



February 10, 2023

Via Mono Lake Committee

Dear California State Water Resources Control Board,

In 1994, the State Water Board saw the importance of a healthy ecosystem at Mono Lake, and mandated that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) diversions be reduced to allow the lake to rise to 6392 feet by 2014. Since then, Mono Lake has been touted as a conservation success story across the nation, and even by LADWP themselves.

Unfortunately, the story is more complicated: we see now that previous allowances for LADWP's diversions were not effective in raising the lake's level, especially with the changing climate and drought. While LADWP blames drought for the low lake level, they ignore the much larger impact of our shared history: without their historical water extraction which robbed the lake of half its volume, without their ongoing diversions from this ecosystem, drought simply would not have the cumulative effects on Mono Lake that we see today. LADWP will agree, we cannot control drought. Yet we can control how much water we continue to divert away.

The board knew hydrological changes were possible, and anticipated further revisions if the lake did not rise in the allotted time frame. We have long passed those 20 years. Extensions of this deadline made for LADWP's stream restoration efforts have passed. And still, the lake has risen only 20% of the way to the mandated level.

It is now time to revise. Friends of the Inyo urges the State Water Board to schedule a hearing quickly to implement long-term stream diversion changes that will ensure Mono Lake rises to the healthy and sustainable level that the State Water Board decided on decades ago. In the meantime, it is imperative that Mono Lake and all the life that relies on it, not continue to suffer while we re-examine its fate. We urge the State Water Board to also suspend water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (LADWP) until the lake level rises enough to avert the current ecological crises. Before we develop a wildfire management plan, we have to first put out the fires which are actively burning. Suspending water diversions by LADWP, for the meantime, will allow us to fully address the future of this relationship and the future of our ecosystem.