



Mono County

2014 State and Federal Legislative Platform

Adopted by the Mono County Board of Supervisors

January 7, 2014

MONO
C O U N T Y

Mono County Board of Supervisors

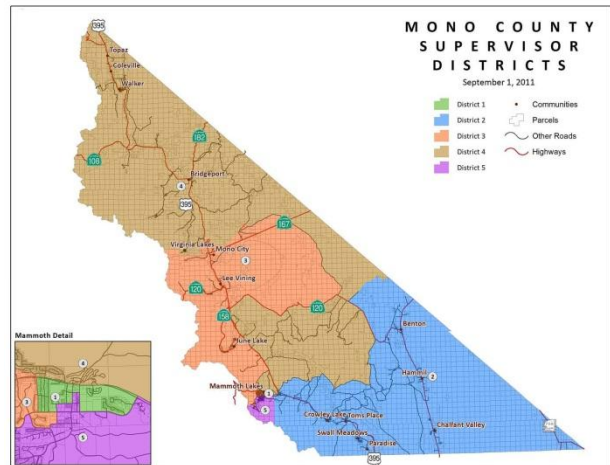
Larry Johnston District 1

Fred Stump District 2

Tim Alpers District 3

Tim Fesko District 4

Byng Hunt District 5



Jim Leddy
County Administrative Officer
PO Box 696
Bridgeport, CA 93517
Tel: (760) 932-5410
Email: jleddy@mono.ca.gov

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Introduction

Mono County, California, is a rural county situated between the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the California/Nevada border. Accessed by state-designated Scenic Byway US Highway 395 which weaves its way north-south, Mono County is 108 miles in length, and has an average width of only 38 miles. With dramatic mountain boundaries that rise in elevation to over 13,000 feet, the county's diverse landscape includes forests of Jeffrey and lodge pole pine, junipers and aspen groves, hundreds of lakes, alpine meadows, streams and rivers, and sage-covered high desert. The county has a land area of 3,030 square miles, or just over 2 million acres, 94% of which is publicly owned. Much of the land is contained in the Inyo and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, as well as the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness areas. As a result, Mono County offers vast scenic and recreational resources, and has unsurpassed access to wilderness and outdoor recreation and adventure.

The county is home to, and named after Mono Lake, which is a large high-desert saline lake with intriguing limestone tufa formations, and is a vital habitat for millions of migratory and nesting birds. Mono Lake is just one of the reasons that Mono County was listed in the "Top 10 U.S. Destinations to Visit" in 2013, by pre-eminent travel guide publisher, *Lonely Planet*, along with the historic gold rush town of Bodie, which during its heyday in the late 1800's was home to as many as 10,000 people, and is now maintained in a state of "arrested decay" for the public to come and enjoy. The travel guide also called out Devils Postpile National Monument, which stretches 60 feet into the sky like a giant stone pipe organ and is one of the world's finest examples of columnar basalt. Yet another natural wonder, Yosemite National Park is only 12 miles from Lee Vining and Mono Lake; the park's east entrance gate is located at the top of Tioga Pass, which is open seasonally from mid-May to early November.

Mono County has several small towns and charming villages, each with their own scenic beauty, year-round recreational opportunities, natural and historical attractions, and unique characteristics. The County seat is proudly located in Bridgeport where the original courthouse is the second oldest in the state to be in continuous use. The only incorporated town in the county is Mammoth Lakes, which is located at the base of world-renowned Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, with a summit of 11,053 feet, over 3500 skiable acres, 28 lifts, and an average of 400 inches of snowfall annually. Approximately 7,500 people reside in the Mammoth Lakes area year-round, but during the peak winter season, the population swells to over 35,000 when visitors from around the state, country and world come to ski and snowboard and take part in many other winter activities. Sister resort, June Mountain, just 20 miles north of Mammoth, offers uncrowded, wide-open slopes and a more peaceful, family-friendly alternative to busier ski areas.

Summer, however, is when Mono County really shines. The region offers countless miles of alpine hiking, superb trout fishing at dozens of well-stocked lakes, streams and rivers, kayaking, cycling, horseback riding, golfing and endless warm-weather adventures. Photographers flock to the county in September and October when it is almost impossible to take a bad photo of the fall color that lights up the Eastern Sierra landscape. *Sunset Magazine* named Mono County one

of the “Top 5 places to Hike” in autumn and *TravelAndLeisure.com* listed Mono County as one of “America’s Best Fall Color Drives.” A wide variety of lodging, restaurants and shops are available throughout the county, and commercial air service to Mammoth Yosemite Airport, just a 10 minute drive from the Town of Mammoth Lakes, is available from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orange County and San Diego on Alaska and United Airlines throughout the winter, and from Los Angeles in summer and fall.



General Guidelines

The Mono County Board of Supervisors supports the general guidelines set forth below. County staff will apply these guidelines in evaluating legislation, as well as executive and regulatory actions. It is the Board's objective to implement these guidelines.

To support the County's service to the community, the County should:

- Support legislative and budget efforts that protect and/or enhance local governments revenues, maximize the County's access to state and federal funding sources, and/or increases local funding flexibility;
- Oppose any effort to balance the state budget through the taking of local government resources;
- Support legislation that protects the County's quality of life, its diverse natural resources, and preserves the essence and history of the County;
- Support legislation that provides tax and funding formulas for the equitable distribution of state and federal monies while opposing attempts to decrease, restrict or eliminate County revenue sources;
- Support legislation and budget action which provides additional and continuing funding for local road infrastructure;
- Oppose legislative and administrative actions which would create federal unfunded mandates and/or preempt local decision making authority;
- Support legislation that realigns governmental services in such a manner as to improve the delivery of services and make government more accountable to the people;
- Support the promotion of tourism and a diversified local economy in the Eastern Sierra in order to achieve strong economic growth and prosperity;
- Continue to support legislation that honors our veterans for their service to our country;
- Support efforts that further the goals outlined in the County's Strategic Plan (once developed and adopted).

State Priorities

1. **Protect County Revenue Sources** - Many County programs are at risk due to the instability of State and Federal funding. The Board supports efforts to sustain funding enabling continuation of critical programs for Mono County's constituents.
2. **Encourage Regulation Relief/Reform** – Given government downsizing at all levels, the Board supports efforts to achieve responsible regulation relief in the following areas:
 - a. **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Reform** –Support legislative reforms to CEQA to simplify and streamline local permit processing, while still protecting the environment. State Involvement in local matters should always be collaborative rather than oversight (I.e. Mines and Geology; Housing and Community Development) Certain exemptions to CEQA should also be extended so they not only apply to urban areas but also to the smaller developed communities more commonly found in rural counties such as Mono.

Efforts to streamline CEQA should include:

- i. Eliminate duplicative layers of regulation between state and federal agencies;
- ii. Single Permit issuance where multiple agencies regulate (i.e. wetlands permit);
- iii. Support the granting of CEQA Exemptions for projects in existing local government Right of Ways.

3. Natural Resources & Agriculture

- a. **Sustainable Funding for State Parks** – Continue to support measures to sustain our State parks for the continued enjoyment of visitors and local residents alike. Closure of these parks would result in a significant negative economic impact on our County as tourism is one of our most important economic drivers.
- b. **Continue forest management to protect our Communities from vegetation Fires** –
 - i. Support measures to address wild fire prevention policies and programs in both private and public lands. Ensure these measures are aware of out of area impacts i.e. smoke into other regions.
 - ii. Continue to seek funding for legislation that supports these goals.
- c. **Support Bio-energy Action Plan** - Mono County supports the ongoing commitment of the California Energy Commission to the 2012 Bio-energy Action Plan, which has resulted in working groups such as the California Biomass

Collaborative and legislation like SB 1122. We encourage the various state agencies involved to continue evolving this field of work to produce cleaner, more affordable technology based on sustainable and healthy forestry principles in a manner that benefits rural Sierra economies. In particular, we encourage state agencies such as the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and California Energy Commission to provide funding for project scoping and planning. Determining a suitable site and the biomass supply that is sustainably available and generating community support is critical to a project's success, but funding for these activities is currently limited.

- d. **Support legislation that promotes, protects, or facilitates the sustainability of our local agricultural** - Mono County agriculture is an important local economic driver, provides jobs, and contributes to the open-space landscape that draws visitors.

4. Public Safety & Criminal Justice

- a. **Encourage Efforts to Combat Illegal Trespass due to Marijuana Cultivation** - Instances of illegal trespass and violent crimes on both public and private lands place our residents, visitors, and law enforcement officers at risk. The County will advocate for solutions to stem illegal marijuana cultivation in all areas of the County by working with private property owners, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and other regulatory entities to address this problem. The County also supports fines that cover the cost of site clean-up and restoration to mitigate for the impacts to the land, water quality and quantity.
- b. **State Realignment & Cost-Shifts** - Continue to ensure successful implementation of the broad array of programs transferred to county jurisdiction under the 2011 Public Safety Realignment. Including appropriate distribution of AB 109 funding. Support state policy changes that will allow for greater administrative and program flexibility for County programs associated with this shift of responsibility.
- c. **Rural Fire Districts** - The population of Mono County is highly rural and dependent upon voluntary associations that provide basic emergency services. These volunteer fire districts provide services to residents, tourists, and are often the first responders to accidents. Support relief for rural fire districts.

5. Transportation & Infrastructure

- a. **Support legislation and budget action which provides additional and continuing funding for local road and county facility infrastructure.**

- i. **Support rehabilitation of Highway 270** - Our County economy is based on tourism and one of the main attractions in the Bridgeport area is Bodie State Historical Park. Currently the unpaved section of State Highway 270 which connects the park to Highway 395 is in disrepair. Seek legislation that funds state repairs and maintenance as deemed appropriate by the responsible state agencies for State Highway 270. .
 - ii. **Support Early Sierra Pass Openings** - Another main attraction for tourists in the Eastern Sierra is Yosemite National Park. It is vital for Mono County tourism that all trans Sierra passes including Tioga Pass (State Route 120), Sonoma (SR 108) and Monitor (SR 89) are open by Memorial Day, allowing spring holiday travelers access to the park from the eastside. In the past, ensuring timely snow removal has required collaboration between Caltrans, the County and in the case of Highway 120 the Yosemite National Park and the County. Each agency currently provides funding, equipment and personnel for various sections of the road. Seek legislation that ensures State and Park responsibility, funding and timeliness for their sections of the road, allowing county funds to be used for County roads.
- b. **Support state resources for county compliance with California Air Resources Board (CARB) Emissions Standards** – In order to meet the CARB requirements for improving air quality in California, Mono County will need to replace most of our fleet of heavy duty diesel equipment. Current replacement schedules show this would cost the County around \$21 million over the next 14 years. Support legislation extending the compliance deadline in rural counties for replacement of on-road and off-road heavy duty diesel equipment. Support exemptions for rural counties that do not have the resources to meet regulatory requirements and encourages financial assistance from the State Air Resources Board to foster compliance.

6. Administrative & Fiscal Services

- a. **Support resources for improving county record keeping services and election administration and monitor legislation that may impact the following:**
 - i. 1) recording fees and process, and recorded documents;
 - ii. 2) vital statistic fees and process;
 - iii. 3) public records;
 - iv. 4) unfunded mandates;
 - v. 5) vote-by-mail, voter registration, election management systems, elections process, and election equipment.

- b. **Support Williamson Act Funding** - The State of California has eliminated funding for the Williamson Act (the California Land Conservation Act). Mono County, like most other rural counties, is dependent on State funding to offset the loss of property tax revenue to the County. This program has been hugely beneficial to our agricultural county. Support legislation and budget language that seeks full funding of the Williamson Act.
- c. **Support the full funding of all Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)** - Support legislation and budget efforts that continue to maximize the PILT revenue from the federal and state government to counties and continues full funding of PILT without restrictions beyond the current authorization.

7. Health & Human Services

- a. **Ensure State and Federal Healthcare Reform has equitable funding formula for rural counties** - In 2014, Implementation of Affordable Care Act (ACA) will begin, it is vital that local government funding streams reflect equitable distribution formulas to service our rural constituents. Securing adequate funding to sustain health care reform measures is important to Mono County. Key issues include:
 - i. Medi-Cal expansion and funding for these mandates
 - ii. The 1991 Realignment allocation/amounts

Federal Priorities

1. **Support Funding/Program Preservation** – Support legislative, regulatory and budget efforts that protect and/or enhance local governments’ revenues, maximize the County’s access to federal funding sources, and/or increase local funding flexibility.
 - a. **Oppose Federal unfunded mandates and/or preempt local decision-making authority**
 - b. **Ensure Affordable Care Act (ACA) funding maintained for local governments** – Support the Prevention and Public Health Fund of the ACA, the nation’s first dedicated mandatory funding stream for public health and prevention activities, which support Mono County health care services to underserved residents.
 - c. **Support federal funding for Housing and Economic Development Programs** – Support the highest possible funding level for key federal housing and economic development programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
 - d. **Support local efforts to develop alternative energy sources including but not limited to appropriate scale biomass, solar, wind and geothermal power generation.**
 - e. **Support funding for Broadband Deployment through the funding of infrastructure projects and grant programs, allocation of resources to broadband planning, advisory, or support oriented organizations** - Mono County is a rural California county in which most of our communities and constituents lack access to high-speed Internet. Though improving in the region through the Digital 395 Project, Mono County communities and residents still face barriers to connectivity. Support for federal funds is critical, as infrastructure projects in much of the area are typically cost prohibitive, and do not yield a significant enough return based on the small population.
 - f. **Support legislation that promotes, protects, or facilitates the sustainability of our local agricultural** - Mono County agriculture is an important local economic driver, provides jobs, and contributes to the open-space landscape that draws visitors.
 - g. **Support Economic Development Resources** –
 - i. **Support H.R. 1241, an act to facilitate a land exchange at the base of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area** - The vitality of Mammoth Mountain will have substantial beneficial economic effects on the Eastern Sierra region

and Mono County, including increased property tax and transient occupancy tax revenues, increased regional visitation, and direct and indirect job creation.

- ii. **Ensure access to federal public lands which support tourism**
- iii. **Maintain and support access to small business capital for local business development through the Small Business Administration.**
- iv. **Support the funding of efforts to bolster fishing and other recreational activities such as funding for the Lahonton Cutthroat Trout Recovery Program.**

2. **Natural Resources & Agriculture** – Support legislation that ensures public access to local natural resources and agriculture throughout the County.

- a. **Support Forest Fuels Reduction and Management Efforts** - with 94% of Mono County publically owned, much of which is covered with high fuel loads, fuels reduction is a major concern for Mono County and its communities. Continue to seek funding priority fuel reduction projects around Mono County communities and key tourist resources through local fire safe councils and public agencies.
- b. **Support control and mitigation for the spread of invasive species to protect, conserve and restore public and private lands**
- c. **Support Biomass Project Development** – Support legislation that encourages the US Forest Service (USFS) to continue actively promoting and assisting with biomass project development. For instance, the Woody Biomass Utilization Grant is critical to funding engineering and design for a somewhat high-risk venture, and is directly related to the USFS's multiple-use mission which requires healthy forests.

3. **Endangered Species** – **Support a balanced approach of the implementation of endangered species regulation with impacts to the economy and communities of Mono County.** Mono County is fortunate to have a rich natural heritage which should be conserved, and supports the need to protect and recover imperiled species. At the same time, these conservation measures must be weighed and balanced against impacts to the fragile rural economy and local communities, and every effort must be made to protect private property rights and avoid detrimental impacts to County residents. The species below only include those known or anticipated to be listed, and any other listings that may arise should be analyzed carefully.

- a. **Minimize local impacts that result from Yellow Legged Frog and Yosemite Toad Listing and Critical Habitat Designation** – Ensure critical habitat and the threats

to the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and Yosemite toad are correctly identified to stop the precipitous decline of these species and support their eventual recovery while minimizing impacts to the economy and communities of Mono County.

- b. Oppose Proposed Sage-Grouse Listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)**
– Support continued participation by federal agencies in a collaborative process to address Bi-State Sage-Grouse listing and conservation efforts. A current USFWS listing proposal recommends over 82% of our small private land base to be included within critical habitat for the sage-grouse.
- c. Monitor Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo listing process-** Mono County is not impacted by the Service's current proposal to list the cuckoo as a threatened species. Found in counties to the north, west and south of Mono County, the potential exists that the County could be impacted by a future critical habitat designation proposal.
- d. Monitor American Wolverine & Pacific Fisher listing process** - Proposals are anticipated for these two species that currently and/or historically occurred in Mono County, based on the list of species from a July 2011 legal settlement between the Service and the Center for Biological Diversity. The settlement requires the Service to make listing determinations for 757 species by 2018.

4. Public Safety & Criminal Justice

- a. Support full funding of Byrne Justice Assistance Grants** – Support the preservation of funding levels for existing safety programs such as the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne/JAG) Program and oppose efforts to reduce or divert funding away from these programs.

5. Transportation & Infrastructure

- a. Ensure federal transportation formulas support rural road infrastructure** - Mono County has concerns regarding the continued implementation of the federal surface transportation reauthorization program, known as the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act or MAP-21. Mono County relies on the network of state highways and locally maintained roads to link residents to essential services. Transportation funding formulas should provide funding protections or guarantees for California's rural transportation system and reflect that rural counties lack viable means to fund larger projects that provide statewide benefit. We should advocate for formulas that distribute federal funds to support local transportation priorities.

- b. Support efforts to protect the Highway Trust Fund and support programs that provide funding for local roads, bridges, and transit initiatives including pedestrian and bicycle systems.**

Elected Officials

Elected State Representatives:

<p>Assemblymember Frank Bigelow 5th Assembly District State Capitol, Suite #4116 Sacramento, CA 94249-0005 Phone: (916) 319-2005 Fax: (916) 319-2105 Website: http://arc.asm.ca.gov/</p>	<p>Senator Tom Berryhill 14th Senate District State Capitol, Room 3076 Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone: (916) 651-4014 Fax: (916) 651-4914 Website: http://district14.cssrc.us/</p>
<p>Governor Jerry Brown c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173 Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone: (916) 445-2841 Fax: (916) 558-3160 Website: http://gov.ca.gov/</p>	

Elected Congressional Representatives:

<p>Senator Barbara Boxer United States Senate 112 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-3553 Fax: (202) 224-0454 Website: http://www.boxer.senate.gov/</p>	<p>Senator Dianne Feinstein United States Senate 331 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-3841 Fax: (202) 228-3954 Website: http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/</p>
<p>Congressman Paul Cook 8th Congressional District 1222 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-5861 Fax: (909) 797-4997 Website: http://cook.house.gov/</p>	