Director of Water Resources, David Pettijohn, who said, "...we now have the most water in the Southern California region than we've ever had in history. There's going to be ... four million acre-feet of water in storage available to all Southern California. To put that in some perspective, that's about eight times as much water as the city uses in a year. So, there's a lot of water in storage and that is good news for us."

> "From an LA perspective ... that amount of water is very small, whereas for the recovery of Mono Lake, it's incredibly important."
>
> —Mark Gold

On January 2, the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), which serves 26 water districts including DWP and Los Angeles, highlighted that the region is prepared even if the winter ends up dry, writing in a statement, "While it is still too early to tell how this water year will shape up, at Metropolitan, we've made investments in storage and long-term planning to reduce our dependence on the amount of water we receive from our imported sources from year to year. By kicking off 2025 with a record 3.8 million acre-feet of water in storage, we are well-positioned to meet our water demands this year."

As questions of water supply and delivery arose during the January fires in Los Angeles, water storage received additional public attention. Questions about hydrants running dry have led to multiple investigations involving DWP regarding these localized water distribution issues. But water distribution is not the same as big picture supply; as Bruce Reznik of the Los Angeles Waterkeeper told the *Los Angeles Times*, "There was plenty of water available in Southern California at the time these fires broke out."

MWD's statement highlighted how local supply and long-term planning are essential in the era of climate change: "Instead of being at the mercy of increasingly dramatic fluctuations in precipitation, we are continuing to adapt to climate change by diversifying the region's water supplies, investing in storage, increasing the flexibility of our water system and supporting Southern Californians' commitment to saving water."

DWP ignored this high level of supply, however, when it abandoned the mayor's commitment to not increase Mono Basin diversions (see page 3). Justifications for the action included dry conditions in the fall and aqueduct reservoir storage.

DWP's reversal of the City's commitment reveals that for all the effort on supply planning, water conservation, water recycling, stormwater capture, and careful planning during wet *and* dry years, the successful outcomes don't seem to affect aqueduct operations. As Adam Perez, DWP's Los Angeles Aqueduct manager, said in an interview, "We always try to maximize aqueduct deliveries to the city."

Mark Gold, Director of Water Scarcity Solutions at the National Resources Defense Council and part of the Committee's coalition, sees the same big picture. "We have the most water stored in our reservoir system in the history of [MWD]," he observed.

Disappointed that the mayor's promise to Mono Lake wasn't kept by DWP, Gold reflected that, "From an LA perspective and what we need on a day-to-day basis to thrive, that amount of water is very small, whereas for the recovery of Mono Lake, it's incredibly important." ❖

PHOTO © 2014 MICHAEL LIGHT

DWP's Tujunga Spreading Grounds, which capture stormwater and recharge the San Fernando groundwater basin with 16,000 acre-feet of water annually, is great example of increased local water capture.

SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA

Juana & Ricardo Gutierrez

In November the Mono Lake Committee presented an award to Juana & Ricardo Gutierrez, whose environmental justice activism for their community of East Los Angeles, and for Mono Lake, led to the creation of the Outdoor Experiences program.

It was a special way to mark the 30th anniversary of the Outdoor Education Center (OEC) program—with the couple's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, as well as Mono Lake Committee Board Member Martha Davis, OEC Manager Santiago Escruceria, and LA Education Coordinator Herley Jim Bowling.

Juana Gutierrez, Santiago Escruceria, and Ricardo Gutierrez in 2019.

In 1994, Assembly Bill 444 was being used to implement a voluntary water conservation program in LA where community groups, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (DWP), installed low-flush toilets within the DWP service area. Juana Gutierrez's group, Madres del Este de Los Angeles–Santa Isabel, was trained in toilet installation and given free toilets to distribute in their neighborhoods.

Part of the effort to show that LA could easily conserve more water than was needed to save Mono Lake, the toilet retrofit program was popular and successful. Together with Committee staff, Juana and Ricardo envisioned the idea of bridging the gap between LA youth and the origins of their water by bringing the toilet retrofit crew to see the benefit of their work at Mono Lake.

As the story goes, the first year they camped up Lee Vining Canyon and were visited by a bear. It was quite an experience, and while everyone was fine, when they got home their daughter, Elsa Lopez, looked for a place where groups could more easily basecamp. She called DWP, which let them use the unoccupied aqueduct supervisor's house. Today, that house is the home of the OEC, and has hosted four generations of the Gutierrez family and thousands of Los Angeles youth at the top of their watershed.

Lawn to native landscape

At the end of last year, our friends at Watershed Progressive began transforming the front and back yards at the OEC—removing lawn, amending soil, and sowing seeds for a more sustainable, educational, and beneficial space. The new native landscape and rain garden will better reflect the conservation themes of the OEC and provide additional shade and learning space.

Funds were granted by the California Department of Water Resources Climate Landscape Transformation Pilot Project led by Watershed Progressive. The program also supports what individuals can do at home, work, and play to build healthy watershed communities. Learn more at the Land Resilience Partnership, *landresiliencepartnership.org*.

Los Angeles outreach

Our annual January visit to community groups and schools in Los Angeles was not possible this year due to the fires. We are especially thinking of groups from Homeboy Industries and Pacoima Beautiful whose communities were hard hit by the fires.

MONO BASIN Outdoor Education Center

Our mission is to build understanding and appreciation for the Mono Basin/Los Angeles watershed through education programs and muscle-powered recreational activity; to demonstrate that balanced solutions are possible for meeting the water needs of people and the environment; and to kindle stewardship through service projects that restore and improve the quality of the Mono Basin watershed.

monolake.org/oec *facebook.com/mono.oec*

Streamwatch

DWP's export increase threatens Rush Creek's peak flow

by Greg Reis

This winter, California precipitation is exhibiting extremes—wet to the north, and dry to the south. By late January, many areas in Northern California had received more than 150% of average precipitation, while almost no measurable precipitation had fallen in Southern California.

February 1 snow surveys found 52% of average snowpack in the Mono Basin. This is similar to many dry years; however, also similar to last year, which ended up close to 100% of average in April. Most wet years would provide enough snow in February and March to catch up to average, but outside of wet years, February–March snow like last year and 1991's "Miracle March" are rare.

In spring 2024, Grant Lake Reservoir was full enough to deliver the minimum-required peak Stream Ecosystem Flow (SEF) down Rush Creek via the spillway, despite the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power's (DWP) failing rotovalve that limits controlled releases to less than half of the required Normal year-type peak flow (see page 10). The full reservoir and resulting spill was only possible because DWP had reduced its exports in the months prior to the peak flow—if DWP had maximized exports, the reservoir would have been so low that Rush Creek's peak SEF would have been less than the 380 cubic feet per second (cfs) requirement.

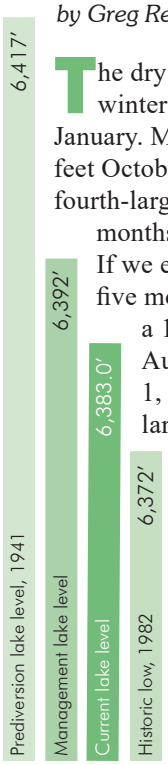
Missing the peak flow of a single year may not significantly impact the restoration of Rush Creek, but the stream will likely be waiting five years before infrastructure is able to release peak flows of more than 175 cfs, which is required in most years. While we wait for DWP to build the infrastructure necessary for delivering the full range of Rush Creek peak SEFs, the one thing that can be done to help Rush Creek is to keep the water level in Grant Lake Reservoir as high as possible to promote spilling, which worked well in 2024.

Unfortunately, DWP's unexpectedly large export this year has already lowered the reservoir to a level where, under last year's hydrology, a spill event capable of meeting the peak SEF in 2025 would no longer occur. While it may be too late for this year, halting exports would maximize the chances of achieving the required SEFs in future years and be the best option for mitigating the negative impacts to Rush Creek due to the damaged rotovalve. ❖

Lakewatch

Dry winter points to a declining Mono Lake level

by Greg Reis



The dry start to the La Niña winter extended through January. Mono Lake dropped 0.4 feet October 1 to January 1, the fourth-largest drop during those months in the last 35 years. If we extend that look back five months since August 1, a 1.1-foot decline during August 1, 2024–January 1, 2025 was the second-largest decline in lake level in more than 35 years and third-largest since 1980, with an interesting pattern of steeper declines following wet years.

Mono Lake rose only half an inch in January, making the August 1–February 1 net drop of 1.1 feet a new record since 1989. If the rest of the winter season continues to be dry, Mono Lake will rise less than a quarter of a foot by April 1. Average conditions could raise it four-tenths of a foot, and a wet February–March could raise the lake more than half a foot by April. Unfortunately, it would have to be quite wet to catch up to average, so the overall outlook for the next year is likely a declining lake level, since Mono Lake tends to rise only in the wetter years.

Every acre-foot of stream diversion slows the journey to Mono Lake's healthy management level, and the considerable benefits of reducing surface water exports really add up over multiple years. Unfortunately, voluntary DWP export reductions have failed (see page 3). The chronically low level of Mono Lake is detrimental to the productivity of California Gulls and impacts the lake's overall ecosystem health. Quick State Water Board action to significantly reduce surface water exports following this year's hearing will be required to adequately protect Mono Lake. ❖

Greg Reis is the Committee's Information & Restoration Specialist. He once saw a shrew running underwater in a high-country stream.

Mono Basin Journal

A roundup of quiet happenings at Mono Lake

by Geoffrey McQuilkin

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

The silts and sands were damp under our feet during a windy winter walk to Mono Lake's northern shore. Pausing at the pre-diversion lakeshore elevation, we squinted to see the present-day water's edge, a half-mile away. Moving on, we crossed acre after acre of land that had been submerged under Mono Lake until the aqueduct arrived and water diversions began.

We crossed the 6,392-foot elevation line—Mono Lake's mandated healthy, Public Trust protection level—and little was different. This ground should be underwater by now, yet the lake's edge remained far away.

The mud on our boots confirmed what you'd expect: recent winter precipitation kept things damp. The wind blew strong and steady, but no dust storms were rising today. Those vast clouds of hazardous dust will come, though, as they do every year.

Large swaths of efflorescent salt crust were already forming, looking like foamy bubbles yet crunching underfoot as we walked. In spring the storms fade away, the sun rises higher, and everything dries out. These crusts will soon break apart and fuel future Clean Air Act violations.

The dust control answer is simple: put these vast emissive areas back underwater. When we finally reached the lake, we could see the particulate crusts dissolving into the water, the perfect natural remedy. The challenge now, of course, is to deliver more water to Mono Lake so it can rise, recover, and solve the problem. ❖

Benchmarks

EMILY PRUD'HOMME

January 2008: Snow blanketed the shore of Mono Lake at South Tufa on a calm, clear day. Mono Lake's level was 6,383 feet above sea level.

ANDREW YOUSSEF

February 2025: 17 years later, Mono Lake once again stands at 6,383 feet above sea level. The current water export rules have not allowed Mono Lake to reach the mandated Public Trust lake level.

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION CENTER & BOOKSTORE

New!

Mono Lake Committee logo baseball cap

For those who love the look and softness of a beloved, well-worn cap, this simple navy blue one, worn by Ryan, will fade and soften beautifully in the sun. The embroidered Mono Lake Committee logo, in midnight and ice blue, is subtle and classy. This cap will fit well underneath a fleece beanie on a frosty winter morning cross-country ski or will keep the sun out of your eyes on a high-country wildflower romp this summer. *Mono Lake Committee exclusive.*

Mono Lake Committee logo baseball cap, unisex, one size, adjustable, navy: $24.00

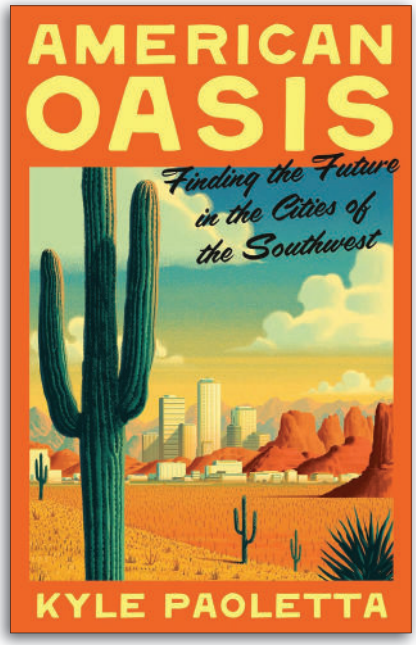
DETAIL

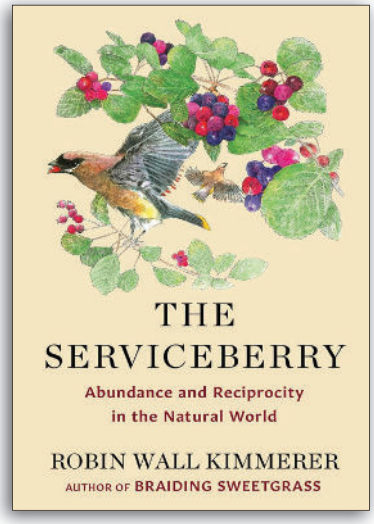
American Oasis: Finding the Future in the Cities of the Southwest

by Kyle Paoletta

Paoletta describes the Southwest's inherent beauty and its formidable and unbending desert climate and explores the ability of people to build large cities amidst relentless heat, aridity, and inhospitable seasons. Cities like Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, El Paso, and Las Vegas can offer pointers for resilience to other places that are beginning to encounter weather whiplash and water scarcity due to climate change. Understanding where sustainability and human equality fell short during the building of these cities is a vital aspect of not repeating history as cities evolve.

American Oasis, hardcover, 352 pages, Pantheon, 9½"x 6¾": $30.00





The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Generosity, plenitude, provision, thoughtfulness, and care are all words that stir in the mind as *Braiding Sweetgrass* author Kimmerer lays out her teachings in her newest book. She compares two economies—the first of sharing and receiving patiently and the second of elevating the self and forcing immediate availability. The pages ask us to contemplate whether we are sowing or merely extracting.

The Serviceberry, hardcover, 128 pages, Scribner Book Company, 7¼"x 5¼": $20.00

order at monolake.org/shop or (760) 647-6595

2025 Field Seminars

TERI TRACY

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour

May 3 • Robbie Di Paolo & Maureen McGlinchy
$155 per person / $140 for 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 LA in 1941. During this seminar, we will visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about their modern relationship with Los Angeles, Mono Lake, and the lake's tributary streams. We will discuss past and present diversions, and see how 20th century infrastructure is serving 21st century water needs. This seminar will provide an overview of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, together with historical, engineering, and ecological anecdotes that make up this fascinating water infrastructure.

Documenting the Range of Light

May 9–11 • Sarah Attar
$380 per person / $360 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Landscape photography provides a unique opportunity to capture and share your personal connection to a place, documenting a specific moment in time while reflecting who you are in that same moment. This photography seminar is about bringing yourself into your images—infusing them with your vision and creativity. We'll dive into how composition, color theory, camera settings, type of gear, and editing all help to bring that vision to life. By the end of this seminar, you'll have a deeper connection to the Eastern Sierra, fresh perspectives on observing and documenting the world around you, and a greater understanding of how to "draw with light."

Breeding Birds of the Mono Basin

May 23–25 • Nora Livingston
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Late spring and early summer are the best times to find breeding birds in the Mono Basin—they are singing from the tops of trees and shrubs to declare their territory to rivals and to protect their mates. This seminar will visit birding hotspots in the Mono Basin to learn about the many breeding birds that raise their families here. We will learn to identify these birds and observe their behavior as they gather food for their young or gather material to build nests. We will also delve into their migration patterns and conservation status.

To sign up for a Mono Lake Committee Field Seminar please visit *monolake.org/seminars* or call (760) 647-6595.

Avian Ecology of the Mono Basin

June 27–29 • David Wimpfheimer
$315 per person / $300 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

The Mono Basin is one of the most diverse ecosystems on the continent; this seminar will be an overview of the varied habitats found here. One of the best ways to gain an appreciation for Mono Lake's drama and productivity is to explore its shores and then proceed higher in elevation to other habitats. We will enjoy the rich diversity of mammals, butterflies, wildflowers, and trees, and a major focus will be the identification and ecology of birds that breed here. In sagebrush meadows and riparian and conifer forests, the seminar will explore a number of sites intensively, mixing short leisurely walks with periods of observation and natural history discussion. A guided canoe tour of Mono's south shore is included.

Brush & Bloom

July 11–13 • AnnaLisa Mayer
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Field illustration is a powerful tool to develop a deep understanding of an ecosystem and encourages us to slow down and pay attention—the first step in developing a natural history practice. In this seminar, we will embark on a journey of discovery amid the wildflowers of the Eastern Sierra, honing our ability to read a landscape through its flora and practicing plant identification through artistic expression. We will have ample opportunity to utilize botanical illustration techniques to learn more about the flowers we encounter, cultivate playfulness and curiosity in the cataloguing of our findings, and even experiment with ethical harvesting to incorporate foraged materials into our sketchbooks.

Ashes to Avalanches: The Mono Basin in Recovery

July 18–20 • Todd Wanner
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

The Mono Basin is a fascinating place to observe the ongoing impacts—both beneficial and damaging—of natural disturbances. A warming climate is precipitating periodic intense wildfires in a variety of plant communities. Additionally, in the winter of 2022–2023, the Mono Basin experienced 100-year snowfall with highly damaging avalanches in sub-alpine plant communities, upper montane forests, and in some places these avalanches slid almost to Mono Lake. The focus of this seminar will be to visit these various disturbance sites and to observe and evaluate the current health of these plant communities. Along the way, we will enjoy birding, botanizing, nature journaling, and reflecting.

Butterflies & Moths of the Eastern Sierra

July 25–27 • Paul Johnson
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

More than 100 species of butterflies and perhaps 20 times as many species of moths live in the Eastern Sierra. With this incredible diversity of species, there is always something new to be found by the careful observer. Most butterflies and moths have close relationships with the few plant species their caterpillars can eat, and various biological needs drive them to visit flowers, mud puddles, hilltops, and more. This seminar will explore these habitat preferences and then use this knowledge to guide our searches at various butterfly-rich locations. We will likely see some

BREELYNN BUTLER

Field Seminars are an excellent way to learn about the rich natural history of the Mono Basin with an expert instructor.

monolake.org/seminars or (760) 647-6595 to register

day-flying moths along the way and we'll also reconvene at night and use black lights to attract nocturnal moths that might otherwise go unnoticed as they go about their lives in the darkness.

Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

August 1–3 • Greg Stock
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

From volcanic craters to glacial moraines, earthquake faults to tufa towers, the Mono Basin displays some of the most unique, spectacular, and accessible geology anywhere in the world. This seminar, consisting of field visits to the premier sites, will present in understandable fashion the geologic stories of the Mono Basin.

Cuentos y Cantos al Desierto

August 8–10 • Stacey Villalobos
$40–80 per person, sliding scale
enrollment limited

La tierra es testigo de nuestras ofrendas, ¿cómo podemos honrar nuestra relación con la naturaleza a través de nuestras voces? Over the course of this bilingual seminar, participants will be guided on a series of outings that will explore reciprocity as an offering through stories and song. Exchanges with plants, animals, and the elements will inform our relationship with the lands, people, and communities we call home. Activities may include hiking, birdwatching, botany, meditation, journaling, storytelling, singing, and embodied voice practices. This bilingual seminar is specifically designed to create a space for native and heritage Spanish-speaking participants.

Mono Basin Landscape & Dark Sky Night Photography

August 15–17 • Jeff Sullivan & Lori Hibbett
$380 per person / $360 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

Summer is a special time in the Mono Basin with Sierra Nevada peaks catching morning alpenglow and afternoon cloud formations lighting up at sunset, often yielding to clear skies for Milky Way night photography. This seminar will cover best practices for composing and capturing stunning landscape and night sky photographs. We'll also spend time learning how to anticipate and plan for great sunrise and sunset shots and how to use composition and light for greater impact in every photograph. When we're not out photographing in the field, we will have discussions and demonstrations on post-processing indoors to refine our skills.

TERI TRACY

Field Seminars span a range of activity levels from easy walking to strenuous hiking.

Falling for the Migration: Bridgeport, Crowley, Mono

August 22–24 • Dave Shuford
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, August is the time of year to see late summer migrants and early arriving wintering birds in the Mono Basin, Bridgeport Valley, and Long Valley. Beginners as well as experts will enjoy this introduction to the area's birdlife found in a wide variety of habitats, from the shimmering shores of Mono Lake to lofty Sierra peaks. We will identify about 100 species by plumage and calls and also discuss migration strategies, behavior, and ecology to complement our field observations.

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Miwok-Paiute Basketry

August 22–24 • Lucy Parker, Dr. Julia Parker, & Ursula Jones
$600 per person / $575 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

During this seminar, participants will prepare materials and create a small Miwok-Paiute basket using a twining method. Basket weaving requires time and desire, plus patience, especially with yourself, as you practice a new skill. Your instructors are excellent guides, and we encourage you come to this workshop open to learning about weaving and native cultures. Participants are encouraged (but not required) to camp with the group at a peaceful private campsite near Lundy Canyon.

Communing with(in) Nature

August 29–31 • Bree Salazar
$40–80 per person, sliding scale
enrollment limited

This seminar will visit the varying ecosystems of Kootzagwae (Mono Basin) and Payahuunadü (Owens Valley) to learn about local natural history, regional environmental/Indigenous-led movements, and ways to feel more connected to and grounded on the land. Activities may include hiking, birding, nature journaling, forest bathing, meditation, and community building. Whether it's your first time or your hundredth in the area, by the end of this seminar we will feel more confident and empowered to step beyond just recreation and into responsibility, while honoring each other's identities. This seminar is specifically designed for participants who self-identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Natural History at the Edge of the Sierra

September 12–14 • Nora Livingston
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

Natural history pays attention to all aspects of nature and widens our view when out in the forest or high desert. In this seminar, we will make our way up the east slope from Mono Lake to Tioga Pass, stopping at several locations to observe all that we find, which may include wildly colorful butterflies like the lustrous copper, hidden Sierra rein orchids in pristine meadows, and plenty of birds, from warblers to rosy-finches. This is the quintessential seminar in the field with a naturalist, where we will ponder the grandeur and the minutiae that envelops us in this amazing place.

Foraging in the Eastern Sierra

September 19–21 • Mia Andler
$290 per person / $275 for members
enrollment limited to 15 participants

Learn about the edible and useful plants of the Eastern Sierra in an active, multisensory, and fun way. This seminar is a hands-on course in plant identification and use. We will search for plants, cook some of what we find, make plant-based products, get creative with field journaling, and get closer to plants by practicing nature awareness techniques. While the seminar will focus on foraging in the Eastern Sierra, much of the knowledge participants will learn will help them forage in other areas too.

FAIRY NOORZAY

The Mono Basin has a great number of unique and fascinating geological features which you can learn about in-depth on a Field Seminar.

monolake.org/seminars or (760) 647-6595 to register

Geology of the Mono Basin: Land of Fire & Ice

September 26–28 • Greg Stock
$280 per person / $265 for members
enrollment limited to 14 participants

From volcanic craters to glacial moraines, earthquake faults to tufa towers, the Mono Basin displays some of the most unique, spectacular, and accessible geology anywhere in the world. This seminar, consisting of field visits to the premier sites, will present in understandable fashion the geologic stories of the Mono Basin.

Mono Basin Fall Photography

October 8–10 • Robb Hirsch
$380 per person / $360 for members
enrollment limited to 10 participants

In autumn, spectacular foliage and skies combine with exceptional light, presenting ample subject matter to photograph. Seminar participants will learn how to refine their own vision and best interpret it through the camera. Explore shoreline locations at sunrise and sunset, fall color in nearby canyons, and grand overviews of the Mono Basin in this seminar.

ELIN JUNG

Capture the stunning beauty of the changing aspens in the Mono Basin on a photography Field Seminar.

Field Seminar Information

Please visit *monolake.org/seminars* to register for a Field Seminar, find complete itineraries, and see cancellation and refund policies.

No pets are allowed on any Field Seminars. Please consider this in advance and find boarding accommodations for your pets or leave them at home; do not leave pets in your car during seminars. Service animals assisting people with disabilities are allowed on seminars and must be leashed.

Field Seminars are open to all, but Mono Lake Committee members may register early and receive discounts. All instructors are experts who have received high ratings from past seminar participants. We emphasize a spirit of learning and camaraderie in this magnificent outdoor setting for a reasonable cost. Proceeds from Field Seminars benefit research and education in the Mono Basin.

All Field Seminars and custom trips operate under Inyo National Forest and California State Parks permits.

Questions? Email *fieldseminars@monolake.org* or call us at (760) 647-6595.

Salt sage rice and beans: the birth of an ecologist

by John G. T. Anderson

Editor's note: Each year we ask a writer to contribute to the Mono Lake Calendar—this essay appears in the 2025 calendar.

"Frost and fire working together in the making of beauty" —John Muir

"All that is holding us together is stories and compassion" —Barry Lopez

"For the sake of an illusion, this crystal world shatter" —Gray Brechin

How do I tell you of a place that utterly altered a life? I guess I just tell you.

Magical lake, inland sea, place of pilgrimage, brief diversion on the road from Reno to Las Vegas. Mono Lake has been many things to many people since the first Indigenous Americans arrived at its shores and realized that they had found home. For those of us who have spent time there, the lake has become intensely personal, we each have stories to tell, and we are drawn back, time and time again, either literally, or in our dreams.

For me, because of my story, Mono will always be a cradle for young ecologists. I was too young to be part of the original team that in 1976 began the serious ongoing study of the lake, its inhabitants, and the surrounding landscape. I first came to the lake in the spring of 1979 as part of the California Gull team lead by David Winkler. I was in my last year at Berkeley, finishing a degree in Zoology that seemed to only qualify me for a stint in grad school, and it seemed like I lacked the grades and the experience to get into grad school. I saw a flyer on the wall of the Life Sciences Building advertising for a couple of volunteer field assistants to work on a bird project at some place that I had never heard of, and I applied on a whim. Ready or not I was in for my first field season.

I still remember the long drive from Berkeley up over Donner Summit, because all the southern passes were blocked with snow. The equally long dogleg south along the east side of the Sierra, ending at Conway Summit and the first sight of the lake, a feeling of falling or flying into a vast space where literally anything could happen and probably would. Science at Mono was enormously different from what we had called science on campus. There were still some of the original team working on expanding projects they had started three years earlier. Gayle Dana seemed to know more about brine shrimp than was possible, Wink was full of ideas for different ways to study gulls, Dave Herbst was obsessed with brine flies. John Harris was the hirsute mammal guy who would come to town after wandering the stark emptiness of the Eastside in search of his beloved desert rats. Then there was Dave Gaines, our leader, our guide, a whirlwind of energy surrounding a deep calm. A person of seriousness with a gnomish sense of humor. When I was with Gaines I had a sense of possibility greater than anything I had felt before or since.

Field work was hard. A land bridge had formed between the main gull nesting colony on Negit Island and the shore the previous year, and coyote got out to the island, driving the gulls to smaller islets nearby. The gull team lived in an abandoned movie set on a small islet called Krakatoa, coming ashore for supplies and rest at a cabin near County Park. We ate beans and rice, and sometimes rice and beans. We read Herman Hesse and John Muir and Ed Abbey.

We went out to the gull islands at night to band and weigh and measure birds because if we landed in the day it was too disruptive to the gulls. The gulls had ticks, so we got ticks. I remember waking up in the morning with my sleeping bag bloody from crushing the ticks that had found me during banding operations. The chicks vomited on us, mixtures of brine shrimp, brine flies, and Lee Vining garbage. They smelled, we smelled, the islands smelled. We were surrounded by water too salty to wash in, much too salty to drink. But. But I remember the sun going down behind Mt. Dana, stars that most people never

Continued on page 23

SANTIAGO M. ESCRUCERIA

Birth of an ecologist from page 22

get to see sweeping their circles above Krakatoa. The Great Horned Owl that shared the movie set with us, that every evening would come out, stretch its wings, and fly off to the neighboring gull colony for dinner.

Then, back to town. Maybe a treat at the Mono Cone. Off to Gaines' and his partner Sally's house for an update on court cases and impromptu seminars on ecology, public policy, the uses of art in activism, wine… It was science with guitars, science with poetry, science for a purpose, for a mission greater than any of us. It was just a spring and summer, but I learned so much. I learned science, but I also learned that science is a deeply human thing, a science devoid of art and literature, purpose and joy, is not worth doing. I came to Mono at best a potential, I left on the road to become a naturalist. A previous occupant of the cabin had left a graffito behind: "Ecologists can learn much from simply observing animals before breaking them down into fluxes of organic carbon. — Deevey." It would be thirty years before one of my own students tracked down the quotation. I quote it whenever I can.

A spring and summer, and then I left to find my own salty sea. I spent parts of seven years at Pyramid Lake before coming east, to very different islands, very different birds.

Aldo Leopold told us that to be an ecologist was to "live in a world of wounds." Mono Lake, Dave Gaines, and the ragged band of Mono ecologists taught me to try to be a teacher, to help students address ecological wounds with clear eyes and a sense of hope. Eventually we scattered to our destinies. John wrote The Book on mammals of the Tioga region, but the rest of us went away. Wink studied swallows in Ithaca, I studied gulls in Maine, Suzanne studied agriculture in Norway and Mexico, I last saw Gayle on a boat in the Gulf of Maine, but somehow the lake has stayed with us. I am old now, I have my own students. I bring them to the lake when I can. For some it is just a stopover on the way to somewhere else, for others I watch a strange light grow in their eyes as they fall in love with the possibility of the lake, the sheer improbability of its survival, their own role in mending an endangered planet. Gaines is gone. My teachers have retired. The birds and I return. We hold seminars under the whispering aspen in Lundy Canyon, we marvel at the tufa, we laugh as gulls chase brine flies, we eat rice and beans (and beans and rice) and sometimes I treat them to a Mono Burger. Somehow, through the work of a strange band of people, Gray Brechin's crystal world has held together to teach another generation. ❖

John G. T. Anderson is the W. H. Drury Professor of Ecology/Natural History at College of the Atlantic. He is the author of Deep Things Out of Darkness: A History of Natural History. *He studies colonial nesting seabirds, history, island ecology, and the intersection between natural history and human history in relation to long-term ecological processes. At present his field research centers around Great Duck Island in eastern Maine.*

2024 Free Drawing prize winners

by Leslie Redman

In December, Mono Lake Committee staff gathered in the bookstore for our annual tradition of selecting the winners of the Free Drawing. It always brings a bit of levity to the day and a brief diversion from our regular work as we select each winner one by one and celebrate as we read their names aloud. We had a great batch of prizes to distribute, as usual, and are so grateful for the generosity of our prize donors. We also appreciate the members and drawing participants who send in extra donations to this fundraiser. Every ticket entered and dollar raised ensures that we can continue our work to protect Mono Lake for years to come. Congratulations to the winners!

Pauline Emmert of Madera won the iPad early bird prize. Mammoth & June Mountain Ski Pass: Melisa Walker of Soquel. Tamarack Cross Country Ski Pass: Veronica Pallan of Bishop. National Park Grand Adventure: Mark Block of Capitola. June Lake Retreat: Bruce MacMillan of Laguna Beach. Eastern Sierra Getaway: Lola Elliott of Huntington Beach. Mono Lake Committee Bookstore Shopping Spree: Mary Gerritsen of San Mateo and Kaitlin Sindel of Lee Vining. Mono Lake Trip for Two: Peter Slattery of Salinas.

Yosemite Outdoor Experience: Lee Stewart of Carmel. Mono Basin Fun in the Field: Wendy Sibray of Santa Cruz. A Day on the Bay: Patrick Hartman of Valencia. Experience the Channel Islands: Marty Mosman of Nevada City. Mono Arts Council Experience: Richard Silbert of Walnut Creek. Juniper Ridge Gift Set: Jo Turney of Citrus Heights. Mammoth Mountain Drinkware Box Set: Harriet Di Paolo of San Francisco. Canoe Adventure on Mono Lake: Aaron Kreisberg of Ventura and Dennis Tschinkel of San Gabriel. Aquatic Experience: Teresa Somers of Novato.

Camp Comfort Gift Pack: Julia Held of Lee Vining. Patagonia apparel: Rick Bury of Carpinteria and Sharon Nicodemus of Sacramento. Patagonia Black Hole backpack: Gerald Vernon of Del Mar. Patagonia Black Hole duffel: Debra Feiner of June Lake. Bodie Exploration: Dewitt Garlock of St. Helena. Pentax Papilio binoculars: Brady Millsop of Deerwood, MN. Photographer's Favorites Book Bag: Roland Bryan of Santa Barbara.

DWP abandons commitment from page 9

DWP does not need more Mono Basin water

The Mono water is just 1–3% of the city's annual supply, and yet is the only water available to help Mono Lake recover from decades of excessive water diversions. The lake today is a decade late and nine feet short of achieving the State Water Board's mandated healthy management level.

To explain its actions, DWP has offered that, because the winter might be dry, it needs the water for the city—and, at the same time, because the winter might be wet, it has reservoir management concerns. Mono Lake's health, notably, was neither considered nor mentioned in these explanations.

Of course, DWP can manage its concerns without increasing surface water exports simply by operating the same way it successfully did in recent years when 4,500 acre-feet was the legal water export limit.

Regarding water supply, state reservoir storage is currently above average, and DWP's own staff reported to the DWP Commission in October that "we now have the most water in the Southern California region than we've ever had in history ... there's a lot of water in storage and that is good news for us" (see page 12).

DWP also claimed the excess water exports are needed to prevent Grant Lake Reservoir in the Mono Basin from overflowing during the winter. Here, too, DWP is disregarding its own operations plan, which contains contingencies for managing the reservoir level by sending additional water to Mono Lake via Rush and Lee Vining creeks. In fact, DWP was diverting flow from Lee Vining Creek and adding it to Grant Lake Reservoir storage at the same time it claimed exports were necessary to reduce storage.

The Mono Lake Committee is dedicated to finding water solutions that get both Mono Lake and Los Angeles the water they need. In LA this includes decades of work on water conservation and local supply enhancement, where huge progress has been made. But while LA has many water sources and a long-range storage capacity to handle multiple dry years, Mono Lake only has one source. And only achieving the mandated lake level will provide Mono Lake the buffer necessary to endure multiple dry years.

We celebrated the mayor's 2024 decision to limit diversions because it was a voluntary action to show that all parties are working together on solutions for the environment and the city. That's what's so disappointing about DWP's actions. True to its history, DWP has rejected environmental considerations and plans to take all the water it can. ❖

ANDREW YOUSSEF

As of February 2025 Mono Lake is nine feet below its healthy level.

DWP hearing strategy from page 5

workshop in February 2023 (see Winter & Spring 2023 *Mono Lake Newsletter*). For that event thousands of Mono Lake supporters from Los Angeles, the Eastern Sierra, and around the state and country commented in favor of lake protection. DWP, however, argued against the science-based conclusions of the State Water Board in the Mono Lake decision, asserting that nesting California Gulls are better off at low lake levels. DWP even issued a press release that ignored the evidence and alleged the Committee "has made false claims that nesting gulls on Negit Island in Mono Lake are at risk of coyote predation."

It's not surprising that DWP is preparing for the State Water Board hearing. However, the positions DWP appears to be preparing are confrontational, counter to established science, and a departure from the long-established policy of the City of Los Angeles.

In 1994, city leaders including the mayor, City Council, and DWP leadership joined with the Committee and other parties to announce their full acceptance of the State Water Board's famous Mono Lake water rights decision. It's a legendary agreement that the City Council recognized and reaffirmed just last fall in a resolution establishing September 28 as Mono Lake Day and declaring, "the Los Angeles City Council hereby remains steadfast in its commitment to Mono Lake and its tributaries as a part of the City's sustainable water future."

So, will DWP actually present formal arguments against Mono Lake's protection and attempt to undermine the State Water Board's requirements for sustainable Mono Lake management? It's up to the leadership of Los Angeles to decide. Citizens and elected leaders have shown a clear commitment to healing the damage done by past DWP water diversions. However, DWP attorneys, if given the latitude, are likely to forcefully argue in favor of leaving the present-day low lake crisis unchanged, unresolved, and unsustainable for Mono Lake. ❖

Hydro relicensing from page 8

productivity, water quality, and riparian vegetation are just some of the resources affected by irregular and unnatural flows. Identifying the key periods when these impacts are most significant is critical for finding a balance between hydropower production and ecosystem health.

Fortunately, the Committee is not working alone. Agencies, including the Inyo National Forest, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the State Water Board have been active and invaluable partners, engaging in agency priority issues, which are often Committee priorities as well. With strong participation from these agencies, each entity can focus on specific areas of concern, while collectively ensuring that a wide range of issues are addressed with depth and precision.

While DWP is often central to conversations about protecting the Mono Basin, the current hydro relicensing process is a reminder that there are other policies and regulatory processes shaping the region's future. No matter the issue, the Committee remains committed to identifying and mitigating environmental impacts, advocating for changes that balance ecological resources with other needs, and ensuring the long-term health of the Mono Basin for future generations. Simply put, the Committee is on the job, making sure opportunities to advocate for the Mono Basin are not missed. ❖

Robbie Di Paolo is the Committee's Restoration Field Technician. This winter he joined the Eastern Sierra Chamber Orchestra as a flautist and is excited for the opportunity to perform classical music with a passionate group of musicians.

Policy notes from page 10

week per person for a Tribal Subsistence Fishing TBU on Mono Basin tributary streams set an unrealistic and potentially unfair standard for Tribes in geographically diverse California that are located well-inland from north coast waters—where the Tribal Subsistence Fishing standard was established.

Therefore, the Tribal Subsistence Fishing TBU remained complicated for Lahontan to implement given the required criteria. This is a specific designation the Kootzaduka'a are hoping to achieve for Mono Basin tributary streams in addition to the TBU designations proposed for Mono Lake. The Tribe has communicated that the full range of TBU designations allowed in California are worth waiting for. A Tribal Cultural Values TBU was also proposed for Mono Basin streams and has an easier road to adoption.

According to the Tribe, Lahontan continues to meet while also consulting with the State Water Board in expectation of finding a pathway to a designation for tributary streams that will include subsistence fishing and support the Tribe's specific traditional values reflected in the modern era of Mono Basin streams.

Mono County District 3 leadership change

After eight years of public service for the county as Mono County's District 3 Supervisor, Bob Gardner has stepped down from his seat. Gardner pushed to develop affordable housing initiatives in Mono County, and he was a strong proponent of improving and enhancing recreation support, partnerships, and services for visitors as federal funding for the US Forest Service and other public land agencies lagged. He was also a big supporter of Tribal recognition for the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe and used his past experience working in Washington, D.C. to help the Tribe navigate the process. Gardner has been active in public and community service his entire life, and he is ready to embrace a slightly slower pace with family, friends, and favorite causes, including Mono Lake.

Elected last fall, Paul McFarland was sworn in as the new

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Paul McFarland, center, being sworn in as Supervisor for Mono County District 3, which includes Mono Lake and the Mono Basin.

District 3 Supervisor on January 7. McFarland is a Lee Vining resident, husband, father of three, and has been a positive and engaged presence in the Mono Basin community for 25 years. He has volunteered for the Lee Vining Public Utility District and is an active volunteer with the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department. His past jobs have included Program Officer for the DeChambeau Creek Foundation, Assistant Planner with the Mono County Planning Department, and Executive Director of Friends of the Inyo. McFarland is a skilled birder and naturalist, and he has led many popular programs over the years for the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua. He is well-known for his distinctive and boisterous laugh, big smile, and thoughtful, can-do hand in everything he works on. While McFarland's resume is long and distinguished, his connection with Lee Vining and Mono Lake started as a Mono Lake Committee Intern in summer 2000. ❖

Staff migrations

by Leslie Redman

As you can likely tell from the preceding articles, the Mono Lake Committee office is abuzz with preparations for this year's State Water Board hearing. While the staff prepares for this substantial undertaking, we have all been taking advantage of the proverbial calm before the storm, an adage that is pretty indicative of the weather patterns so far this year as well.

Even though this winter has felt overall a bit more like spring than the last few have, the newest members of the Committee staff have been making the best of snow-free trails and decent coverage on the ski slopes. We were fortunate to add two Project Specialists to the team just before winter set in, and welcomed an Education Coordinator in February.

GEOFF MCQUILKIN

Education Coordinator Hannah Ashby, right, measuring the effect of DWP's diversions with Robbie and Maureen on Mono's east shore.

Education Coordinator **Hannah Ashby** migrated north on the Highway 395 corridor from Bishop to join our staff. Most recently, Hannah has been working as the founder and operations lead of Wildflower Adventure Co-op, using her extensive experience as a rock climbing and backpacking guide. We are looking forward to seeing how she will elevate the Committee's education, Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, and Field Seminar programs to new heights. Considering our proximity to Yosemite's high country, there's no doubt Hannah will enjoy taking advantage of the climber's playground right in our backyard as well.

Project Specialist **Olivia Nelson** grew up in Lee Vining, but comes to us most recently from Idaho Falls, ID where she worked as a baker. We're excited to have Olivia back in Lee Vining, as she is eager to engage more deeply with the community and learn more about the Mono Basin. She has been helping kick off the planning for this year's Chautauqua as well as assisting with the Free Drawing. She looks forward to spending quality time hiking in the high Sierra and paddleboarding the local lakes once the weather warms up.

Project Specialist **Kinsey Warnock** first experienced the Sierra Nevada while hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2021. Before arriving in Lee Vining, she led volunteer trail maintenance programs for the Continental Divide Trail Coalition in each of the five states the trail traverses. While at the Committee, Kinsey has been hard at work assisting the membership team with the many mailings that are sent out at the end of each year and researching the impact of beaver dam analogs on streams to improve Rush Creek restoration. Outside of work, she has been enjoying opportunities to ski the local resorts, walk and run near Mono Lake, and play in the Mammoth Lakes recreational volleyball league. ❖

Leslie Redman is the Committee's Membership Coordinator. She has been an actor and musical theater performer for most of her life and is glad to be adding to her knowledge and appreciation for shrews which, until this point, only went as far as what she learned from reading Shakespeare.

Become a Mono Lake Volunteer

Lead tours, rove trails, pull invasive plants, share the Mono Lake story with visitors, and much more! This year's training takes place June 6–8, 2025 and we welcome new volunteers.

The Mono Lake volunteer program is a joint initiative sponsored by the US Forest Service, California State Parks, and the Mono Lake Committee, with support from Sierra Forever (formerly the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association) and the Bodie Foundation. Learn more at *monolake.org/volunteer*.

ELIN LJUNG

Partner staff with the 2024 class of new Mono Lake Volunteers after their graduation from volunteer training.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRY TAYLOR

From the mailbag

News from members and friends

by Leslie Redman

It's always reassuring to see winter storms bring much needed precipitation to the Mono Basin. Every flake of snow that falls adds to the snowpack in the high country that will melt in the spring and endeavor to flow down Sierra streams and into Mono Lake. Thank you to everyone who contributed in honor or in memory of friends and loved ones. Your support is what makes our work to protect every drop of water that belongs in Mono Lake possible.

In honor

Celeste Berg of Bishop gave a gift in honor of **Paul Berg & Hilda Shum**. **Elizabeth Berger** of Altadena donated in honor of **Charles Layton Smith**. **Jeffrey Browne** of Camarillo, **Gary Egrie** of Columbia, MD, and **Louis & Cristina Filippone** of Smithtown, NY donated in honor of **Joan Egrie**. **Georgia F. Cole** of Loveland, CO contributed in honor of **Sherry Taylor**. **Allan Enkin & Wendy Mandel** of La Quinta gave a gift in honor of **Sarah Taylor**.

Cooper French of Seattle, WA donated in honor of **Keri French**. **Karen Havlena** of Susanville contributed in honor of **John Harris**. **James Hollibaugh** of Nevada City gave a gift in honor of **Dr. Ronald S. Oremland**. **Bart & Debby Jones** of Cornwall Bridge, CT donated in honor of **Mara Krista Plato & Pete Jones**. **Rob Lamb** of Portland, OR contributed in honor of the **Erdman family**. **Sally Lux** of Thousand Oaks gave a gift in honor of **Yvonne Lux**. **James & Laurie May** of Castro Valley donated in honor of **John McClary**. **Sally Miller & Roland Knapp** of Lee Vining contributed in honor of **Anna Christensen** and **Geoff McQuilkin**.

Jock Reynolds & Suzanne Hellmuth of New Haven, CT gave a gift in honor of **Lisa Cutting & Margaret Eissler**. **Ruben Ruckman** of Culver City donated in honor of **Robert Ruckman**. **Ronald Rutowski** of Tempe, AZ contributed in honor of **Amanda Mitchell, Lauren Mitchell, & Pat Rutowski**. **John & Jeri Taylor** of Prosper, TX gave a gift in honor of **Sherryl & Tony Taylor**. **Joy Zimnavoda** of Redondo Beach donated in honor of **Janet Carle** and the **Mono Lake Volunteers**.

In memory

Wendy Wyse of Kentfield, **James Allen** of Fairfax, **Joseph Jehl** of Annapolis, MD, and **Robin Leong** of Vallejo gave gifts in memory of **F. Bruce Dodge**. **John & Marlene Arnold** of Portola Valley donated in memory of **Dan Bryant**. **Peter Benvenutti** of Oakland contributed in memory of **Bruce Cornelius**. **Juliette A. Bryson** of Cupertino gave a gift in memory of **Ann L. Brown**. **Carolyn Butler** of San Francisco donated in memory of **Nancy Wuerfel**.

Dorene Connelly of Sacramento contributed in memory of **Robert Funk**. **Robin & Brett Cox** of San Carlos gave a gift in memory of **Roland & Elizabeth Smith**. **Peter Hackett** of Ridgway, CO donated in memory of **John Fischer**. **Lisa Katter-Jackson** of Encinitas contributed in memory of **Ronald Paul Jackson**. **Gene Lock** of Sacramento gave a gift in memory of **Susan Ann Lock**. **Andrea Nelson** of Burbank donated in memory of **Natalie Beckman**. **Kathleen Oakes** of Reno, NV contributed in memory of **Edward Oakes**.

Jim Oeland of Medford, OR gave a gift in memory of **Caroline Erickson**.

Anne Olmsted of Palo Alto donated in memory of **Franklin Olmsted**. **Ralph Rea** of Laguna Woods contributed in memory of **Patti Rea**. **Kristen & Paul Schmidt** of Irvine gave a gift in memory of **Ed Martinez**. **Lisa Schoneman** of Port Townsend, WA donated in memory of **Lyle K. Gaston & Lynn M. Foster**. **Kelly Siemens** of Davis contributed in memory of **David Siemens**. **Bob & Uta Silverman** of Solvang gave a gift in memory of **Howard Sheckter**. **Katherine Simmonds** of San Mateo donated in memory of **Maria De Grandis**. The **Sylvester family** of Chico contributed in memory of **Frank S. Stephens**.

Joyce Vandermeyde of Lafayette gave a gift in memory of **Astrid Brassinga**. **Paula Wiens** of Melba, ID donated in memory of **Mary DeDecker**. **April Yamaichi** of Burlingame contributed in memory of **Shigeru Yamaichi**. **OJ Zeleny** of Mammoth Lakes gave a gift in memory of **Don Zeleny**. ❖

ELIN LIANG

Mono Lake Committee staff draw winning tickets in the 2024 Free Drawing—see page 23 for the complete list of winners.

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