

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM

(1-29-03)

TO: Inyo County/Los Angeles Standing Committee

FROM: Inyo County and LADWP Staff

SUBJECT: Modification of the Klondike Lake Enhancement/Mitigation Project

Background

The Standing Committee adopted the Klondike Lake Enhancement/Mitigation Project in 1986. Klondike Lake is located in an alkali sink north of Big Pine. Prior to the implementation of the enhancement/mitigation project, the alkali sink was intermittently filled with water from the Owens River via the Big Pine Canal and the Lyman Ditch. Under the project, the lake level has been maintained via water releases from the Big Pine Canal to the lake via the Lyman Ditch.

The purpose and scope of the project was described in a 1986 negative declaration. In the negative declaration, the project was described as:

Maintain the lake level via a water supply from the Big Pine Canal that will vary between summer and winter, and release water from the existing headgate on the south shoreline to a native habitat area to provide nesting and feeding areas for waterfowl. The roadway into the lake would also be improved.

An additional benefit of this project is the sub-irrigation of a plot of native pasture adjacent to the ditch which brings the water from the Big Pine Canal to the lake.

Providing a firm water supply to the lake will enhance the attractiveness of the facility for recreation as well as improve waterfowl nesting and feeding habitat.

The negative declaration provided for a supply of water to the project from the Big Pine Canal via the Lyman ditch. Water not used by the project would be conveyed from the project to the Owens River via a ditch commonly referred to as the "Klondike drain." The negative declaration estimated that a peak flow of 5 cfs would be supplied to the project, but the annual amount of water used by the project was estimated to be 3 cfs or 2,200 acre-feet a year.

In late 1994 and 1995, LADWP re-channelized portions of the Lyman ditch to reduce obstructions and conveyance losses. Diversion structures were installed along the ditch to maintain water releases to areas of native pasture and wetland habitats adjacent to the ditch. Based on a comparison of past project water uses, it is estimated that the re-channelization and

maintenance work on the Lyman Ditch effectively reduced the conveyance losses by over 200 acre feet/year.

Because of the prolonged drought that began in 1987, beginning in 1990, the County and LADWP agreed through annual operations programs to reduce the annual supply of water to the project by varying amounts. Beginning in runoff year 1999, a 500 acre-foot reduction in the project was specified in the annual operations program. The annual 500 acre-foot reduced supply has continued through the 2002-2003 runoff year. The reduction in supply resulted from the savings in the conveyance losses caused by the re-channelization and maintenance work, and by not releasing water to the native habitat area south of Klondike Lake.

The amount of water annually used by the project from the 1990-91 through the 2001-02 runoff years is shown in the following table.

Runoff Year	Calculated Klondike Lake E/M Project Use (AF)
1990/91	1475
1991/92	1861
1992/93	492
1993/94	3364
1994/95	1684
1995/96	1067
1996/97	1899
1997/98	1726
1998/99	1599
1999/00	1482
2000/01	1389
2001/02	1334
	Average Use (1990-1994): 1775 AF
	Average Use (1995-2001): 1499 AF

As shown on the table, the average use by the project since the re-channelization and regular maintenance of portions of the Lyman Ditch in runoff year 1995/96 has been 1499 acre-feet per year. Generally, water has been supplied to the project between May and September of each year.

Modification of Klondike Lake Project

The Inyo County/Los Angeles Water Agreement provides that all enhancement/mitigation projects will be continued unless the Inyo County Board of Supervisors and LADWP, acting through the Standing Committee, agree to modify or discontinue the project. It is recommended that the Standing Committee modify the Klondike Lake project as described below.

It is proposed that the water allotment to the Klondike Lake project be permanently reduced from approximately 2,200 acre-feet per year to an average of approximately 1,700 acre-feet per year. The area of the project is shown on Figure 1. In order to supply the three

components of the project as described below, the actual amount of water supplied to the project will vary from year to year, but the total amount of water supplied to the project over time is estimated to average approximately 1,700 acre-feet/year. (300 acre-feet of the savings resulting from the reduction in the water supply to the Klondike Lake project will be transferred for use by the Big Pine Ditch System.)

As modified, the three components of the project will be supplied with water as follows: (1) from approximately May to September, a varying amount of water will be supplied (as was done during the period from 1995 to 2001) to maintain areas of native pasture and wetland habitats adjacent to the Lyman ditch; (2) from approximately May to September, a varying amount of water will be supplied, as necessary, to maintain the level of Klondike Lake within 10 inches of the mid-elevation demarcation of the West Headgate Waterman Gate disc (as was done during the period from 1995 to 2001); and (3) release a flow of up to 200 acre-feet per year as necessary to the native habitat area to promote nesting and feeding areas for water fowl and to maintain habitat in the Klondike drain ditch.

Flow will be released to the habitat area as necessary from the existing two headgates on the south shoreline of Klondike Lake. The flow released will be measured at the headgates. If, during a period of the year when water is normally not conveyed to Klondike Lake (such as during winter), water is required to be supplied to the lake to provide sufficient water to allow releases to the native habitat area, the resulting conveyance losses between the Big Pine Canal and the two headgates will be deducted from the up to 200 acre-feet of water to be supplied to the habitat area. The two headgates are shown on the attached map.

The approximate area (consisting of approximately 25 acres) of the nesting and feeding area and of the habitat in the Klondike drain ditch is shown on Figure 2. The total amount of water released from the headgates to maintain the approximately 25 acres will not exceed 200 acre-feet per year (less any water flowing in the Klondike Drain Ditch that is deliberately released for the sole purpose of maintaining habitat in the ditch). Beginning in May 2003, the Technical Group will conduct test releases to determine the amount of flow that must be released from the two headgates to provide for nesting and feeding and to maintain the habitat. The Technical Group will also determine the schedule for the releases of up to 200 acre-feet per year.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Standing Committee:

1. Conditionally modify the Klondike Lake Enhancement/Mitigation Project as described above.
2. Agree that implementation of the modification is contingent upon approval of a modification of the Inyo County/Los Angeles Water Agreement regarding the Big Pine Ditch System project by the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, the LADWP Board of Water and Power Commissioners and the Inyo County Superior Court. Such a modification must provide that only water in excess of 300 acre-feet a year that is used by the Big Pine Ditch System Project will have to be replaced by groundwater pumped from Well 415 and a new well in Bell Canyon to be constructed by the LADWP.
3. Agree that if the modification of the Water Agreement is not approved, the modification of the Klondike Lake project shall be void.