



Media Release

State Water Board approves new stream restoration measures for Mono Lake Basin

New instream flow levels will benefit fish and wildlife

October 8, 2021

Contact: Ailene Voisin
Ailene.Voisin@waterboards.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO – State water officials took a significant step on October 1 toward reversing damage to the Mono Lake Basin from excessive water diversions through major revisions to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power’s (LADWP) water rights licenses.

The changes approved by the State Water Resources Control Board provide significant updates to an existing stream restoration program and will restore instream flows to 20 miles of creek and fisheries habitats in the basin. LADWP is required to construct an outlet structure at Grant Lake Dam to facilitate higher peak flow releases during certain months and accelerate ecosystem recovery processes that will benefit the trout fishery and riparian habitats of Rush, Lee Vining, Walker and Parker Creeks, tributaries to Mono Lake.

The new measures build upon a historical 1994 State Water Board decision that established water export limitations and conditions to protect the environment in and around Mono Lake. The lake is an ancient saline waterbody at the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada with a unique ecosystem that supports millions of migratory birds and is immensely popular with people who love the California outdoors.

“We all know Mono Lake is a special place,” said board chair E. Joaquin Esquivel. “These solutions to help restore the health of the lake are especially rewarding as they were developed in collaboration with multiple entities and are based on recommendations from independent scientific experts who were enlisted by the board and spent years studying the situation. “Additionally, this progress is noteworthy because it takes place in an area that helped establish the State Water Board’s obligation to consider the public trust doctrine when weighing the environmental impacts of water rights.”

The amended licenses incorporate provisions of a 2013 settlement agreement and combine all prior terms and conditions required by LADWP’s water rights. The parties to the settlement include LADWP, the Mono Lake Committee, California Department of Fish & Wildlife and California Trout. Together, and under board direction, they will coordinate and implement future actions, including construction of the Grant Lake outlet.





“Thanks to the State Water Board’s leadership, a new era of science-based stream restoration is now underway that will benefit fish, wildlife, and all Californians,” said Mono Lake Committee Executive Director Geoffrey McQuilkin. “We are proud to join together with Mayor Garcetti, the City of Los Angeles and conservation partners to support and implement this bold phase of the effort to restore Mono Lake and its tributaries.”

The State Water Board’s mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for current and future generations.