

Park advocates question wisdom of closing Mono Lake

By Lance Williams, California Watch

Mono Lake is the second-largest lake in California – a gorgeous, otherworldly expanse of aquamarine saltwater in the high desert east of Yosemite National Park.



Mono Lake is one of 70 California parks threatened to be closed.

Photo/Michael Maloney

Its very existence is a modern environmental success story. As late as 1984, the lake was condemned to become a 65-square-mile salt flat, as the city of Los Angeles had dammed its tributary streams and diverted the water into the LA aqueduct.

It was saved, in dramatic fashion, by an unlikely coalition of trout fishermen, environmentalists and water-rights lawyers. Today, it's recovering from 50 years of abuse.

But now, as part of a round of budget cuts, Gov. Jerry Brown has ordered the closure of the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, the state park established as part of the effort to

save the lake.

It's one of 70 state parks being shuttered in hopes of saving \$22 million.

Mono Lake's boosters say closing the park won't save the state a dime. But they say it will derail volunteer programs that have allowed the park to operate for years at minimal cost to the state.

"It doesn't make any sense," said Geoff McQuilkin, executive director of the Mono Lake Committee, the organization founded in the 1970s to save Mono Lake.

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