Dr. Matthew Reiter Presentation Summary

Mono Lake is an important site on the Pacific Flyway for breeding and migrating waterfowl, however populations declined along with declining lake levels following the initiation of water diversions in the 1940s. The Mono Basin Waterfowl Habitat Restoration Plan was developed in response to the State Water Resources Control Board's Decision 1631, which established water diversion criteria to protect wildlife and other environmental resources, and included waterfowl population and habitat monitoring.

The Mono Basin Waterfowl Habitat Restoration Program and associated monitoring have been conducted for over two decades, generating a substantial body of data on waterfowl populations, habitat conditions, and responses to management actions at Mono Lake. This program has included three primary components: (1) summer breeding waterfowl surveys, (2) fall migrating waterfowl surveys, and (3) surveys of waterfowl habitats. This presentation summarizes trends in waterfowl distribution, abundance, and habitat conditions at Mono Lake from 2002–2023.

The analyses indicate declining populations of migrating waterfowl using Mono Lake as well as declines in the number of breeding waterfowl. However, indices of waterfowl productivity (e.g., brood counts) appear stable. Recent remotely sensed data highlight a reduction in lake-fringing wetland habitat for waterfowl. We are currently assessing the potential drivers of the observed declines in waterfowl and waterfowl habitat at Mono Lake. Understanding these drivers will be critical for informing adaptive management of waterfowl and their habitats at Mono Lake.