



2022/23 Winter, Monsoon and
Tropical Storm Hillary in the
Owens Valley



All government agencies' infrastructure suffered severe damage – USFS, NPS, BLM, Inyo County, Los Angeles DWP, CalTrans.



The Lower Owens River topped Highway 136 for weeks at a time putting stress on infrastructure. However, high water flows brought the river out of her banks spreading nutrients and seed. Normal LORP flows are far lower as per the 1991 Inyo County/ Los Angeles Long-term Water Agreement. An increase of invasive salt cedar is a threat.



The abundance of water flowing into Owens Lake filled most of the habitat/dust control project. These normally dry areas in summer and fall supported thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. Owens Lake is part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (whsrn.org).



Flows from the Owens River and Cottonwood Creek filled the Owens Lake brine pool (~50 sq. miles) which is about 50% of the lake's surface area. Many paddlers from around the state came for recreation during this unique opportunity. Several bird species and brine shrimp also used the pool. For rest and foraging.



The Future –

- Increase water recharge to include additional areas in the Owens Valley.
- Allow water tables throughout the valley to rise even more than they have to increase local storage volume and protect native vegetation that has still not recovered from groundwater pumping in the past.
- Allow more seasonal summer/fall water on Owens Lake for migrating shorebirds.



