

# Mono Lake ecosystem in state of crisis



The drought is taking a toll on Mono Lake. Photo/ Chris Steeter

**By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times**

As this drought-stricken body of salt water recedes, the repercussions mount: Its exposed alkaline flats are giving rise to dust storms. A haven for endangered migrating birds has become more vulnerable to predators. And Los Angeles' ability to divert snowmelt from the region – which it has done for seven decades – could be cut off.

In recent months, the Department of Water and Power has reduced its take from Mono's tributaries by more than two-thirds. Still, the 1-million-year-old lake is within two feet of the level that state officials say threatens the alpine ecosystem at the base of the Eastern Sierra Nevada.

Unless the region gets a significant amount of rain by the next official water level reading in April 2016, Mono may fall to 6,377 feet in elevation, triggering a halt to any diversions. The California State Water Resources Control Board established the limit in 1994 to resolve a dispute between environmentalists and the city 350 miles south.

Of particular concern is further exposure of a land bridge that coyotes could cross to access the second-largest California gull colony in the state. That passageway to Negit Island and nearby islets is surfacing, leaving the eggs and chicks vulnerable.

**Read the whole story**