



# Lower Owens River

## Project Journal

November/December 2002

## Restoring A River For All of Us

The long-standing vision of restoring the Lower Owens River is on the verge of becoming a reality. Imagine the lower 62 miles of the Owens River full of flowing water year-round, and thousands of acres of habitat for fish and wildlife restored by using diverted water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct. It's almost here.

The Lower Owens River Project (LORP), is managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (the LADWP) and Inyo County Water Department. It is among the most environmentally significant river habitat restorations ever undertaken in the United States, according to Mark Hill, nationally recognized ecologist who has conducted exhaustive studies for these two agencies to help them prepare for this historic project. The LORP will return a steady flow of water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct to the Owens River below Big Pine and down to the Delta of Owens Lake. Additional water will spread into basins at Blackrock and the Lower Owens River Delta to create hundreds of acres of wetlands habitat for waterfowl and shore birds — one of the largest restorations of wetlands in California.

**"Helping restore the functioning of an entire ecosystem, as the LORP will do, is a project of such grand scale that the knowledge is being used in other parts of the world in restoration of similar watersheds. As the last piece of a long-term effort to rewater the entire Owens River, this project being undertaken by the Department of Water and Power and Inyo County is absolutely unique. This is a tremendous opportunity to manage land uses while keeping ecological function."**

— Mark Hill, Ecosystem Sciences, Inc.

The LADWP and Inyo County have just released a draft environmental document that describes the details of the LORP including the impacts of construction as well as its significant benefits. Owens Valley residents have provided input to the project thus far. The public is encouraged to review the document and provide comments by January 14th.

### DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT LOWER OWENS RIVER PROJECT, INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The Draft EIR/EIS may be viewed online at: [www.LORPEIR.com](http://www.LORPEIR.com). Copies are available for public review at locations listed on the back page. Written comments must be mailed no later than **January 14, 2003** to:

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## From Drawing Board to Reality

The Lower Owens River Project that has been examined in the 2002 draft environmental document has evolved from an idea conceived nearly 25 years ago. Today's LORP was defined in a 1997 memorandum of understanding between the LADWP, Inyo County, California Department of Fish and Game, State Lands Commission, Sierra Club and the Owens Valley Committee.

The vision is to establish a healthy Lower Owens River riparian ecosystem, where diverse plant and wildlife can thrive, and threatened and endangered species can be protected. Under this plan, current and compatible land uses along the 62-mile stretch of river will continue, especially recreation, but also livestock grazing, agriculture, and other activities. The project is also expected to boost recreational opportunities and the economy of the southern Owens Valley.