



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor

RONALD E. DEATON, General Manager

5
October 6, 2006

Ms. Barbara Williams, President
Bishop Mural Society
2605 Highland Drive
Bishop, CA 93514

Dear Bishop Mural Society:

The Owens Valley employees of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) are deeply offended by, and concerned about the mural that has been recently painted on a building at East Line and Fowler Streets in Bishop. It's unfortunate that at a time like this with so much terrorism, violence, hatred and war in the world, such a false and negative depiction of Los Angeles' Owens Valley water gathering activities would be produced. It's also most unfortunate that the Bishop Mural Society has apparently deviated from their theme of producing murals with positive portrayals that unite the community and that everyone can be proud of, and moved toward editorializing and political messages.

It's obvious that the scenes depicted in the mural are not realistic portrayals of the Owens Valley as it was 100 years ago, or in the present. Perhaps if the designers of the mural had done more research on historical and current issues, a more realistic depiction could have been created. And if the LADWP had been asked, our staff would have been happy to have provided historical and current photographs and information that could have been used to make the mural more accurate.

Over the years the LADWP has worked cooperatively with the communities and made significant contributions of money, labor, and equipment to numerous community projects and organizations throughout the Owens Valley. Until now LADWP has supported the needs of local communities and organizations without much question as to the intent and content of the project. However, due to the negative and untrue depiction in the mural, LADWP is now forced to reevaluate its policy and more closely scrutinize all requests for assistance throughout the Owens Valley.

The idea that the Owens Valley would have become a major agricultural center is not realistic due to the area's remote location, high altitude, variable weather, and soil conditions. Without Los Angeles' land ownership developers would long ago have begun converting large tracts of Owens Valley land into housing, businesses, and industrial facilities. The Owens Valley remains one of the last areas in California that is virtually untouched by pollution and development, precisely because of the LADWP's excellent land stewardship.

Water and Power Conservation . . . a way of life

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The LADWP is committed to maintaining the Owens Valley's high quality of life, and the enhancement and protection of the Owens Valley environment, as evidenced by the serious commitments that were made in the Inyo County-Los Angeles Water Agreement, the 1997 Memorandum of Understanding, and the 1998 Owens Lake Dust Mitigation Memorandum of Understanding. As a result of those commitments and other obligations, LADWP now leaves more than one-third of the water it formerly diverted to Los Angeles in the Eastern Sierra to protect and enhance the local environment. The LADWP has also spent hundreds of millions of dollars on Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra enhancement and restoration efforts.

The LADWP's protection of the Owens Valley also has other benefits. It's well-known that tourism is the major industry in the Eastern Sierra. It's also well-known that visitors have many vacation destinations from which to choose. By working together to enhance and market our beautiful area, Los Angeles and Inyo County can attract more visitors for longer stays, generating more revenue for the area.

However, negative and untrue portrayals such as the mural can only serve to damage the local tourism-based economy, and alienate local residents, many of whom are LADWP employees, and their families and friends.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
GENE L. COUFAL

Gene L. Coufal
Manager
Aqueduct Business Group

- c: Mr. Dan Wells, Vice President, Bishop Mural Society
- Ms. Shirley Fendon, Secretary, Bishop Mural Society
- Ms. Andrea Shallcross, Treasurer, Bishop Mural Society
- Mr. Jerry Core /
Bishop City Council
- Mr. Rick Pucci, Administrator, City of Bishop
- Bishop Chamber of Commerce