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SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2011  
CALIFORNIA  
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
LOS ANGELES / SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Snowdy Dodson

Greetings as we enter the always exciting fall planting season. Gardeners are by definition optimistic; we see the endless possibilities that reside in bare earth, but in my yard there is the problem of how to create such a spot. This year I have taken out a huge number of non-native bulbs leaving a nice area with late afternoon shade where I hope to plant some native iris and heuchera and maybe a meadow rue or two. I also have visions of clearing a nasty looking mess of plants along my driveway. Yes, I'm doing all of this work in anticipation of buying plants at our Chapter Plant Sale on Oct. 29 & 30. I trust you will support the Chapter by attending the plant sale and by buying plants, books, and seeds and attending the native gardening talks that we have arranged for your enjoyment. I also invite you to come to volunteer at this event and make it even more fun and meaningful. You know how to reach me and many of you know to expect a call from me asking for your help. This annual event is our major fund raiser.

At a recent event where I was distributing CNPS literature and wisdom (and maybe wit), I was asked by a prospective member how we use Chapter funds. I answered that we use the profits to support our good works such as our weeding and restoration activities and also to offer our monthly programs and to publish our bimonthly newsletter and put up our website and Facebook page. So our extra funds go toward renting the meeting venues, dinner and honoraria for speakers, printing and mailing the newsletter, etc. We also fund special activities such as the spring Wildflower Symposium; we contribute to CNPS State events such as the upcoming 2012 Conference; and we support other local non-profit organizations to help protect native habitats. Our Chapter also pays for weed control work in the Sepulveda Basin, Caballero Canyon, Malibu Bluffs, and elsewhere. We are able to do all of this due to the hard work of our Chapter volunteers and because of the wonderful native gardeners out there who come to our sale and make purchases.

There are several other fall native plant sales that may be of interest Theodore Payne Foundation (Oct. 14 & 15), Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (Nov. 5 & 6), CNPS San Gabriel Mountains Chapter (Nov. 12), & CNPS Channel Islands Chapter (Nov. 12).

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

of the Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2011 – 7:30 - 9:30PM**

**SEPULVEDA GARDEN CENTER, ENCINO**

**“A STATE OF CHANGE”**

**FORGOTTEN LANDSCAPES OF CALIFORNIA**

**Presenter: Laura Cunningham**

Laura Cunningham is an artist-naturalist who has worked in the field of wildlife biology. She will talk about her new book **A State of Change - Forgotten Landscapes of California** and will be available to sign copies that you can buy at the meeting. Cunningham has been a scientific illustrator for the Museum of Paleontology at University of California, Berkeley and illustrated fossil invertebrates for the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. She has also produced mural exhibits for various museums and institutions, including scenes of fossil mammals at Badlands National Park, and murals depicting the history of life on Earth for the California State University Fresno Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. Her work has also been exhibited at numerous art shows and museums around the country, including the Pacific Rim Wildlife Art Show in Seattle, the Oakland Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Carnegie Museum, and Safari Club International. Laura was trained in paleontology at the University of California at Berkeley and in natural science illustration at UC Santa Cruz.

**OCTOBER 11, 2011 – 7:30 - 9:00PM**

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH,  
SANTA MONICA**

**HOW TO WILD YOUR GARDEN  
WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

**Presenter: Barbara Eisenstein**

This talk will present practical approaches to transitioning from traditional resource-intensive yards to more natural, interesting and fun gardens featuring low-water use native plants. There will be tips on landscaping and gardening with native plants and examples of a variety of sustainable native plant gardens. Barbara Eisenstein is a California native plant gardener, horticulturist, writer and photographer. She lives in South Pasadena where she gardens with her dog, Milo. A former native plant garden hotline expert at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, she is now an RSABG Research Associate, a board member of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of CNPS, and Founder of Friends of the South Pasadena Nature Park. Check out her blog, Wild Suburbia ([www.weedingwildsuburbia.com](http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com)), to follow her gardening adventures.

**Programs are free to the public. Refreshments will be served. For directions, see Programs on page 3.**

## HIKES AND RESTORATION - SEPTEMBER &amp; OCTOBER

**SUN 9/11 8:45am***Santa Monica Mountains*

**Weed Wars Restore Habitat.** A weed warrior gets the rigput and thistles out so native grasses, plants, and oak seedlings will again provide food and shelter for the animals of the mountains. Credit for community service. Call for location. We will go to the weediest spot we can find. *Reservations required.* 818-348-5910 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 9/17 8:45am***Malibu Creek State Park***Oak Savannah Restoration/ Commemorative Oaks**

Young oak trees need summer water to become the stately oaks that restore life, beauty and habitat to the park. Community service credit. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SUN 9/18 8:45am***Topanga State Park*

**Lower Topanga Creek Restoration:** Topanga Creek was returned in its historic channel in 2008. During 2009-2010, creek-side native vegetation was planted and now needs watering and weeding by volunteers. Bring, water, snack, sturdy footwear. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 9/24 8:45am***Malibu Creek State Park***Oak Savannah Restoration/ Commemorative Oaks**

Young trees planted in the winter now need summer water and weeding to become the beautiful oaks that restore life, beauty and habitat to the park. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 9/24 9am-4pm***Temescal Canyon Park*

**Weeding in the City Park at Temescal Canyon** Barbara Marinacci leads weeding at the Native Plant Garden in Temescal Canyon Park (the City of L.A. park between PCH and Sunset, NOT MRCA's Temescal Canyon Park). Show up anytime. For more information contact Barbara at [barbara.marinacci@verizon.net](mailto:barbara.marinacci@verizon.net).

**SAT 9/24 9am-Noon***Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve*

**Ecology Tour** Steve Hartman will lead a walk through the Wildlife Reserve and discuss the ecology of this man-made habitat. Meet at the restroom/amphitheater area. For directions see [www.sepulvedabasinwildlife.org](http://www.sepulvedabasinwildlife.org). Info: 818-881-3706.

**SUN 9/25 8:45am***Cold Creek Preserve*

**Creek-side Habitat Restoration** Hundreds of beautiful native plants need volunteers to give them enough water to survive until the first rains of winter. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SUN 9/25 10am***Malibu Bluffs Park*

**Bluffs Ramble to the Sea** Walk 2-miles on trails with great views, dip your toes into the bay, look for dolphins, sea lions and observe the fire-following recovery of native plants. 310-472-0624. 2hrs.

**SAT 10/8 8:45am***Santa Monica Mountains*

**La Sierra Canyon Native Plant Restoration** After meeting at Peter Strauss Ranch parking lot, we caravan to La Sierra Preserve. There we may plant, weed, or water newly planted areas or environmentally sensitive areas in wetlands and along the trails in this scenic site that is not open to the public. Bring snack, sunscreen and water. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org). 3.5hrs \*

**SUN 10/9 8:45am***Malibu Creek State Park, Tapia Unit***Weed War is Recruiting Weed Warriors for Coast-weeks**

Bring lunch, water, and gloves. Reservations required: [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) or 818-348-5910. Community service credit given. 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 10/15 8:45am***Malibu Creek State Park***Oak Woodland Restoration: Volunteers Needed**

Help care for native oaks, shrubs, and grasses. Receive community service credit. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org). 3.5hrs \*

**SUN 10/16 8:45am***Topanga State Park*

**Lower Topanga Creek Restoration** Help restore the 12-acre flood plain & upland. Bring, water, snack, sturdy footwear. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org) 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 10/22 8:45am***Cold Creek Preserve*

**Cold Creek Habitat Restoration Day** Help plant, weed, and water to restore the habitat many animals depend on for food and shelter. Credit for community service. *Reservations required.* 818-591-1701 x203 or online at [volunteer@treepeople.org](mailto:volunteer@treepeople.org). 3.5hrs \*

**SAT 10/22 8:30am***Caballero Canyon*

**Chaparral Chatter Nature Walk** With shorter and cooler days, the last summer flowers are blooming and if there has been an early rainfall, the first shrubs will be blooming.. Bring hat, water, sturdy boots. Info: 818-782-9346 3hrs

**SAT 10/22 9am-Noon***Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve*

**Ecology Tour** Steve Hartman will lead a walk through the Wildlife Reserve and discuss the ecology of this man-made habitat. Meet at the restroom/amphitheater area. For directions see [www.sepulvedabasinwildlife.org](http://www.sepulvedabasinwildlife.org). Info: 818-881-3706.

*continued on page 3*

**CNPS PROGRAMS****TUES 9/13 7:30-9:30PM***Sepulveda Garden Center, Encino***A STATE OF CHANGE –  
FORGOTTEN LANDSCAPES OF  
CALIFORNIA****Presenter: Laura Cunningham**

**Directions:** the Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd. in Encino, is on the north side of Magnolia between Balboa & Hayvenhurst. Park in the lighted lot at the east end of the garden, walk west along the path to the garden center building. Native plant and gardening books will be for sale and refreshments are served. A no-host dinner precedes the meeting at 6:00 pm at Tony Roma's Restaurant, 16575 Ventura Blvd., Encino. (818-461-8400)

**TUES 10/11 7:30-9:00PM***First United Methodist Church, Santa Monica***HOW TO WILD YOUR GARDEN  
WITH NATIVE PLANTS****Presenter: Barbara Eisenstein**

**Directions:** The First United Methodist Church, 1008 11th Street, Santa Monica CA 90403, is one and a half blocks north of Wilshire Boulevard on 11th Street in Santa Monica. From the 10 freeway, exit at Lincoln. Go right, or north to Wilshire. Turn right. In three blocks turn left on 11th Street. The church is on the left, just past California. Church parking is on the right under an apartment complex. The Fireside Room is at the north end of the church's large patio, next to the Sanctuary. Native plant and gardening books will be for sale and refreshments are served. A no-host dinner precedes the meeting at 6:00 pm at El Cholo Mexican Restaurant in Santa Monica at 1025 Wilshire Blvd.

**FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE ABOVE PROGRAM, PLEASE SEE "UPCOMING PROGRAM" ON FRONT PAGE.**

**CHAPTER BOARD MEETINGS**

**September 6 and October 4, 7pm  
LA/SMM Chapter Board Meeting  
6117 Reseda Blvd. Suite H, Tarzana**  
(north of Oxnard/Topham, on west side of Reseda), one block from the Orange Line Busway on Reseda Blvd. These meetings take place in Steve Hartman's office. Join board members for dinner at 6pm at Garden Wok Restaurant at same address. Members welcome!

**NATIVE PLANT SALE  
OCTOBER 29 & 30, 10AM TO 4PM**

Sepulveda Garden Center,  
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino (near Hayvenhurst)

With over 1000 plants of over 50 California native species, there is a plant that can fill your garden's needs — from hot and dry to moist and shady. Many native plants can survive quite well with natural rainfall once they get established. Sale items include seeds, irises, mints, sages, berries, hummingbird and butterfly plants, shrubs, perennials, and trees. Theodore Payne Foundation seed mixes will be available as well as a selection of native annual wildflower species. Also available for sale are books, field guides, posters, and CNPS t-shirts. Visit displays and exhibits by local environmental agencies and non-profits. Snacks and drinks will be available for purchase. During the sale, experienced CNPSers can assist you in selecting plants that are suitable for your garden!

**Featuring FREE Native Plant Gardening Talks****Saturday - 11:00am**

**Genevieve Arnold, Seed Room Manager, Theodore Payne Foundation  
"California Dreamin': Sowing Seeds for Spring Wildflowers"**

The late fall months in southern California are prime time for sowing native annual wildflower seeds in the garden. As the grey days of winter pass by, it's fun to imagine the bright array of flower colors and patterns that will emerge in the spring! Annual native wildflowers perform well in a variety of garden spaces, from open areas to borders and creative display beds or pots. Join us to get an overview of some beloved annuals and learn tips on preparing your soil and sowing techniques.

**Saturday - 1:30pm**

**Bart O'Brien, noted horticulturist and  
Director of Special Projects at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden  
"Reimagining the California Lawn"**

Bart's talk will be based around the book we have been waiting for--how to create a beautiful California "lawn" that is both efficient in use of resources and water-conserving! Bart O'Brien, Carol Bornstein and David Fross have produced an outstanding guide for those seeking alternatives to concrete, fake turf, overwatered and overfed grasses and high water bills. Books will be available at the plant sale for purchase and signing.

**Sunday - Noon**

**Steven Hartman, naturalist, native gardener, and author  
"California Native Plants in the Field and in the Garden"**

This introduction to California native plants will include information about growing habits and requirements.

For more information or to volunteer call 818-881-3706 or  
visit [www.lacnps.org](http://www.lacnps.org) or find us on facebook.

**HIKES AND RESTORATION - Continued from page 2****SUN 10/23 10am***Malibu Bluffs Park*

**Bluffs Ramble to the Sea** Ramble 2 miles around the coastal park on trails with views of mountains and sea; walk on the beach; return to the Bluffs and look for dolphins and whales. Meet in the parking lot. 310-472-0624. 2hrs

**SAT 10/29 9am-4pm***Temescal Canyon Park*

**Weeding in the City Park at Temescal Canyon** Barbara Marinacci leads weeding at the Native Plant Garden in Temescal Canyon Park (the City of L.A. park between PCH and Sunset, NOT MRCA's Temescal Canyon Park). Show up anytime. For more information contact Barbara at [barbara.marinacci@verizon.net](mailto:barbara.marinacci@verizon.net).

## CHAPTER BOARD OFFICER NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

We are seeking candidates for offices on the chapter board. The term of office is one year. You may nominate yourself or be nominated by another chapter member (with your permission) for the office of president, chapter delegate, vice president, secretary or treasurer of the chapter board of the Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter. Chapter officers are expected to attend monthly meetings, usually held on the first Tuesday of the month. In addition to the monthly meetings the chapter delegate is expected to attend four statewide CNPS chapter council meetings held at various locations around the State.

The qualifications are:

1. Candidates must affirm they are members in good standing of Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains (LA/SMM) Chapter – that their dues are paid up.
2. Candidates must be active or have been active in one or more of LA/SMM Chapter's recognized or scheduled programs and projects in education, plant science, conservation, field trips, events, publication and outreach.
3. Nomination letters and e-mails must contain your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and a short statement about your CNPS activities and why you want to serve on the LA/SMM Chapter Board.
4. Nomination letters must be mailed to the CNPS Nominating Committee, 15811 Leadwell St., Van Nuys, CA 91406 or e-mailed to [lacnps@lacnps.org](mailto:lacnps@lacnps.org) by the deadline of October 14, 2011.

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## COASTWEEKS 2011

Sept. 17-Oct. 9

A celebration of our coastal and water resources kicked off by the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Coastal Cleanup Day on Sept. 17. See the Coastal Commission website for details and for a list of other activities:

<http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html>

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BOTANISTS SYMPOSIUM

October 15, 2011

**Baja ¡Aja! Botanical Diversity of the Peninsula**

This symposium will focus on Baja California resources as well as current and potential threats impacting this unique ecosystem. Located at the Ruby Gerontology Center on the campus of California State University, Fullerton. [www.scb.org](http://www.scb.org)

## DESCANSO GARDENS WORK DAY

November 19th, 9 am to noon

The California Native Garden portion of Descanso Gardens has invasive species that are threatening some of the chaparral and coastal sage habitat. Volunteers are needed to help eradicate a new invasive shrub that is spreading in both wild and garden areas. The area we will be working in will be rugged. Please bring gloves, hat, water, snacks, sensible shoes, and sunscreen.

Pruners would also be useful if you have them.

Volunteers will get a short tour of the gardens. Rachel Young, the Native Horticulturist for Descanso Gardens, will coordinate this effort and will lead the tour. Contact Rachel for further information:

[rachel@descansogardens.org](mailto:rachel@descansogardens.org)



*Taking a break after clearing the area of poison hemlock (*Conium maculata*) to uncover *datura* (*Datura wrightii*) are (L-R) Keithe Larsen, Sid Mendel, David Hollombe.*

## MOUNTAINS RESTORATION TRUST CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

**Headwater Corners Open House:**

**Sundays, October 2, 9, 16, 23 from 1-4 pm**

The public is invited to Headwaters Corner, Calabasas, to celebrate Mountains Restoration Trust's 30 years of preserving and protecting the natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Headwaters Corner is located at the gateway of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area at 12375 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas. Headwaters Corner is a 12-acre preserve featuring five significant ecosystems. The public is invited to tour a 100-year old homestead home, walk the shady grounds near a shady stream, explore trails, enjoy a native plant garden, pick up literature on all MRT's restoration and education programs, and bring a snack for the picnic area.

## COUNCIL FOR WATERSHED HEALTH

In 1996, the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council began out of conversations between Dorothy Green and Mark Gold of Heal the Bay regarding inadequate communications among the agencies with responsibility for water management. Five different water agencies were not exchanging information with the public or even among themselves.

As first board president and founder, Dorothy Green pushed everyone to look at the bigger picture. Where others saw concrete, she saw the river. Where others saw a river, she saw the watershed. Where others saw stormwater pollution, she saw more drinking water. Dorothy also saw collaboration. She knew that she couldn't make the vision a reality without bringing together a group of diverse stakeholders, which is why 15 years ago she led a group of like-minded individuals in forming an organization dedicated to creating a more sustainable Los Angeles.

The Council is proud to announce it's new name: **Council for Watershed Health**. This name signifies the recognition that to achieve it's vision of a sustainable Los Angeles, the Council must work more broadly to educate people everywhere that healthy waters means healthy communities.

Council for Watershed Health is a 501c3 non-profit California corporation. (213) 229-9945 or via email at [info@watershedhealth.org](mailto:info@watershedhealth.org). On the web at [www.watershedhealth.org](http://www.watershedhealth.org).

## CNPS MEMBERSHIP SERVICES UPDATE

CNPS has recently upgraded our Web interface, the technology that provides visitors to our main website the ability to join CNPS, make a donation, or get information about our planned giving program online. This upgrade will provide new and existing CNPS members with additional options to view their gift records, register for statewide events such as the 2012 Conservation Conference, and sign up for professional workshops, all through a secure member login and password. Eventually we hope to send special messages, newsletters, and alerts tailored to our members' interests through this new interface.

Existing members can register online by going to [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org) and clicking on the Join/Renew or Support CNPS buttons. Existing and new members will navigate to a new page to register a user name and password. Immediately upon registering, members or visitors can make a donation, view an event calendar, sign up for a new membership, or register for statewide events. After 24 to 48 hours of completing the registration process, new or existing members will receive a confirmation email and can log back into the site to view their giving history, renew an existing membership, and receive special messages.

If you have any questions or feedback about the new site, please email [cnps@cnps.org](mailto:cnps@cnps.org)

### THE CNPS 2012 CONSERVATION CONFERENCE HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

The upcoming statewide CNPS 2012 Conservation Conference, in San Diego, Jan 10-14, 2012, is an opportunity for all of us to come together and celebrate everything we do as a leading plant conservation organization in California. Our membership includes top level scientists and decision-makers in agencies, universities, consulting firms, and non-profit environmental organizations as well as the grassroots activists working hard on the front lines. We will all join hands at the conference and share what we know and how we do it. Hundreds of CNPS volunteers from chapters throughout the state have contributed to the planning and execution of this event over the last two and a half years. There are sessions and activities for everyone from career botanists to garden enthusiasts. The committees have planned 5 days of non-stop workshops, talks, and social and art events. You could learn how to start a plant restoration nursery at a workshop, listen to talks on a particular rare plant or invasive species, or contribute to a conversation about CEQA or desert energy projects. There will be five sessions focusing on regional issues from north to south, including those of Baja California. To nourish your appreciation of our native landscape you may choose to take a drawing workshop with John Muir Laws, read a poem, submit a photograph, admire botanical art, or sing and play music. There will be opportunities to take action on your subject of interest and numerous social events where you will see and meet CNPS members and other experts from all over the state and beyond. Registration is now open for both the conference events and the hotel. Early registration discounts are available until October 31, with additional discounts for CNPS members and students. Special CNPS conference discounts are available at the conference hotel, the Town and Country Resort, until December 16 or until all rooms are taken. You may register for the conference and/or the hotel through our website at [www.CNPS.org/2012](http://www.CNPS.org/2012).

# SPECIAL REPORT FROM THE OWENS VALLEY

## OWENS LAKE — IT'S NOT JUST FOR THE BIRDS

### Steve McLaughlin, Bristlecone Chapter CNPS

A group called the Owens Lake Planning Committee has been working now for 14 months on a master plan for the lake, that is, all of the area within the 3600-foot contour (the historic lake), *except* for the Owens River delta (more on that below). Most of the lakebed belongs to the State Lands Commission (SLC). The objectives of the master plan are (1) to control dust from the lakebed while (2) protecting the public trust values on the lakebed and (3) conserving as much water as possible. Public trust values in this case are wildlife habitat, public access and recreation, and view shed.

Groups represented on the Planning Committee are the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP), which is responsible for dust control, the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD), the California Department of Fish & Game (DFG), Inyo County, economic interests (grazing, mining), local residents, the Lone Pine Paiute Tribe, and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including California Audubon, Eastern Sierra Audubon, Owens Valley Committee, the Eastern Sierra Land Trust, and the Bristlecone Chapter of CNPS.

The Master Plan process was preceded by a Conservation Action Plan (CAP) process which involved many fewer stakeholders; CNPS did not participate. However, the CAP did identify alkaline meadows associated with seeps and springs, mostly along the old shoreline, as key conservation targets. Because the conservation of wetland plant communities is a high priority for CNPS, it was important for the Bristlecone Chapter to be represented at the table, and I have participated on the Planning Community since its beginning.

The lakebed can be divided into “project” and “non-project” areas. Project refers to the dust-control project, located mostly on the north, east, and south sides of the lake. The GBUAPCD monitors dust levels from the lake to identify areas with excessive PM10 (dust particles 10 microns or less) emissions. The “project” area has grown over time and likely will continue to grow as new areas become emissive.

There are currently just three approved methods for controlling dustshallow flooding, managed vegetation, and gravel. Managed vegetation, at present, is defined as a monospecific stand of salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*) meeting certain minimum cover requirements. Since shallow flooding is the least expensive dust control method, it is the most widely one currently used on the lake. As the amount of acreage subject to dust control has increased, the amount of water budgeted on the lake for dust control has increased to about 95,000 acre-feet per year.

Soon after shallow flooding was initiated brine flies reappeared over much of the lakebed. The combination of water and a food source has attracted large numbers of both migratory and breeding waterfowl, including Snowy Plovers. California Audubon has identified Owens Lake as an “Important Bird Area.” But plant species are now also expanding onto the lake bed. I have compiled a list of 166 wetland plant species found on Owens Lake. Many of these were first documented by Mary DeDecker, who made several collecting trips to Cabin Bar Ranch and a few other sites along the lake. The most diverse sites, such as Willow Dip and Cartago, have more than 40 species of plants. Some sites within the dust control project have been colonized by more than 30 species of plants.

One of the ways identified by the Planning Committee to alter shallow flooding is to encourage the establishment of a diverse mix of native plants, called “modified managed vegetation.” Dust control cells near the Owens River delta are being naturally colonized; other areas will probably have to be seeded. The SLC is currently considering a greatly expanded list of plant species for use in managed vegetation.

The Planning Committee has considered two possible legal frameworks for implementing a Master Plan. The first is a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). A portion of the lakebed would be designated as a preserve, which would be managed to maintain or improve wildlife habitat. The preserve would serve as mitigation for DWP to implement other dust-control methods elsewhere on the lakebed, provided of course that such methods satisfactorily control dust, as determined by GBUAPCD. There were two problems with this approach, however. The first is that the lakebed is a dynamic system. Almost all areas have habitat value, and the areas of “best habitat” (as identified by actual bird use) have been shifting almost yearly. Secondly, the SLC did not wish to assume the role of permittee under an NCCP.

The other alternative is to have a Master Plan based on a master lake/streambed alteration agreement, administered under a Memorandum of Understanding between DWP and the regulatory agencies (DFG, SLC, and GBUAPCD). NGOs would have an as-yet-undefined role in the implementation of the Master Plan.

The Habitat Work Group of the Planning Committee has subdivided the lakebed into 141 polygons, 82 on the current dust-control project, and 59 on non-project areas. The largest polygon is the brine pool, which has limited habitat value but which is also not emissive. We have developed a habitat-suitability index (HSI) for each of four guildsopen water, shorebirds, waterfowl, and meadow species. An independent review panel has recommended that shorebird and waterfowl guilds be divided into separate guilds for breeding and migratory species. Plants are important particularly to defining the HSI for the meadow and breeding waterfowl guilds. Botanical parameters that go into these HSIs include vegetation structure, cover, and species richness. We multiply the HSI values for each polygon by that polygon's acreage to define the “value acres” of habitat. These value acres will be used, in a still undetermined way, to define the baseline conditions for the CEQA analysis.

From my point of view, there have been a couple of problems with the planning process. It has been and still is very difficult to get DWP's attention focused on the entire lake bed and not just on the dust-control project. Most of the wetland vegetation and flora is associated with springs found around the lake bed. This vegetation was identified previously as a conservation target, and it includes both CNPS-listed species and plant associations. Since DWP does not actively manage most of the area outside of the dust control project, the agency has much less interest in its condition and conservation.

*Editor's Note: I noticed these articles in the May-June 2011 issue of the CNPS Bristlecone Chapter newsletter. I think our membership should know what LA DWP is doing. Thanks to Stephen McLaughlin and Daniel Pritchett for giving me permission to reprint their articles.*

The second problem is the exclusion of the Owens River delta. This area is part of the Lower Owens River Project (LORP) and is subject to current agreements between DWP and Inyo County. The Master Plan could not supercede the LORP agreements, but that is not an inherent obstacle to including the delta in the Master Plan. The delta contains riparian woodland, marsh, and meadow communities, is ecologically connected to the rest of the lake bed, and is certainly within the 3600-foot contour. The Planning Committee has been forced to exclude the delta largely because neither DWP nor the County is willing to work out how exactly to include it in the Master Plan. Several NGOs, including CNPS, would prefer to see the delta included in the plan.

There is still one proverbial 800-lb gorilla in the room that could derail the entire Master Plan process, and that is groundwater pumping. DWP would like to replace aqueduct water with groundwater pumped from below the lakebed for use in its shallow-flood dust control cells. This may or may not be feasible, but the Planning Committee won't have enough information by the time we hope to complete the Master Plan. Unlimited groundwater withdrawal would definitely dry up springs (it always does), leading to significant deterioration of wetland habitats around the lake. How much groundwater withdrawal would be a significant hydrological and ecological impact is very difficult to determine. And should pumping at Owens Lake be subject to the Long-term Water Agreement? DWP and the County don't agree. If DWP takes the position that groundwater pumping be part of the Master Plan, it may not be possible to achieve consensus.

## **DROUGHT RECOVERY POLICY ABANDONED**

**by Daniel Pritchett**

Inyo County Supervisors have apparently abandoned the strongest language requiring water table recovery in the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) and associated EIR. The language is a two-paragraph document known as the Drought Recovery Policy (DRP) and it calls for recovery of soil water "within the rooting zone." The DRP was adopted by the Inyo-LA Standing Committee in 1991 to insure water table recovery from enormous drawdowns of the late 1980's. I have written about its importance repeatedly over the years. The DRP was adopted because of doubt as to whether the LTWA's experimental "On/Of" pumping management protocol would be adequate to bring about needed water table recovery. With 20 years of data, it is now clear the doubt was well founded. Nonetheless, DWP unilaterally terminated the DRP in 2001. Inyo objected strenuously on procedural grounds (DWP cannot unilaterally terminate a policy adopted by the Inyo-LA Standing Committee), as well as substantive ones (water tables in many areas had not recovered sufficiently to meet the DRP's goal). Although Inyo Supervisors blustered and threatened litigation, they never pulled the trigger. The County still asserted the DRP was in effect as recently as 2010, although 2006 was the last year the county bothered to actually report which parcels were still subject to it.

This year Inyo finally threw in the towel. In its comments on DWP's proposed annual operations plan Inyo County didn't even mention the DRP. Consistent with Inyo County's long-standing efforts to minimize public knowledge of and involvement in water policy, there was no prior discussion of the DRP abandonment by the Inyo County Supervisors or Water Commission, and the Director of the Inyo County Water Department recently stated he didn't know whether the county still held the DRP to be in effect or not.

## **CONGRESSMAN SHERMAN RECEIVES CONSERVATION AWARD**

On July 13, 2011, Congressman Brad Sherman received the Friend of the National Parks Award from the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) for his commitment to preserving America's national parks for future generations. The National Parks Award is given to Members of Congress who lead efforts to protect and enhance the National Park System. The NPCA, which has 600,000 members and supporters, works to protect the park system to preserve the nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage.

One of Sherman's major accomplishments in helping the National Park System is the protection of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The area is the most visited unit of the National Park System, with over 33 million annual visitors. Sherman is a strong advocate on the importance of the Santa Monica Mountains for residents of the San Fernando Valley.

Earlier this year, Sherman worked to persuade the Obama administration to include funding in its Fiscal Year 2012 Budget for land acquisitions in the Santa Monica Mountains. The President's budget included \$3 million to acquire and protect up to 350 acres of land in Zuma and Trancas Canyons near Malibu in the Santa Monica Mountains. Over the years, Sherman has helped to secure nearly \$20 million to acquire and preserve critical open space and complete the 65-mile Backbone Trail.

The National Park Service completed an acquisition of 160 acres of pristine habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in April of this year. The three parcels, located between Peter Strauss Ranch and Malibu Creek State Park, were identified as high priority land acquisitions due to the undisturbed condition of the property and the richness of the natural habitat.

Congressman Sherman worked with Senator Feinstein to secure the federal funding to preserve this area near the north face of Castro Creek from future development.

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## **CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT OF 2011**

Originally introduced in 2009 by Senator Dianne Feinstein, the California Desert Protection Act of 2011 protects the heart of the California desert by creating two new national monuments, wilderness areas, wild and scenic river segments and national park additions for Mojave National Preserve, Death Valley National Park, and Joshua Tree National Park. The new version of the bill is slightly different from previous versions. The energy component, which developed a protocol for siting renewable energy projects, has not been included in the new bill in favor of addressing renewable energy issues in separate legislation. One new provision authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to study how climate change will impact the land protected by the California Desert Protection Act. The same provision also calls for land-management agencies to adopt policies and procedures that will help protect critical wildlife corridors, ensuring that as our climate changes, animals can roam to seek food, water, shelter and reproductive sites.



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SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2011

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

#### Front Page

Sept. & Oct. Programs,  
President's Message

#### Page 2

Calendar of  
Chapter Activities

#### Page 3

Native Plant Sale,  
Board Meetings

#### Page 4

Announcements

#### Page 5

Council for Watershed  
Health, CNPS 2012  
Conference

#### Page 6 & 7

Special Report from  
Owens Valley,  
Congressman Sherman  
Wins Award, California  
Desert Protection Act of  
2011

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