

Los Angeles Aqueduct Tour



Bartshé Miller • September 20, 2019

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

The Mono Basin extension of the Los Angeles Aqueduct began exporting water 350 miles south to the City of LA in 1941. Today, the aqueduct must balance competing needs instead of exclusively serving one. Join Mono Lake Committee Policy Director Bartshé Miller for a focused, field-based investigation of the north end of the aqueduct system. We'll visit all the major aqueduct facilities in the Mono Basin and learn about their modern relationship with Los Angeles, Mono Lake, and its tributary streams. We will look at the changes coming from the 2013 Mono Basin Stream Restoration Agreement with Los Angeles, discuss past and present diversions, and see how 20th century infrastructure is serving the 21st century water needs. This field seminar will provide a great overview of the Mono Basin system, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and a few of the historical, engineering, and ecological anecdotes that make up this fascinating water infrastructure.

Bartshé (pronounced "Bar-SHAY") Miller is your imperfect guide for unraveling the Mono Basin's complex and fascinating plumbing—he has 27 years of experience living in the Mono Basin and has worked for the US Forest Service and the Mono Lake Committee. He will lead you along the engineering seam that shapes the landscape of the Mono Basin with interesting stops that reveal the hydrology, ecology, and history of Mono Lake and the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

ITINERARY

Friday, September 20, 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. After check-in and introductions we'll spend about an hour in the Committee's gallery for a general orientation to the Mono Basin watershed and some general hydrology concepts. We'll look at old maps from the Mono Lake research library showing historic patterns of land ownership and water management.

We will then move outdoors to begin our field portion near Mono Lake where tributary streams enter the lake, investigating how the landscape has changed since diversions began and what happened when the water was later returned. We will then travel to the site of West Portal, once a thriving boomtown, located at the northwestern entrance to the Mono Craters Tunnel, where diverted water exits the Mono Basin and flows under an active chain of young volcanoes. From there we'll continue to the holding site of all Mono Basin diversions, Grant Lake Reservoir and to see how water gets out of Grant Lake Reservoir and into Rush Creek and Mono Lake.

After lunch at a shady spot with restrooms, we will follow the aqueduct north along good dirt roads, past siphons, sand traps, and the Parker and Walker Creek diversion dams. We'll continue to the top of the Los Angeles Aqueduct at the Lee Vining Creek diversion, where some of the water first begins its long journey to the city, and where the rest of the water flows past modernized infrastructure for the benefit of all. All along the way, throughout the day, we will not fail to notice relevant bits of natural and human history that accent this unusual water conveyance.

We will officially conclude the day at 4:00pm. Unofficially, depending on time, inclination, and afternoon thunderstorms, we travel upstream toward Tioga Pass to see where the edges of two great urban watersheds abut and discuss further nuanced challenges in managing the system from beginning to end. If the group is willing, we can end the day with an informal dinner where any and all partners, family, and friends are welcome.

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

Hiking: We will be hiking short distances (50–200 meters) from our vehicles with minimal elevation gain. However, some of the hiking will be over rugged and uneven terrain, on and off trails.

TO BRING

- lunch & snacks
- plenty of drinking water for the day
- day pack
- rain jacket
- personal sun strategy (hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, etc.)
- insect repellent
- binoculars/camera
- field guides/note-taking materials

SUGGESTED READING

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

SUGGESTED WEB BROWSING

- Current real time data, including flows and minimum flow rules:
monobasinresearch.org/data/mbrtdframes.htm
- Historical resources: monobasinresearch.org/historical/



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

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