

*The Rainshadow* is the newsletter of the Owens Valley Committee. OVC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit citizen's action group dedicated to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of water and land resources affecting the Owens Valley.

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## President's Message

The Lower Owens River is shaping up as a nice desert watercourse, and we are delighted that it was an OVC member, Frank Colver, who led the very first folks to descend the river in kayaks! The River has attracted a lot of attention. The OVC talks to many people about it, and we give a lot of tours. One problem afflicting this desert jewel is that we *still* do not have an adequate monitoring and adaptive management plan, which should have been completed before the water was introduced into the River. We are pushing hard for getting this plan developed and approved, as we believe that the LORP project is not really complete until we all agree on how it is going to be operated. Judge Cooper sided with us earlier this year by refusing to declare the LORP "implemented" until the requirements surrounding the installation and operation of the flow monitoring stations were in full compliance. But the Owens Valley can now say that "a river *does* run through it," and we encourage all of you to come and see this tremendous project for yourselves!

Two environmental projects that the OVC has jump-started this past year are the Hines Spring and associated wetlands project (known also as the 1600 AF projects, as that is the amount of water that has been allotted to them), and the Yellow Billed Cuckoo (YBCC) habitat project. For Hines Spring, a tentative agreement was crafted by the ad hoc group that has been meeting since the fall of 2006. The OVC Board disagreed with the consensus, as they felt that too much groundwater pumping was being proposed for a heavily impacted well field in one of the mitigation projects. So the ad hoc group re-convened, and a revised proposal is in process. We are extremely gratified that the ad hoc process survived this apparent setback, and seems well on its way to an acceptable conclusion. The YBCC project had a setback of another kind, as virtually the entire site was burned in the extensive fires that blazed around Independence and Big Pine in July. This group also has re-convened, and is working its way towards solutions.

As we work our way forward to assure that the water-related projects in the Owens Valley are implemented with maximum environmental benefit for everyone, and as we continue to reach out to the community with education and public awareness programs, we are eternally grateful to those of you, near and far, who support our efforts. The OVC has retained its strength over the years, thanks to you!

**Carla Scheidlinger**  
President  
Owens Valley Committee



# The Ad Hoc Process Hits a Snag, but Continues

Mark Bagley

The Ad Hoc Process is an informal meeting of members from the MOU parties that have come together to work cooperatively in an effort to reach an agreement on long delayed additional mitigation projects required by the 1997 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The group consists of staff and volunteers from the MOU parties, including LADWP, Inyo County, OVC, Sierra Club, and the Department of Fish and Game. Importantly, it also includes the potentially affected ranchers that lease LADWP lands.

The delay in developing plans for the additional mitigation, originally scheduled for completion in June 2000, is the subject of a 2001 lawsuit against LADWP filed by OVC and the Sierra Club.

The court is aware of the Ad Hoc Process and is supportive of the parties working out a mutually satisfactory solution.

The additional mitigation projects stem from a commitment by LADWP in the 1997 MOU to provide 1600 acre-feet of water per year for mitigation of groundwater pumping impacts to springs in the Owens Valley. This water was to be used in mitigation projects recommended by the MOU consultants by June of 2000.

After the MOU parties provided two time extensions, the final plans were still not completed. OVC and Sierra Club then included this issue in a 2005 lawsuit. The Court ruled in OVC's favor on the main issue in the lawsuit, the Lower Owens River Project, but declined to rule on the additional mitigation, citing progress being made. However, no real progress was visible in the ensuing six months.

None of the MOU parties were very happy with the draft plans the consultants had released and OVC, with Sierra Club and the Inyo County Water Department, started the Ad Hoc Process in February 2006 as an unprecedented cooperative effort of the MOU parties and ranchers to address the

mitigation at Hines Spring be reexamined by the group.

A Hines Spring mitigation project is called for in the 1991 groundwater EIR and the MOU, with the EIR specifying a one- to two-acre on-site mitigation measure supplied by a nearby well. However, after infiltration tests were conducted it was determined by

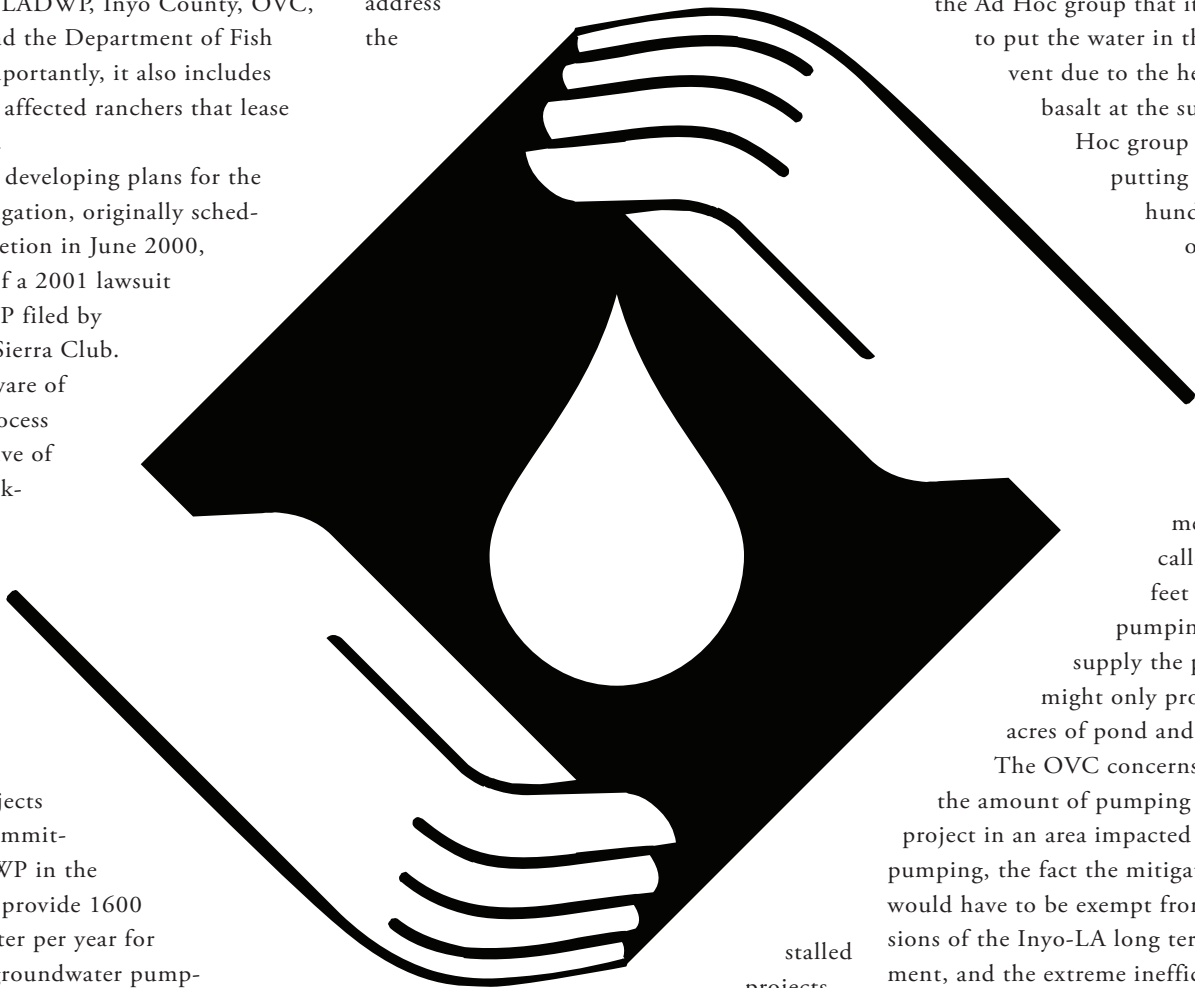
the Ad Hoc group that it was not feasible to put the water in the old spring vent due to the heavily fractured basalt at the surface. The Ad Hoc group recommended putting water out a few hundred away in the old outflow channel where the infiltration was not so extreme. However, the recom-

mended project called for 940 acre-feet of groundwater pumping per year to supply the project which might only produce about two acres of pond and wetted habitat.

The OVC concerns were with the amount of pumping to supply the project in an area impacted by groundwater pumping, the fact the mitigation supply well would have to be exempt from the off provisions of the Inyo-LA long term water agreement, and the extreme inefficiency of the project, i.e. most of the water would go right back in the ground and not contribute to development of aquatic or wetland habitats.

Other projects recommended by the ad hoc group and approved by OVC would use surface water or artesian well flows, not pumped groundwater.

Recently the Ad Hoc group met and is currently reevaluating the Hines Spring project and other projects with a goal to provide new recommendations that would address the OVC concerns and meet the concerns of all the other MOU parties.



stalled projects and come up with something

all could live with.

Late last spring the Ad Hoc group made recommendations to their boards outlining several mitigation projects that the group had agreed on and that could be used to satisfy the MOU requirement for additional mitigation. The OVC Board of Directors was the first governing board to consider the ad hoc recommendations and in September the board recommended that the proposal for

# A First Descent: Lower Owens Floats Their Boats

Ceal Klingler



**OVC Member Frank Colver's expedition—a first descent of the Lower Owens.**

In a celebration of the river's renewed existence, nine people kayaked and canoed approximately the northmost five miles of the Lower Owens this April in what was likely the first boat descent in nearly a century.

Until the rewatering ceremony December 6, 2006, the southern sixty miles of the Owens River had been mostly a memory and an empty riverbed since 1913, when Los Angeles diverted the river into the first Los Angeles aqueduct. Plans for a river resurrection surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s, when Los Angeles lost a series of court battles over impacts to the Owens Valley from excessive groundwater pumping and from exports via a second aqueduct. Eventually the city agreed to partly restore the Lower Owens River as partial mitigation for thirty years of groundwater pumping damage, but the project stalled in its planning stages.

In 2005, a judge ordered Los Angeles to, among other measures, begin flows to the river by January 2007 or risk losing the use of its second Owens Valley aqueduct. Flows began in winter

2006, and Los Angeles announced in February 2007 that flows had reached required levels throughout the river. Speculation about floating the river inevitably followed—or rather, led.

The river explorers met obstacles, of course: chain link fence, tules, tamarisk stumps. But they persevered. "In some cases we could squeeze by, next to a bank, either paddling with great difficulty or walking on the bottom and pulling the boats," wrote Frank Colver, an Owens Valley Committee member, in a recent account of the descent. "...In many cases the water was so deep where we needed to push a path through the tules that we could not use our feet on the bottom for traction. Instead, we would sort of lie down or walk on our knees being supported by the floating refuse of dead tules."

Colver is fairly certain he and other expedition members—Gary, Karla, and Jessamyn Peebles; Nathan and Mike Piehl; Mel Herlin; Sylvia Stevenson; and Russ Brown—can claim the title of first descent of the newly restored river. "We

did not see any evidence of anyone having broken a boat path through the tules," he wrote. "It looked untouched (it doesn't any longer)."

The trip breaks no records for longest, most difficult, or most remote. No one will sing love songs to the river's rapids, or extoll any holes, plunge pools, or dangerous deviousness—oxbows notwithstanding. What makes this river trip special is not the character of the river's water; it's the simple presence of water.

"It was a thrill for me to float over the new gauging station just above Black Rock Road," Colver wrote. "Last December 7 I walked over to it—[it was] only a trickle then—and stood there wondering if I would ever be able to find myself floating over it."

The group took out at the east bank of the river at Black Rock Road, leaving further exploration for a time when the channel is less choked with vegetation.

For a while, the Lower Owens River Project wouldn't float. Now it does.



# LORP MOU Compliance Lawsuit Resumes

Mark Bagley

In late September OVC and Sierra Club filed a motion to file a supplemental complaint to a case first filed in Inyo Superior Court in January 2005. This case lay idle while LADWP worked to establish Lower Owens River Project (LORP) baseflows. Baseflows have now been established, but the monitoring and adaptive management portion of the LORP Ecosystem Management Plan, required by the 1997 MOU, remains in draft form.

OVC and Sierra Club contend that the MOU requires this plan to establish the project description for the LORP Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Although the MOU required completion of the draft LORP EIR by June 2000, no draft was released until a court-ordered deadline compelled one in late 2003. Even after the release of the final EIR in 2004, the LORP still lacked a final ecosystem management plan. The lawsuit contends that a plan should have been completed before approval and implementation of the project.

Since filing the first complaint in 2005, three more draft monitoring and adaptive management plans—a required component of the ecosystem management plan—have been released. Still no final plan has been completed. The ecosystem management plan is a vital part of the LORP and the monitoring and adaptive management part of the plan will have an enormous influence on the success of the project.

In addition to the lack of a final ecosystem management plan, the OVC and Sierra Club contend that



Photo: Mike Prather

**Braided river north of Independence; note the multiple channels.**

some of the provisions of the draft plans do not comply with the MOU. Issues include a lack of feedback from monitoring—including vague and inconsistent monitoring triggers—to indicate where and when adaptive management modifications are necessary to meet the goals of the project as set forth in the MOU. Additional issues include restrictions on the purpose and use of seasonal habitat flows, failure to recommend the amount, duration and timing of seasonal

habitat flows to achieve project goals under varying hydrologic scenarios, and lack of integration of the parts of the ecosystem management plan.

The California Department of Fish and Game, a party to the 1997 MOU, has not joined in the lawsuit, but it did provide extensive comments in September on a recent draft of the monitoring and adaptive management plan. Fish and Game concluded that the draft plan failed to provide an effective adaptive management methodol-

ogy. Among the many concerns raised by Fish and Game are that much of the proposed monitoring data collection “has no relationship to management triggers or performance standards,” that performance goals and success criteria are substandard, and that the needs of MOU identified habitat indicator species and listed threatened and endangered species “are not considered in the development of thresholds and standards that would trigger improved management.”

As Fish and Game points out, the main goals of the LORP, established in the MOU, include a healthy functioning ecosystem “for the benefit of biodiversity and Threatened and Endangered Species” and creation of “diverse natural habitats consistent with the needs of the habitat indicator species.” (MOU, Section II.B)

LADWP and Inyo County are defendants in the lawsuit: the MOU requires them to direct and assist the MOU consultants in preparation of the LORP Ecosystem Management Plan following the procedures set forth in the MOU. Part of the problem appears to be a lack of agreement between LA and the County regarding what the MOU requires and a failure to provide the necessary direction and assistance to the MOU Consultants. Part of the problem appears to be the consultants’ work.

Prior to any further action in court, the MOU parties will meet to discuss the issues and see if any can be resolved.

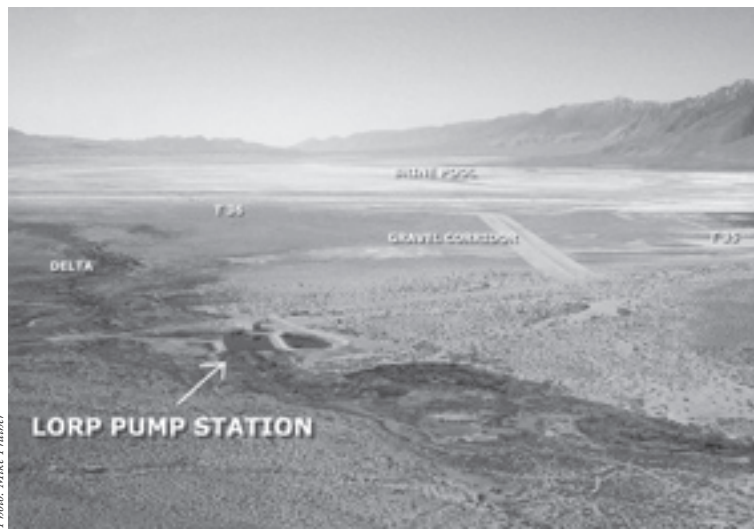


Photo: Mike Prather

**Lower Owens pump station. This pump station reclaims three-quarters of the river's water for use on the lake or the aqueduct. The remaining quarter goes to the lake delta.**

# Volunteer Profile: John Williams

Carla Scheidlinger



John Williams's name is probably familiar to a lot of you, as he is the one who sends out the engaging and sometimes prodding letters advising you that your memberships in the OVC are coming due. John has been volunteering for the OVC for several years, and he is in charge of the membership database, as well as of sending solicitations, newsletters, brochures, and other information that keep our membership apprised of our activities. John volunteers for the OVC "because they didn't offer to pay me," which suggests that he'd work for us under pretty much any circumstances (editor's note: as a result of his excellent membership drives, we have enough money that John, as well as several other volunteers, can now receive a modest stipend). John has long felt that the work of the OVC centers on the most critical environmental issues in the Owens Valley, namely groundwater pumping and water management. He'd like to see the OVC become unnecessary, but believes that such a scenario is just a pipe dream, as Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) will "always want to take

more water than is sustainable," and the OVC is the principal monitor to assure that this doesn't happen.

John has always been an environmentalist, so when he came to the Owens Valley 12 years ago and attended an OVC public meeting, getting involved was a natural step. John is originally from Oklahoma, but got out of the state after finishing college. As a kind of "professional student" John studied math,



creative writing, and computer sciences, finally receiving a PhD in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin Madison. He still teaches math here at Cerro Coso College, which he views as a kind of public service. Writing remains important to him, and he is a serious although unpublished poet, a creator of crossword puzzles (published in the New York Times), and he's writing a book about a two-week, solo backpacking trip that nearly ended in disaster. John is an avid ultra-light backpacker, and spends a lot of time enjoying our great local outdoor backyard.

John says that he feels that his volunteer work is important to the OVC because if the OVC were not here, LADWP would be essentially monitoring itself, which would be akin to "the fox guarding the hen house." Getting the word out to others is important. "We need the moral and political support of our membership, as well as the financial contributions," John notes. The OVC is fortunate indeed to have such a dedicated volunteer working for the environment of the Owens Valley.

## Lower Owens River Project Baseflows Are Fully Implemented

Judge Lifts \$5,000-a-day Penalty, Orders LADWP to Comply with Flow Criteria

Mark Bagley

Although rewatering of the Lower Owens River began with a flourish last December, it was not until July 11th that Judge Lee Cooper declared "that the Lower Owens River is a river." In so doing Cooper approved an agreement that ended his 2005 injunction that threatened the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) with the loss of their \$89-million Second Los Angeles Aqueduct and imposed conditions until the Lower Owens River Project (LORP) baseflows were fully implemented.

Those conditions included a \$5,000-a-day penalty, a 37% reduction in groundwater pumping, and set a deadline of July 25, 2007 for implementation of the baseflows. The Lower Owens River had been dried up in 1913 with diversion of its water into the first LA Aqueduct.

Judge Cooper made the agreement a court order. This makes it relatively easy for the Owens Valley Committee or other parties to the agreement (Sierra Club, Inyo County, Department Fish and Game) to enforce if LADWP fails to live up to its terms, providing strong protection for the river.

The agreement halted penalties that amounted to \$3.3 million and set forth requirements for flow monitoring and reporting. Importantly, the agreement

establishes baseflow criteria that the flow monitoring must show are being met. If the flow criteria or reporting requirements are not met, the agreement provides for automatic penalties of up to \$5000-a-day.

The new agreement was negotiated after Judge Cooper rejected a February motion by LADWP that declared the 40 cubic-foot per second baseflow had been established and asked for an end to the penalties. Cooper rejected the motion at the urging of the Owens Valley Committee and Sierra Club, and other parties, because LADWP's flow monitoring was not implemented in accordance with the LORP EIR.

With the baseflow established, the Lower Owens River is returning to life. However, management of seasonal high flows and of grazing and recreational use will greatly influence the development of the new riparian area.



Photo: Mike Prather

Phoebe Prather and Jake with "first water."



# MEMBER PROFILE

## GREG SMITH OVC BOARD MEMBER

Greg Smith hails from San Marcos in North County San Diego. So why are we profiling an “outsider”? Because Greg Smith is a member of the OVC Board. Greg, who has made his living as an oceanographer, engineer, and electronics specialist, has been coming to the Owens Valley since 1971. When he “partially retired” and bought a cabin in 2001 in the Alabama Hills next door to long-time OVC activist Betty Gilchrist, he very quickly got involved with the OVC himself.

Greg’s first reaction to the Owens Valley was an incredulity that so much water was being transferred so far from its area of origin. He joined the OVC Board because he had a deeply heartfelt connection to water, and he saw a chance to contribute to an equitable solution to some of the thorny water problems that face the Owens Valley. As a Board member, Greg is committed to working in a team environment to forge coalitions among diverse members of the Owens Valley community who share a common goal of realizing autonomy from the often paralyzing grip of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. As a relative new-comer to the valley, Greg can bring a more objective voice to the debate. His organization skills and fundraising efforts will also help in achieving his goals for positioning the OVC as a major integrating force in the Owens Valley.

Greg’s interest in water is reflected in his writing. He is currently working on a book titled “Rivers of Sand” which discusses the different development paths taken by the watersheds defined by the Mojave, Amargosa, and Owens Rivers, all of which used to drain into Death Valley. These literary efforts are a natural outgrowth of Greg’s ongoing commitment to sorting out the tangled issues surrounding the use and distribution of western water. We are very fortunate to have Greg on the OVC Board.



# Las Vegas and the Search for

Greg Smith

In 1905 Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) began buying land in the Owens Valley while building an aqueduct to transport the water more than 250 miles. By 1913 LADWP owned enough water rights to begin sending the water south. It only took until 1920 for the Owens Lake, the Mojave Desert’s largest body of water, to dry up and turn into a salt flat that produced terrible dust storms. Ten years later LADWP had bought almost all the water rights in the Owens Valley and had pretty much terminated growth of any kind except tourism. Almost 100 years later the bad feelings, law suits and repercussions from countless thousands of lives displaced are still being felt. Do you think it could happen again in these modern times? If you answered no, guess again. It is happening again.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), supplying water to Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County, has been granted several water use permits by the Nevada State Water Engineer (NSWE) to pump and transport 60,000 acre ft. of water through a 327-mile pipeline from Nye, White Pine and Lincoln Counties. The NSWE granted a preliminary use of 40,000 acre ft over the next 10 years with an eventual increase to 60,000 acre feet after 10 years, depending on the impact in these counties from the pumping program.

Clark County, one of the fastest growing counties in the US with 2 million residents, has completely

outstripped its available water resources. The SNWA, formed in 1991, is responsible for delivering water to seven regional agencies and currently supplies ~550,000 acre ft/yr (an acre foot is 1 foot of water over one acre and represents about 325,850 gallons). Relying almost completely on Lake Mead (90%) and local groundwater, the SNWA is frantically searching for alternative sources while implementing conservation measures where it is deemed appropriate. This includes recycling waste water (~11,000 acre ft), promoting less water consumption (xeriscaping, covered pools, tiered water rates and water education) and utilizing wastewater to promote riparian habitat before it is returned to Lake Mead (~77,000 acre ft). But Las Vegas is still, by a large factor, a water hog with per capita consumption at ~260 gallons/capita/day (GPCD). Compare this to other desert cities such as Phoenix (144), El Paso (122) and Tucson (107).

So what about the future? How does all this affect groundwater elsewhere in the state and what are the similarities to the Owens Valley? Well, let’s do a review of the creeping grab for more water resources by the LADWP in the eastern Sierra.

**1913: LADWP buys the water rights in the southern Owens Valley and diverts the river into the LA Aqueduct, drying Owens Lake.**

**1930: LADWP completes the acquisition of most of the water rights in the northern Owens Valley.**



**Is your glass half-empty? The mighty Lake Mead feeds Las Vegas’ unquenchable thirst.**

# Water: Is Your Backyard Next?

**1941: LADWP builds Long Valley Dam, creating Lake Crowley. The aqueduct is extended into the far reaches of the Sierra Nevada all the way to Mono Lake through an eleven mile tunnel. Mono Lake levels begin to fall.**

**1969: LADWP builds a second aqueduct and begins extensive pumping of groundwater from the Owens Valley that results in reduced spring flows and significant changes to habitat.**

**1972: Inyo County sues LADWP over the environmental effects of increased groundwater pumping and surface water diversions.**

**1978 and later: David Gaines starts the Mono Lake Committee and sues LADWP over water use. More than twenty-five years of litigation follow at significant cost to LADWP. Water extraction from Mono Lake and Owens Valley ground water pumping is finally reduced.**

So how does this compare with Las Vegas? Today the SNWA's delivery of fresh water to its seven members totals just over 550,000 acre ft, but final modifications to the system will increase its delivery capability to approximately one million acre ft. Due to a doubling of the population in Clark County by the year 2035, the 2006 Water Resources Plan calls for a 73% increase over existing levels to a total of 944,000 acre ft. Where will it come from? At least half of this increase, about 200,000 acre ft, will come from groundwater in other parts of Nevada. Most of these regions are sparsely populated, and without water resources they will remain that way. But you can see the trend, and it doesn't bode well for the environment, both human and natural, in these areas.

So who is minding the store here? The NSWSE is responsible for granting water right applications based upon four primary criteria:

- Is there unappropriated water at the source?
- Will the application impair existing rights?
- Is the application in the public interest?
- Does the application adversely impact domestic wells?

Nothing in the above list addresses concerns about the environment except the public interest. When Teddy Roosevelt agreed with Los Angeles in 1905 that an aqueduct should be built even though it would destroy the economy of the Owens Valley, the decision was made in the public interest, 'for the greater good'. Are these greater goods still within the public interest today?

After approving a major portion of the groundwater rights applications by the SNWA, the NSWSE will allow the SNWA to pump

- Characterizing current phreatophyte conditions
- Characterizing hydro-geologic settings
- Developing groundwater flow models
- Identifying and evaluating hydrologic management and monitoring alternatives

However, the real issue here is that Las Vegas will continue to grow with an unabated thirst for water, thereby putting pressure on finding alternative water supplies when none may be available. And what about increased litigation from organi-

zations like the Sierra Club should extensive damage to the environment occur? Wouldn't it be better to try to reduce consumption while increasing conservation? For example, if Las Vegas reduced water consumption from 240 GPCD to that of Phoenix (144 GPCD) they would reduce total water consumption by 40% or 400,000 acre ft in the year 2035. Couple that with increased conservation measures like using recycled water for irrigation and—guess what?—you don't need to build a pipeline and pump groundwater.

So why doesn't a city like Las Vegas promulgate measures to work in this direction? Politics and people are

the answer. It's political suicide to mess with your constituency's purported rights to water, even in the desert. An example of this was made clear to me the other day when I challenged my neighbor about planting a nice green lawn in his front yard while we were in the middle of a drought. His answer: "I had a green lawn in Michigan and, by golly, I have a right to a green lawn here."

While higher volumes in today's modern economies may lead to reduced cost, the days of 'the more you use the less you pay' for finite resources such as water are over. Because water is a community resource, our governments need to educate the citizenry about good stewardship when it comes to consuming water. For those who want more water for pools and green lawns, a tiered system of rates should be implemented so that profligate water users have to pay more. Only then will customers reduce their consumption to acceptable levels and begin to conserve.



**Las Vegas' Bridge of Sighs: Lake Las Vegas.**

40,000 acre-feet annually from several basins in White Pine and Lincoln Counties for 10 years. After that the SNWA may be allowed an additional 20,000 acre-feet annually based on the results of monitoring and impact analysis.

But there is some good news. The NSWSE's approval also requires the protection of existing groundwater rights in the basin, the ability for future groundwater growth and development in Spring Valley and a comprehensive monitoring, management and environmental mitigation plan including:

- Assembling databases
- Defining current groundwater conditions
- Characterizing current spring hydrologic conditions
- Documenting current conditions of the spring-dependent habitats, including spring pools and brooks, and riparian, wetland and open-water habitats.



# News Briefs

## OVC Receives Major Grant

OVC was recently awarded a grant of \$137,000 from a foundation that prefers to remain anonymous. This grant is a follow up to a 2005 grant that enabled OVC to hire a legal and policy consultant, hire consultants to prepare Development and Communications Plans, provide a stipend for our volunteer outreach coordinator, and pay for production and mailing of our newsletters.

The new grant will continue funding for our legal and policy consultant, Mark Bagley, whose tasks include oversight, analysis and coordination of OVC's interest in the 1991 Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) and the 1997 memorandum of understanding (MOU). Mark

continues to work on legal issues related to the MOU and Lower Owens River Project, providing information and assistance to attorneys for OVC and co-plaintiffs Sierra Club, and working with our volunteers, expert witnesses and consultants. Mark works with OVC volunteers in collaborative efforts of the MOU parties to reach agreement on MOU issues such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo habitat enhancement plans and plans for projects to utilize 1600 acre-feet of water per year for additional mitigation.

Our legal efforts to enforce the LTWA and MOU will be enhanced by the new

grant as it provides significant funds to pay our attorney Don Mooney, who has so ably represented OVC since 1991, and to cover legal expenses such as court expenses, costs for depositions, travel expenses, and fees for expert witnesses and scientific consultants.

The new grant also provides funds for volunteer stipends, a program that was expanded this year to include volunteers that coordinate our membership and mailing, bookkeeping and treasury, website, newsletters, and outreach and administration.

## Yellow-billed Cuckoo Habitat Fire

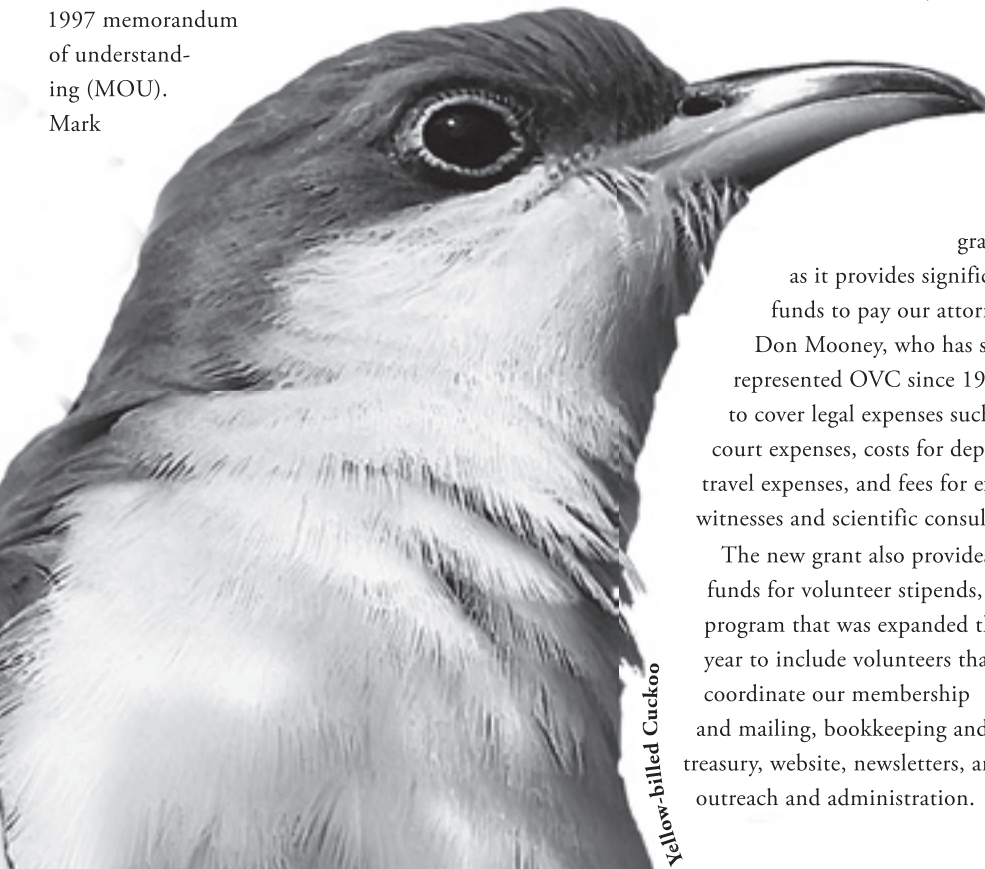
A fierce wind-driven wildfire in July destroyed a major portion of the riparian habitat at Baker Creek near Big Pine. This tragedy, however, will not stop OVC efforts as per the 1997 MOU to enhance yellow-billed cuckoo habitat there. The yellow-billed cuckoo is an indicator of the most biologically valuable riparian habitat and is a species that is, therefore, in trouble in California where we have lost more than 90% of riparian areas.

Currently being discussed by the MOU parties and the grazing lessee are restoration concepts that include irrigation of newly planted cottonwood and willow trees, management of grazing, fencing, exclosures and control of non-native locust tress (which have low wildlife value). Winter of 2008-2009 is the target for implementation of the project which hopes to recreate and diverse riparian habitat for yellow-billed cuckoo which in turn foster abundance of a host of other vertebrate species and plants.

## OVC Outreach

Recent OVC outreach activities include touring the Lower Owens River Project with an environmental studies student from the University of Guelph [Ontario, Canada.]<sup>0</sup> On a larger scale, a 30 student environmental studies class from Pasadena City College was also led on a tour of Owens Lake and the Lower Owens River Project. This will be followed up in November when OVC will have a booth at Awareness Day on the Pasadena CC campus. Working as a part of the annual Lone Pine Film Festival, OVC led a tour entitled 'Movie Sets to Avocets' which allowed discussion of water and landscape with 40 people over two days. We are also participating in a citizen led effort seeking a recreational planning grant for the Lower Owens River from the the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

To book a tour of the valley including the Lower Owens River, Owens Lake and the Los Angeles Aqueduct please contact outreach@ovcweb.org or mprather@lonepinetv.com.



The Yellow-billed cuckoo is the key indicator species for healthy riparian habitat.



## Owens Lake

The final build out of the Los Angeles Owens Lake Dust Project is being prepared. Some 9.2 square miles of this last work will include ponds and sheet flooding bringing the total of such dust control methods to nearly 35 square miles by the end of 2010. The subsequent reappearance of Owens Lake's lost wildlife heritage has been noticed

throughout the state. Audubon-California has listed Owens Lake as one of its top ten Important Bird Areas in California.

Attracted by the habitat fostered by the flooding dust control methods, tens of thousands

of shorebirds and waterfowl are once again using

Owens Lake during migration, for wintering and nesting – the lake is the largest snowy plover nesting site in California. Coupled with the 900 acre Lower Owens River Delta Waterfowl Area (a component of the LORP), the flooded dust control areas on the lake have restored much of



the habitat that once existed at Owens Lake when it was one of the West's most important wildlife sites. Plans are underway for access to the lake by the public for wildlife viewing once the construction is completed. This will include interpretation as well. The Lower Owens River Project and Owens Lake are biologically, hydrologically and historically connected. Their futures are intertwined.

“As we proceeded around the western margin of Owens Lake, great numbers of ducks and waders, scattered and in large masses, were seen on the beach and out on the water.

— Joseph Grinnell  
Ornithologist, Berkeley  
September 14, 1911



Baker Creek, post July 2007 fire.

# OVC Mission

OVC is a non-profit citizen action group dedicated to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of water and land resources affecting the Owens Valley. The Committee oversees compliance with the implementation of appropriate water management policy, educates the public, encourages participation in local government, and advocates an inclusive and open decision-making process.

## OVC Goals

1. "Watchdog" the 1991 LTWA between Inyo County and L.A.
2. Oversee the implementation and management of the Lower Owens River Project (LORP).
3. Educate the public and promote its involvement with water issues.
4. Seek a dual use designation for dust control water at Owens Lake for wildlife as well as dust.

**OWENS VALLEY COMMITTEE**  
**PO Box 77**  
**Bishop, CA 93515**



*Peter Knapp*

# YES!

I would love to join the Owens Valley Committee and help with protection, restoration and sustainable management of water and land resources in the Owens Valley.

<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	Speckled Dace
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	Tui Chub
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	Owens Pupfish
<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	Brook
<input type="checkbox"/> \$500	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	Aquifer
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Skills \_\_\_\_\_

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
BISHOP, CA  
PERMIT NO. 37