
LADWP Unveils Owens Lake Trails Adding Public Recreation Areas to Lakebed

*Three Trails Totaling Four Miles of Pathways and Wildlife Viewing Stations
Provide Top Stop for Birdwatching While Educating Public about Dust
Mitigation Efforts*

OWENS VALLEY – The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) joined Owens Valley stakeholders and officials today to celebrate the grand opening and ribbon cutting of the Owens Lake Trails, which aim to enhance public access, recreation, and wildlife habitat at Owens Lake while educating visitors about LADWP’s dust control efforts on the lakebed.

The Owens Lake Trails feature three trail areas – The Boulder Creek Trailhead, Plaza Trailhead and Dirty Socks Trailhead – with a total of four miles of walking paths, overlook areas and land art installations. The effort is part of LADWP’s Owens Lake Dust Mitigation Program, initiated in 2001, which has successfully mitigated 96% of dust emissions from Owens Lake to date. Complete mitigation expected by 2017.

The Owens Lake Trails project was designed in partnership with LADWP, community stakeholders and other interested parties, including California State Lands Commission, Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, the Paiute-Shoshone Tribes, and the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society.

“LADWP is proud to stand beside Owens Valley community partners today to open the Owens Lake Trails to the public,” said Richard Harasick, Director of LADWP Water Operations. “Thanks to collaboration with agencies and stakeholders, we have developed a trail system that creates a birdwatching mecca, educates the public on dust mitigation, showcases visually spectacular land art and provides another location for visiting tourists to enjoy the beautiful Owens Valley environment, among many other benefits.”

Jennifer Lucchesi, Executive Officer of the California State Lands Commission, which owns the majority of the Owens Lake land, said the Commission has “a long history of collaboration and leadership at Owens Lake. The grand opening, an example of this collaboration, will enhance public access and showcase the area’s rich diversity.” The state agency leases Owens Lake land to LADWP and required a public access and recreation component at the lake as part of the lease agreement.

The Owens Lake Trails satisfy the public access, education and recreation component of the Owens Lake Dust Mitigation Program and was required to meet the overall program’s requirements of controlling dust; protecting, creating and enhancing wildlife habitat; protecting cultural resources; providing area-wide economic development, and creating a view shed that is in harmony with the surrounding environment.

“People enjoying recreation activities at Owens Lake now breathe some of the cleanest air in the country and the health of our surrounding communities are protected,” said Phillip L. Kiddoo, Air Pollution Control Officer for the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, which regulates air quality compliance at Owens Lake. Noting Owens Lake was once the single largest source of dust particulate pollution in the country, Kiddoo said, “Today there are 45 square miles of dust control mitigation successfully implemented by the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, reducing dust emissions by more than 75,000 tons per year.”

LADWP uses native vegetation, shallow flooding and highly-effective water efficient measures to manage dust emissions on the lakebed including, tillage and gravel. In addition to controlling dust, water-based dust control measures provide habitat for wildlife. Following four years of bird studies by staff biologists, LADWP was able to strategically design and construct dust control areas on the lakebed that maintain habitat values while using less water for dust control options. The three trail locations are each located near these habitat areas within a safe viewing distance of the over 120 bird species that visit Owens Lake each year.

"Thanks to the dust control efforts of Los Angeles Owens Lake is once again an important stopover for hundreds of thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl – a California heritage," said Mike Prather, who represents the National Audubon Society. "The public may now witness one of the biological wonders of the West – the largest and most diverse wildlife location in Inyo County."

In addition to the natural habitat, the Owens Lake Trails feature land art installations designed by Perry Cardoza of Nuvis Landscape Architecture and constructed by CDM Smith. The land art installation includes a central plaza, surrounding paths, and natural art and architectural elements. Cardoza said the large sculptures that provide shade for the Plaza Trailhead were inspired by the wings of the snowy plover – a protected bird that nests at the lake.

“NUVIS Landscape Architects is honored to be a part of the very talented design team that developed the artistically inspired habitat for the plaza,” Cardoza said. “Our collaborative approach to creating art and architectural elements that function to provide shade has delivered a one of a kind solution that can only be found on the Owens Playa.”

The Owens Lake Trails project, which cost \$4.6 million, was completed on time and under budget. LADWP will oversee the maintenance of the trails, which were designed to require minimal upkeep.

For more information on the Owens Lake Trails please click [here](#).

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