

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Policy Statement

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following statement was received from the Department of Water and Power in response to ENVIRONS' request. The first half of the article consists of a Press Release, and the second half consists of the actual DWP Mono Lake Policy Statement. Both documents have been reprinted here as they were received, without alterations or corrections.*

PRESS RELEASE

The Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners has adopted a Mono Lake policy calling for a cooperative effort between various levels of government and the environmental community to reach an equitable solution by which the needs and requirements of both the city and the lake can be accommodated.

Board President Rick J. Caruso said, "We recognize that a city Department of Water Power policy on Mono Lake is long overdue.

"We realize that for many people, the lake is a unique environmental resource of significant value to the state and nation. We are committed to preserving the the [sic] environment in the Eastern Sierra. It is our hope that the issuance of this policy will result in an increased dialogue between interested parties to find a solution. We are committed to resolving the issues."



Since 1984, the Department and the County of Inyo have been working together to resolve long-standing disputes and litigation over the Department's water gathering activities in the Owens Valley. This Mono Lake policy is fully consistent with the Department's commitment to continue to pursue with Inyo County a settlement of the litigation and disputes through the joint adoption of a long-term groundwater management plan for the Owens Valley.

Although the DWP's first priority is to meet the water needs of the residents of Los Angeles, the policy recognizes that a reduction in the city's authorized diversions of the four streams tributary to saline Mono Lake may need to take place at some point in the future to preserve the lake's ecosystem.

"We must keep in mind, however, that any reduction in diversions would have far-reaching implications in California's water supply picture, since high quality replacement water and energy sources would need to be obtained," Caruso said. "In addition, economic impacts would need to be addressed and shared.

"We continue to be concerned about the availability of replacement sources. This is especially a concern in light of the recent State Water Resources Control Board draft report, which recommends that water exports from the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta be reduced, thereby limiting the water resources available to California."

Caruso said, "We also are concerned about water quality. Mono Basin water is the highest quality water currently available to the DWP. A loss of this water source would force the DWP to serve more water of slightly lesser quality."

The policy states, "The Department believes it is incumbent on all concerned -- the city, the state, the nation, the environmental community and others -- to work together to find means by which both the needs and requirements of both the city and the lake can be accommodated.

"Specifically, the Department believes that the responsibility for providing high-quality replacement water and energy supplies for the city must be shared by the state and federal governments and other interested parties. The Department hopes that such a sense of shared responsibility will enable all concerned to reach a settlement that best serves the needs of people and the environment. The Department pledges its best efforts to reach such a settlement," the policy states.

The policy was drafted by the Board's public affairs committee, chaired by Walter A. Zelman.

Mono Basin water currently generates more than 300 million kilowatt hours of clean hydroelectric

energy as it flows through power plants along the Los Angeles aqueduct system.

Los Angeles depends on four of seven streams tributary to Mono Lake for one-sixth of the water supply for its 3.3 million residents.

POLICY STATEMENT ON MONO LAKE

1. Water diversions by the DWP from the Mono Lake Basin are an important source of high quality water for the City. Mono Basin water also produces a substantial amount of clean, non-fossil-fuel-based electricity for the City. The people of the City own established water rights under the state law authorizing these diversions and have relied on these rights and the water those rights secure for many years.

2. The Department will consider any decrease in Mono Basin diversions in light of two important realities.

a. The Department faces considerable uncertainty today with regard to every one of its basic sources of water: in the Mono Basin, in the Owens Valley, from the Colorado River, from the State Water Project, and from groundwater pumping in the San Fernando Valley. The reliability of supply from each of these sources is less than it has been in decades.

b. Today, all water purveyors are under increasing pressure to serve the highest quality of water available. Mono Basin water is the highest quality water currently available to the Department. A loss of Mono Basin water would force the Department to serve more water of slightly lesser quality.

3. The Department believes that, based on available scientific evidence, the Mono Lake ecosystem is currently in a healthy and productive state, particularly in regard to the most critical issue of the Lake's ability to provide food and habitat for large

numbers of migratory birds. The DWP will continue to participate cooperatively in research and monitoring programs designed to determine the lake levels necessary to maintain the Mono Lake ecosystem in a healthy state.

4. The Department must view the water needs of the residents of the City as its first priority. However, the Department recognizes that for many citizens of the State and Nation, the lake is a unique environmental resource of significant value. The Department acknowledges its responsibility to do what it reasonably can to maintain the lake in an environmentally healthy condition. The Department also recognizes that to do so will, at some point in time, require a reduction in the City's authorized diversions which must be replaced.

5. The Department believes it is incumbent on all concerned -- the City, the State, the Nation, the environmental community, and other relevant entities -- to work together to find means by which both the needs and requirements of both the City and the lake can be accommodated.

6. Specifically, the Department believes that the responsibility for providing high quality replacement water and energy supplies for the City must be shared by the State and Federal governments and other interested parties. The Department hopes that such a sense of shared responsibility will enable all concerned to reach a settlement that best serves the needs of people and environment.

7. The Department will continue to vigorously pursue the practical implementation of water conservation and reclaimed water projects.

8. The Department pledges its best efforts to reach such a settlement. Until such a long-term settlement or solution is achieved, however, the Department must continue to represent the needs and rights of the people of the City.



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