



# LOWER OWENS RIVER RECREATION USE PLANNING PROCESS

## EXISTING CONDITIONS MEMO

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MIG, Inc.  
815 SW 2ND AVE.  
PORTLAND, OR 97204  
503.297.1005  
[www.migcom.com](http://www.migcom.com)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

**I. Introduction and Project Purpose..... 1**

**II. Lower Owens River Project and Policy Framework: The LORP Goals .....3**

**III. Existing Conditions, Recreation Constraints and Opportunities ..... 6**

**IV. Stakeholder Views on Recreation Opportunities ..... 12**

**V. Emerging Recreation Opportunities ..... 18**

**VI. Next Steps in the Planning Process.....22**

**Appendix A: LORP Recreation Opportunities Analysis .....23**



## I. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT PURPOSE

This memorandum is a summary of existing conditions, opportunities and constraints with respect to developing and managing recreation within the Lower Owens River Project Area (LORP).

Inyo County is partnering with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) to create a long-range Recreational Use Plan for the Lower Owens River. The goal of the Plan is to enhance and better manage community and visitor recreation experiences in the LORP area. This plan will create a foundation for the continued investment and collaboration needed to establish the Lower Owens River area as a destination for local and regional outdoor enthusiasts. Resource conservation and recovery, improved recreational access and local economic development are fundamental goals of this plan.

The planning area includes lands owned by LADWP on both sides of the Owens River, between the Los Angeles Aqueduct on the north, and the Owens Dry Lake on the south. The project area represents one of the largest river ecosystem restoration projects in the nation (<http://www.inyowater.org/LORP/default.htm>).

Much of the planning area includes ecologically sensitive riparian and wetland habitat lands that are in early stages of recovery. Since the return of flow to the river in 2006, the resurgence and recovery of the local ecosystem has resulted in a rediscovery of the area by anglers, paddle boaters, bird watchers and other recreationists.

This project has relied on background and technical information provided by Inyo County and LADWP. Ecological issues are complex and still evolving as the river, riparian and wetland ecosystems adapt to an increased flow of water.

For this plan to be successful, local stakeholders, including ranchers, recreation users and conservationists must be consulted and heard. A key stakeholder list was developed and initial contacts have been made. Project



## EXISTING CONDITIONS MEMO

consultants spent three days in the LORP area in early December conducting field visits, interviewing available stakeholders, meeting with various groups and organizations, and attending events to gain an understanding of the issues from the local perspective.

The information gathered through background document review, resource maps, interviews and field visits has been used to create this report, which summarizes initial project findings and recommendations.

## II. LOWER OWENS RIVER PROJECT AND POLICY FRAMEWORK: THE LORP GOALS

The Lower Owens River Project (LORP) includes 77,657 acres of high desert land located in Inyo County, California. The land is owned by the City of Los Angeles and managed by LADWP. The concept of creating a recreation use plan is an outgrowth of a 1997 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Inyo County and LADWP that states:

*“The goal of the LORP is the establishment of a healthy, functioning Lower Owens River riverine-riparian ecosystem, and the establishment of healthy functioning ecosystems in the other elements of the LORP, for the benefit of biodiversity and threatened and endangered species, while providing for the continuation of sustainable uses including recreation, livestock grazing, agriculture, and other activities.”*



The Lower Owens River was substantially de-watered in 1913 when the flow was diverted to Los Angeles. A long process of multi-party negotiations and litigation resulted in a series of agreements to return managed flow to the river based on fishery and riparian needs. The return of a consistent flow of water (since 2006) has opened new opportunities for recreation. (LADWP maintained off-river lakes and ponds through their watershed management practices for many years prior to 2006.)

The recovering river, wetlands and riparian ecosystem have together greatly increased existing and potential recreation use, particularly fishing, hunting, birding and paddling. As the river ecosystem and off-river lakes and wetlands continue to recover, recreation use is expected to grow in popularity. A central purpose of this plan is to explore ways to manage and enhance expanding recreation use.

The development of a Recreation Use Plan is intended to improve the opportunities for both local residents and tourists. Public land abounds in the Eastern Sierra region. The vast majority of the land in Inyo County is owned and managed by various government agencies, including federal, state, city and local. The region attracts millions of visitors, mostly from urban regions of



California, but many from across the nation and internationally. Death Valley attracts about one million visitors a year. The Inyo National Forest reports over four million recreation visitors per year. The local economy is highly dependent on seasonal tourist income.

The existing policy framework for LORP recreation use and management is described in a series of guiding documents developed over the past two decades. A brief summary of adopted plans follows:

- *1991 Long Term Water Agreement:* This agreement called for LADWP to help fund rehabilitation and new development of County managed recreation facilities, including day use and camping areas. Some of these facilities would be located on land owned by Los Angeles. Some funding for operations and maintenance was to be included.
- *1997 LORP MOU:* This guiding document includes recreation as a goal or benefit of the overall project to restore the river. It states that recreation use must be compatible with other LORP goals, particularly ecosystem improvement and recovery. A warm water recreational fishery is called out as a key goal of the project.
- *LORP Ecosystem Management Plan:* This document addresses potential conflicts between recreation and ecosystem recovery by stating that recreation must not negatively impact the natural ecosystem. It calls for recreation management, including tools such as seasonal closures, to prevent and reduce conflicts. It does not call for any specific recreation facilities.
- *Framework for the Recreation Plan: Technical Memo #10:* This was a joint project of LADWP and Inyo County. The analysis work was completed by Ecosystem Sciences, the consultant for the MOU parties in LORP restoration. It identified recreation use patterns prior to river re-watering, issues of concern, constraints and opportunities. It included some case study examples of other large natural area recreation issues, and presented some general ideas for types of



recreation suited for the Lower Owens River. It did not propose any specific recreation facilities or uses.

- *LORP Monitoring, Adaptive Management and Reporting Plan:* The LORP Monitoring Report has a brief section on recreation (pages 3-75-77). It describes the primary current recreation use as fishing, and notes that overnight camping is prohibited. LADWP expects an increase in recreation use, particularly wildlife viewing, bird watching, hunting and fishing over the next 10-15 years, and expresses concerns about damage to natural resources.
- *LORP Final Environmental Impact Report:* This document called for the installation of six kiosks and fencing with pass-throughs by LADWP, which was implemented in 2010. The kiosks help orient recreation users and establish use rules. The fence pass-throughs allow foot access to the river, primarily for fishing. No additional pass-throughs are planned at this time, but access may be modified if necessary.
- *LORP Post-Implementation Plan:* This document describes how LADWP and the County will divide financial costs of administering the LORP. It includes language describing the funding of recreational improvements within the LORP.



An important point emphasized in these documents is that ecosystem recovery takes precedence over other values, including recreation. This means that recreation is allowed and expected, but should not be developed at the expense of habitat preservation and enhancement.



### III. EXISTING CONDITIONS, RECREATION CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The LORP area is a flat to gently sloping mid-elevation, north-south valley flanked by two of the highest mountain ranges in North America, the Inyo-White Mountains on the east and the Sierra Nevada on the west. The elevation of the Lower Owens River Valley ranges from a low of 3620 feet at the Delta, to a high of 3820 feet at the Los Angeles Aqueduct Intake. The surrounding mountain peaks rise to over 14,000 feet. Several seasonal creeks flow from the Sierra into the valley. Some disappear into the ground and others are conveyed to the LA Aqueduct, while a few, such as Georges Creek, flow all the way to the Owens River. The Inyo Mountains, much dryer than the Sierra, have no creeks that flow into the Lower Owens River.

The Owens River flows north to south, ending in Owens Lake, a shallow salt water body that is now mostly dry. The river itself ran mostly dry from 1913 until 2006, when a minimum, consistent flow of 40 cubic feet per second (cfs) was established, along with annual seasonal habitat flows up to 200 cfs, dependent on forecast runoff from snowmelt. These seasonal flows are meant to mimic natural spring freshet flows during high run-off years. Most of the flow continues on to Owens Lake for dust mitigation purposes. A portion of the flow (6-9 cfs) reaches the Delta area at the north end of the lake, providing expanded wetland habitat.

The dominant vegetation of the valley floor is a mix of alkali scrub and meadow habitat. Riverine-riparian trees and shrubs are taking root along the river as the shallow water table rises and gradually spreads laterally. This riparian area covers about 6,500 acres, or 8 percent of the total LORP area. A series of constructed and managed wetlands occur within the approximately 2500-acre Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area (WMA) in the northwest end of the LORP. Water levels are adjusted seasonally to maintain key habitats, particularly for waterfowl.

The Delta Habitat Area encompasses approximately 325 acres where the river meets the upper part of Owens Lake, forming a series of wetlands and shallow





pools of water. The Delta wetlands are key habitats for wading and shorebirds, and are reportedly becoming a popular area for bird watching.

A series of off-river lakes and ponds occur along a fault line opened up in a massive 1872 earthquake. They include popular fishing areas, such as Lower Twin Lakes, the Coyote/Grass Lakes complex, Upper and Lower Goose Lakes and Billy Lake. These lie mostly within the Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area.

The majority of the LORP land area is characterized by dry uplands with a range of desert shrubs and grasses. Most of this area is grazed by cattle and is fenced, limiting access to recreation users. There are few large or tall trees in the LORP. A few groves of Fremont cottonwood near the river grow up to about 40 feet in height.

The open landscape character of the LORP permits outstanding, mostly uninterrupted views of the surrounding mountains, but also provides little shade during the hot summer months. Along the river, tall and dense vegetation limits mountain views.

Water in the desert landscapes of the western U.S. is a limited and precious resource. The addition of water to the Lower Owens River has re-created habitat for fish, birds and mammals.

There are concerns that increased recreation use results in conflicts with LORP habitat enhancement mitigation goals and established ranching operations. But the return of water also creates new recreation opportunities. Kayaking, canoeing, fishing, hunting, picnicking and other activities are all made possible or enhanced by the return of water to the Owens River. Several recreation uses already take place in the LORP, while others are restricted by policy or lack of facilities.

The following is a brief summary and description of existing recreation uses in the LORP, many of which suggest opportunities and constraints more thoroughly explored in the following sections.

**Non-Motorized Boating:**

The return of flow of water to the river created great anticipation that canoeing and kayaking would become significant recreation uses. However, unsafe conditions and three main constraints have limited this activity. First, boat access points are hard to find or are non-existent. There is little signage, and access may only be possible by scrambling up or down steep, unstable banks. Second, frequent road crossings have culverts too small to paddle through. This requires multiple portages up and down the river banks. And third, the relatively shallow water depth of much of the river has resulted in widespread growth of tules and other aquatic vegetation that is impassable for sometimes long stretches. Some canoeing and kayaking does occur but repeat visits by people other than locals is unlikely, and out of town visitors may not have a rewarding experience to tell their friends and families about.



The tule problem may be an interim issue that will clear up in some areas over several years as the water table adjusts and shade increases, but some parts of the river, particularly the “Islands” area, lack a deep enough channel to drown tules out. Additionally, cottonwood and willow recruitment has been slow to develop, resulting in little shade to date. LADWP monitoring and reporting acknowledges the tule problem, and there may be some attempts to manage seasonal floods to help set back the tule growth. To date, some mechanical management of tules has been tried in portions of the river for flood control and water conveyance during the seasonal habitat flows and to improve the accuracy of flow measurement, but not for recreation management purposes.



### **Fishing:**

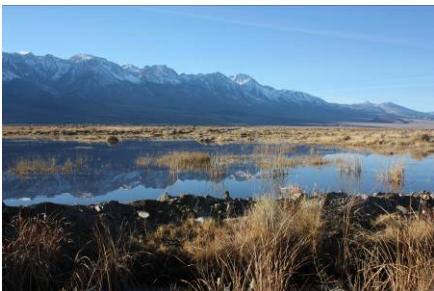
This is a well-established use that pre-dated the return of water to the river. Prior to the return of water, most of the fishing occurred in off-river lakes and ponds. Some fishing also occurred in parts of the river channel below Billy Lake, where water was found. Most of the Lower Owens River is a warm water bass fishery, and is productive and highly valued. Many miles of fencing were constructed to better manage livestock and human influences within the LORP and facilitate recovery of streamside vegetation. LADWP worked with the Warmwater Fishing Association to identify key access points for fishermen. LADWP has since provided multiple fence pass-throughs for anglers.

### **Birding and Wildlife Viewing:**

This is a growing activity in the LORP, with birding activities increasing significantly over the past few years. California Audubon leads trips to the area. Birding areas include the Blackrock WMA, the Delta area and the riparian area of the river.

### **Waterfowl Hunting:**

Waterfowl hunting takes place in the Blackrock area, Delta, and riparian areas in season.



### **Off-Highway Vehicle Riding:**

This is a current and expanding use, particularly in the Lone Pine area. Some suggest increased OHV use in LORP is due to restrictions on federal land. While most off-highway vehicle (OHV) users drive responsibly, the negative impacts of a small number of irresponsible users can be significant in desert and riparian ecosystems.

### **Swimming and Tubing:**

These are uses primarily engaged in by locals. There are some popular swimming holes, including the old railroad trestle area. Tules present the same limitations on tubing as on boating.

### **Picnicking & Camping:**

There are no existing facilities for picnicking in the LORP. There are suitable sites along the main access roads. Lack of shade is a seasonal constraint.

Camping is prohibited by LADWP, as are all overnight uses, but is reported to be an activity locals engage in, particularly near Billy Lake.

### **Hiking/Walking:**

There are no established hiking trails or designated paths in the LORP. Some hiking and walking probably does occur along the many roads in the area.

### **Scenic Driving & Road Biking:**

Scenic driving and road biking mostly occur along Highway 395, which is a State Scenic Byway. Scenic driving within the LORP is limited by poor road conditions and lack of signage. Road cycling is limited by the small amount of paved road surface.

### **Historic and Cultural Tourism:**

The Eastern California Museum at Independence draws visitors from around the state and region, as does the Federal Interagency Visitor Center just south of Lone Pine. The County is awaiting notification to determine if grant funding will be provided to create a museum in Independence focused on the Lower Owens River Project. Death Valley National Park offers much in the way of historic and cultural tourism.

The Lower Owens River area is rich in Native American cultural artifacts. Federal laws require these artifacts be left undisturbed. However, there is a long tradition in the area of gathering Native American artifacts along the river. This activity is illegal but still continues to be practiced, mostly by locals.





**Mountain Biking:**

Mountain biking may take place along the many unimproved roads in the LORP but present use is unknown. Constraints include lack of marked routes, “sand traps” in areas of deep alkali dust, fencing and cattle guards.

**Volunteer Stewardship & Environmental Education:**

There are some annual clean-up events and local schools have incorporated lessons about the Lower Owens River into their curriculum.



## IV. STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

During the week of December 6, 2010, MIG consulting team members Joan Chaplick and Dean Apostol conducted interviews with more than 30 individuals in Inyo County regarding their opinions about potential recreation issues and opportunities along the Lower Owens River. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in small groups. MIG also was given the opportunity to make brief presentations to the Bishop Rotary Club and the Board of the Interagency Visitor Center.

Participants were asked to describe their involvement in activities related to the Lower Owens River, share their issues and concerns about potential recreation uses, and comment on a variety of potential recreation activities.

While the interviews revealed a wide range of interests and concerns, there was substantial agreement on the following issues:

- *Tule Growth & Management:* The expansion of tules in the river channel is a significant limitation on recreation use. Tules have occupied areas that were previously open water, reducing fishing and boating access and possibly impacting wildlife habitat. Several participants described difficult access in places unsafe conditions in portions of the channel. Many stakeholders feel that tules should be reduced through active management.
- *Information:* There is a critical need to provide information about current recreation and public access policies including activities allowed, day use only, road conditions, reminders to close gates, the need to restrict motorized vehicles (including ATVs) to roads, the laws protecting cultural artifacts, and “leave no trace” principles.
- *Signage:* Basic wayfinding and directional signage is needed to help users identify access points and avoid getting lost.



- *Day use policy:* The current day use only policy is supported by most stakeholders interviewed. Concerns were expressed that any overnight use, especially camping, could significantly increase the risk of fire in the area. Some camping reportedly occurs near Billy Lake. There are abundant camping opportunities near the LORP, including public and private campgrounds, as well as dispersed camping allowed on nearby Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands.

## RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT

Stakeholders expressed opinions about the following recreation activities in or along the Lower Owens: fishing, hunting, target shooting, birding, hiking, bicycling, boating/kayaking, picnicking, horseback riding, volunteer stewardship activities, environmental education, ATV/OHV usage and camping.

**Fishing and hunting** are established uses and should be continued.

**Target shooting** is common in some areas. A few users shoot up signs and the sound of the shots can be scary to someone recreating nearby.

The expansion of **birding** is seen by some as a key opportunity for recreation and tourism growth. Birding opportunities have increased significantly and should be encouraged, including opportunities that might attract visitors from outside the area.

**Hiking and road and off-road bicycling** are established uses and should continue. Users, especially those who are not locals, would likely benefit from improved signage and general information about trails and routes.

Users have been disappointed by the unsafe conditions and constraints that limit **boating and kayaking**. However, these activities could be encouraged if access is improved. Stakeholders believe that current tule extent and further encroachment will have the biggest influence on the quality and safety of a user's boating experience.

**Picnicking** should be encouraged at key access points. Managers may need to provide information directing users to locations that provide easy access. If picnicking is encouraged, users will expect minimal infrastructure including picnic tables, shade, trash cans and possibly restrooms.

**Horseback riding** is currently occurring near the river, but the level of interest in riding is not known. If riding is to be encouraged, it may require parking to accommodate horse trailers.

**Volunteer stewardship and environmental education** activities were noted as important. Several interviewees, including tribal representatives, were enthusiastic about increasing and expanding these activities to help encourage understanding and stewardship of the natural and cultural resources in the area. Stakeholders expressed that some area youth have little connection to the river and these activities may help them better understand what is right in their backyard.

**ATV and OHV riding** are seen by some as the most worrisome form of recreation due to potential impacts to natural resources. Stakeholders recommend that riders are provided with information on suggested routes and that areas that are off-limits are clearly identified and posted. Several stakeholders noted that a small number of users cause most of the negative impacts. Unfortunately, these impacts can be significant and tear up desert vegetation that is slow to recover.



**The development of trails** appears to have strong support among stakeholders. The Lone Pine Economic Development Corporation, along with several partners and with support from the National Park Service, has developed an idea for a *Lone Pine Heritage Trail* planned to integrate various interpretive, environmental and cultural learning opportunities with trail-based recreation. One version of this trail would connect Lone Pine with the river to the east and the Alabama Hills to the west, the Interagency Visitor Center and the Diaz Lake Recreation area to the south. This project would include a reconfiguration of Highway 395 as more of a “main street” atmosphere through central Lone Pine. It uses a combination of transportation modes, including walking/hiking, cycling and driving. The Eastern Sierra Institute for

Collaborative Education has identified and researched a number of interpretive themes. [See also: <http://www.esice.org/programs/roadside-heritage.html>]

The Independence Chamber of Commerce has expressed interest in developing a trail along the river. This trail would extend along the entire 62-mile length of the river, from the LA Aqueduct intake to the north to the Owens Dry Lake to the south. The goal is to use the trail to enhance existing recreation use, mainly hunting and fishing, and to add new uses, including hiking, birding and outdoor photography. A series of hand drawn maps by trail proponents shows sections of the trail along with side trips and ideas for birding, picnicking and interpretive stations.

#### **Recreational Operations & Management:**

Several stakeholders expressed concern about operation and maintenance of new recreation facilities in the LORP. Some County facilities are operated through contractors due to lack of staff. LADWP does not provide park rangers or recreation managers. There are questions about enforcement of use regulations and maintenance and repair of facilities.

As the landowner and primary manager of the LORP, LADWP is concerned about the potential for increased recreation use to interfere with regular maintenance and management operations, cattle management and ecosystem recovery. Maintenance operations require temporary road closures, heavy equipment occupying or using roads, and access to water control facilities. Cattle operations take place within a framework of responsibilities. Recreation users, particularly those from out of the area, could leave gates open, block gates or otherwise make cattle management difficult. Ecosystem recovery is a primary objective of LORP management. Recreation users could trample recovering riparian vegetation, harass wildlife, or damage fragile areas by using OHVs off- road.

### ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Stakeholders identified a number of additional issues important to consider as the Recreation Use Plan process evolves and the Plan is developed, most notably cattle management, economic development and the protection of existing cultural resources. A brief summary follows.

#### **Cattle Management:**

Ranchers can be significantly impacted by recreation use on their leases. LADWP requires that each lessee carry insurance that indemnifies the City of Los Angeles against any claims. Ranchers are concerned about insurance costs and their ability to get continued coverage.

Ranchers are required to allow public access on most of their leased land. Some recreation users are careless or unaware and fail to close the cattle gates behind them. Ranchers are concerned about the financial and management responsibilities they may incur as a result of increased recreation use. They are allowed to lock some gates to help them manage their grazing operations, but there is some local opposition to this practice, and locks have been vandalized in some instances.

Ranchers are also concerned that they end up being de facto recreation managers for their leases. Ranchers interviewed mentioned that improvements such as new cattle guards at key locations, directional signage and user information could help reduce recreation use impacts on their operations.





### **Economic Development:**

Many stakeholders welcome the economic benefits that may occur with increased recreation tourism in the LORP. Some hope that new recreation opportunities will result in tourists making the area more of a destination rather than just a brief stopover. They hope Lower Owens River visitors will shop in local stores, buy lunch and possibly extend their stay. Their expectations are relatively modest and few believe that increased recreation will be a significant boon to the area. Chamber of Commerce officials noted that during peak season (summer months) hotels already have a high occupancy rate. Communities might experience greater economic benefits if recreation on the LORP helped increase visitation during the spring and fall shoulder seasons. December was mentioned as the slowest month for area businesses.

### **Cultural Resources:**

Representatives from the tribes and many stakeholders recognized these artifacts as important, irreplaceable resources that should remain undisturbed. There is much concern among Tribal representatives that increased river recreation will result in increased artifact gathering. Signage and information should remind visitors that if any artifacts are found they should be left undisturbed. Recreation facilities should be located away from areas known to have artifacts. All visitors to the river should be reminded to follow federal laws that require these artifacts be left undisturbed.

## V. EMERGING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The following recreation concept and opportunities are ideas based on stakeholder input to date, concerns expressed by LADWP, and observations by the consultants. Together, they represent a series of modest recreation investments that could create high return value for the community. By building an integrated recreation and way finding system around an organized visitor experience, Inyo County can maximize the economic value of affordable investments in recreation facilities and management.

These possible investments should be envisioned as an integrated LORP recreation and heritage system. They are intended as a starting point for further discussion. A plan for operations, maintenance and visitor management needs to be developed before new facilities are provided and increased recreation is promoted.

This system would allow and encourage visitors to use Lone Pine, Independence, and Big Pine as three station points focused on recreation, European settlement and history, and Native American heritage respectively. Self-guided or outfitter run tours by local businesses could provide a supported multi-day experience. Lone Pine would focus on recreation amenities and activities (hiking, biking, boating, and birding). Independence would offer heritage information and activities related to Euro-American settlement of the area, the diversion of water to LA, and other events and information of historical interest. Big Pine could offer Native American heritage opportunities and workshops in basketry, food gathering and tool making, for example. The story of the Owens Valley and the LORP is of potentially great interest as far as cultural and historic tourism is concerned.

Envision a tour group beginning in Lone Pine, spending one day boating and another birding at the Delta or at the Islands area. They could then hike or bike to Independence along the Lower Owens Trail, their luggage transported for them. In Independence they would learn about the early settlement of the Owens Valley, changes brought by the water diversion, and recent efforts to restore the river. They could also visit Manzanar to learn about the internment camps. The next day they might hike or bike the trail to Big Pine, where they



could learn about the local Paiute and Shoshone histories and engage in traditional Native American activities.

The ideal seasons for this could be fall and spring, especially if Elderhostel, the non-profit educational travel organization were recruited to establish or support programming.

Outfitters fees could contribute to some or all the cost of facility maintenance. These recreation experiences will also be available to visitors travelling independently who may desire to extend their stay in the local area. Since the scale and number of facilities are modest and would not likely require user fees to maintain, local users could continue their traditional recreation uses and benefit from the facilities improvement, signage and additional information.



### RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES DIAGRAM

The diagram on page 21 illustrates where potential recreation opportunities are located, and how these can be woven together into an integrated framework for recreation and heritage education and tourism.

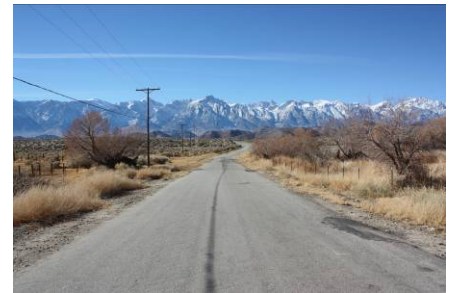
This map is intended as a starting point for discussion. We expect community members to suggest additions or subtractions as the Recreation Use Plan process moves forward. Inyo County and LADWP officials will also weigh in and provide a management perspective that could result in changes or adaptations.

Viewing the map from lower right to upper left (southwest to northeast), there are a series of five access “portals” located along Highway 395 at junctions with the main paved roads that lead into the LORP. These would be well marked by signs or “gateways” that signify opportunities. Each portal leads to a recreation use cluster, which would include activities suitable to the location, such as:

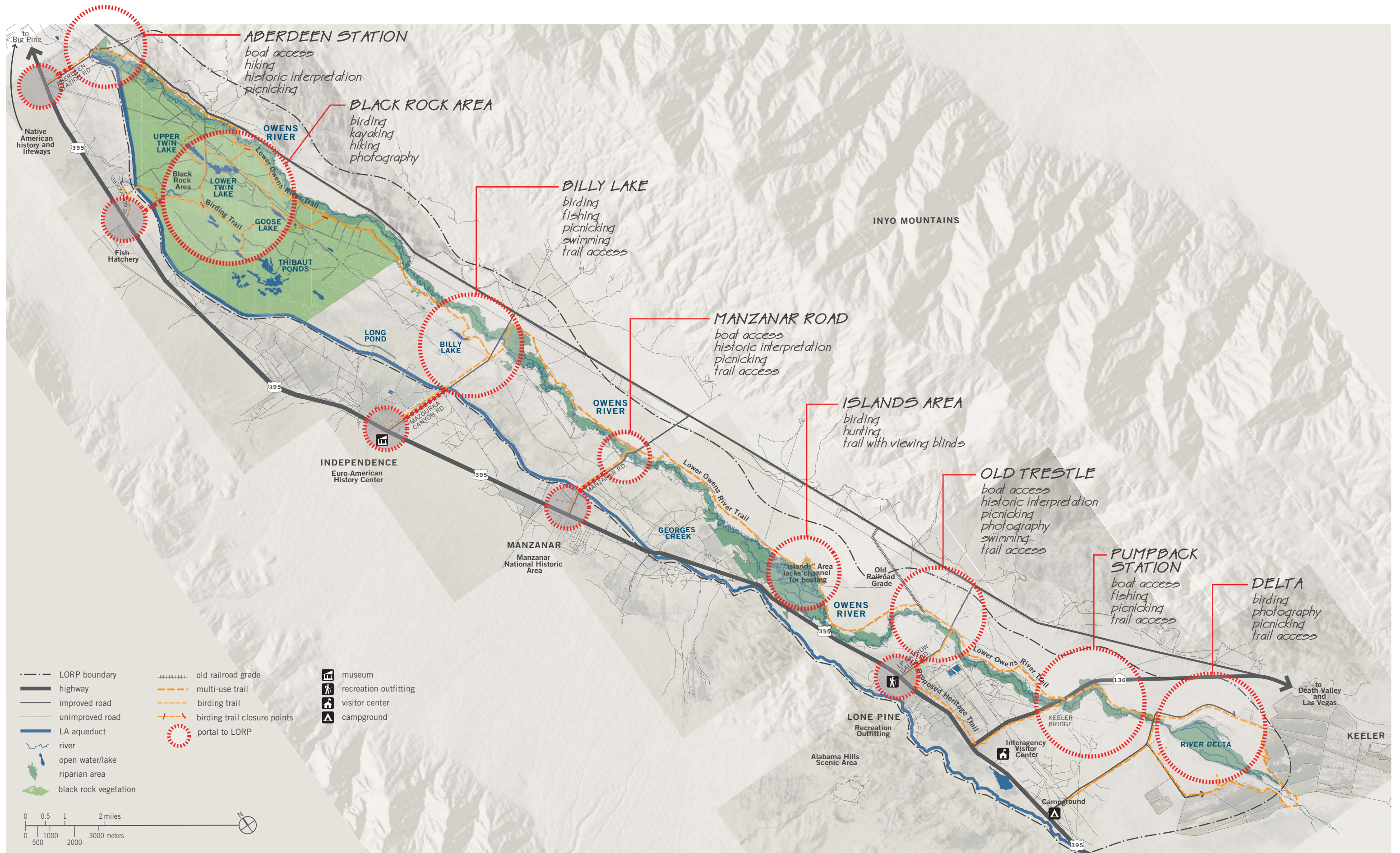
- Birding (Delta, Islands, Blackrock WRA)
- Photography (multiple points)
- Trail access (all)
- Swimming (Old Trestle)
- Boating (several locations)
- Historical and cultural features (Trestle, Independence, Aqueduct intake)

Some uses, like fishing and hunting, are presumed to be opportunistic. In other words, rather than designate areas where these occur, we assumed they occur where the user decides (unless an area is placed off limits).

The Lower Owens River Trail is a key new facility that can be created mostly from converting existing, little used primitive roads. This could be accomplished with low levels of investment. The trail could dip into and out of the riparian area depending on resource sensitivity.











## VI. NEXT STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The next step of the project will be a multi-day “rolling charrette” to be held May 5-7. These dates correspond with a visit to Independence by the Inyo/LA Standing Committee. The charrette will gather local stakeholders and others together in 2 locations, Lone Pine on May 5 and Independence on May 6. The hours of each charrette will be from 4-7PM, with new session starting on the hour to allow maximum participation and to attract both local agency representatives and community members.

Over the following months, the Lower Owens River Recreation Use Plan will continue to reach out to community members to review and comment on developing and managing recreation. Early indications are that reaching a working consensus around modest facility and visitor improvements is possible. A key challenge will be making sure that there is adequate opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to become involved and share their knowledge and creative ideas.



## APPENDIX A

### LORP RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

**LORP Recreation Opportunities Analysis**

Activity	Extent	Location	Facilities	Local	Tourist	Constraints	Opportunities	CORP* ranking
Non-motor boating	Limited	River	None	X	X	Limited put ins, tules	Improve, sign, manage tules	NA
Mountain biking	Unknown	LORP access roads	Dirt roads	-	X	Gates, wayfinding	Sign & improve soft spots	14
Road biking		Paved road or trail	Hwy 395	-	X	Paved roads	Limited	8
Birding	Common	BWMA, Delta, riparian	None	-	X	Fencing, wayfinding	Signs, blinds	6
Wildlife viewing	Unknown	BWMA, Delta, riparian	None	X	X	Fencing, wayfinding	Signs, blinds	6
Waterfowl hunting	Com	BWMA, Delta, riparian	n/a	X	X	Habitat and numbers	Habitat enhancement	declining
Game hunting			n/a	X	X			declining
Fishing	Com	River and ponds	Pass-throughs	X	X	Habitat damage	Tule management	13
OHV riding	Com	Lone Pine area	Dirt roads	X	-	Fencing	Designate routes	10
Hiking/walking	Unknown		Trails, cc	X	X	Fencing, wayfinding	Marked routes	1&5
Scenic driving		Highway 395	Hwy 395	-	X	Access	Marked routes	2
Camping	Illegal	Billy Lake	None	X	-	Not allowed	Off-site	-
Picnicking	Informal	Billy Lake and Trestle?	None	X	X	No facilities	Tables, shade	5
Historic-cultural	Unkown	RR Trestle, Intake	None	-	X	No information	Signs, programs	-
Swimming/ tubing	Locals	Trestle area	None	X	-	Tules	Tule management	NA
Outdoor photography	Unknown	Random	n/a	X	X	Wayfinding	Mark routes	9

\* Note: CORP is the California Outdoor Recreation Plan. Ranking is based on user preferences.