



Figure 15. Aqueduct Intake with Chris Plakos, LADWP
Photo: James Powell 2013



CHARACTERS: KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE EASTERN SIERRA

Primary Decision Makers

Land ownership in the valley is divided mainly between three agencies: the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the United States Forest Service (USFS). Due to the high impact that their decisions have on land planning for the area, it was necessary to identify the goals and management objectives of each agency, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the decision models currently used to address these objectives. This research served as a foundation for development of the project team's objectives, land analysis, and change modeling (see Figure 16).

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)

The LADWP has been the most influential decision maker in the Owens Valley since the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913. Beginning with land purchases in 1905, Fred Eaton convinced William Mulholland and the City of Los Angeles to invest in a pipeline that would bring water to the growing settlement to the south (Libecap 2005). Aided by acts of congress and federal land purchases throughout the 1920s, the LADWP became the majority landowner on the valley floor. Subsequent management practices on those lands have heavily impacted the hydrologic patterns and economic development of the area. As stated in their company mission, the LADWP's main objectives are to provide Los Angeles with a constant, clean, and reliable water delivery, while satisfying legally binding water agreements and other related policies (LADWP 2006b). The main legal document that impacts these objectives is the Long Term

CHARACTERS

Decision Models

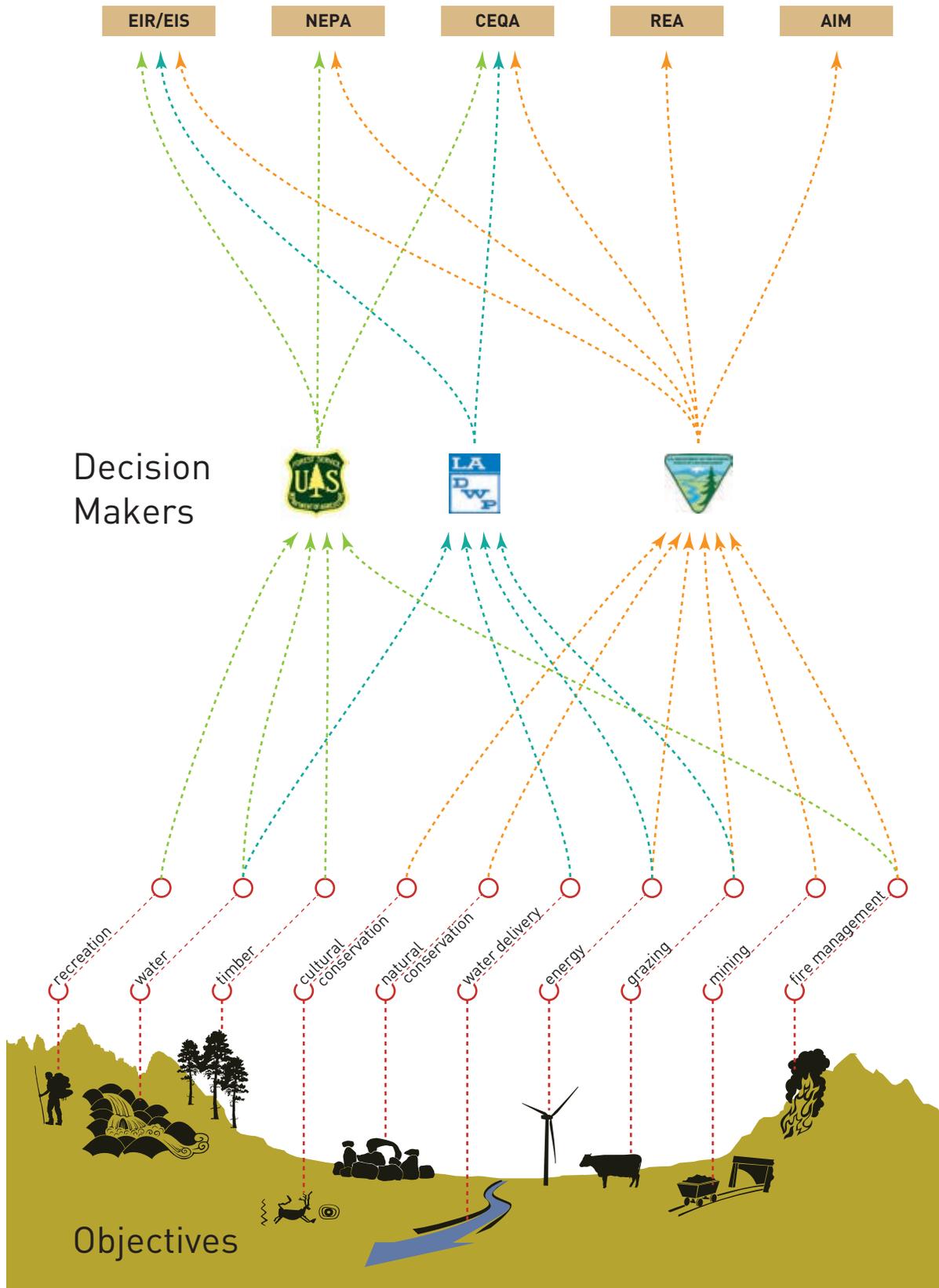


Figure 16. Decision Makers

Water Agreement (LTWA) that was settled between the Inyo County Water Department and the LADWP in 1991. This calls for restrictions on groundwater pumping and monitoring of vegetation cover and habitat quality. Due to environmental disturbances caused by the quantity of water exports in the past, the LADWP now also lists avoidance of creating “significant effects on the environment” as an agency objective (LADWP 2012a, I-4).

U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

In 1946, the United States government combined the Government Land Office and Grazing Service departments to form the Bureau of Land Management within the Department of the Interior (BLM 2009). As such, the BLM did not exist as an agency when the Aqueduct was constructed, but as the Land Office, it has been involved in the area since 1907 (BLM 2009). Within the study area, the BLM maintains a regional field office in Bishop out of which it manages mining and energy leases, recreational lands, and cultural resources. BLM objectives include managing the land so it provides energy (renewable and non-renewable), mitigating wildland fire, ensuring long-term productivity and health of grazing lands, engaging stakeholders in resource management planning; preserving outstanding environmental and cultural resources through the National Landscape Conservation System, and protecting, managing, and controlling wild horses and burros (BLM) 2013).

U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

Teddy Roosevelt established the Inyo National Forest in 1907 in order to protect the water rights of Los Angeles. The original Forest Service allotment was 221,324 acres on the floor of the Owens Valley, but this was later combined with an isolated portion of the Sierra National Forest to become the Inyo National Forest (USFS 2012a). The original forestlands are now owned by the LADWP and BLM, but the Inyo National Forest reached 2.1 million acres in 2007. It is today the most visited national forest in the United States with the major attraction of Mammoth Lakes Ski Resort (USFS 2013a). Due to this increase in the amount of federally owned lands, the USFS manages more than half of the study area, with most of the mountainous western and eastern edges of the watershed boundary covered by the Inyo National Forest. Acting in conjunction with the LADWP and BLM as well as their own federal directives, the USFS has preserved the majority of the land within the study area for public recreation and resource conservation. Specific agency objectives for their lands include managing timber and water to maintain their quality and quantity for future resource extraction; providing recreational opportunities that contribute to public health and well-being; and conducting fire management (USFS 2012a). The USFS interacts with other agencies in the valley, but conducts planning efforts according to federal and jurisdictional mandates rather than for watershed health. The Inyo National Forest Management Plan is undergoing revision as of 2013 (USFS 2013b).

CHARACTERS

Secondary Decision Makers

In addition to the three main landowners, there are a host of agencies and organizations that provide varying amounts of input to larger decision making processes (Figure 17). These secondary decision makers include natural resource regulating agencies and commissions such as the South Lahontan Regional Water Control Board (Region 6), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Inyo-Mono Interregional Water Management Program, Inyo County Water Department, the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District and the State Lands Commission. These latter two agencies are especially involved with planning for the future of Owens Lake and the mitigation of dust storms from the lakebed. Efforts are currently underway to develop a master plan for Owens Lake that will help to resolve ongoing litigation and court battles between LADWP and state and federal regulators.

Besides the three major decision makers, Southern California Edison also operates hydroelectric plants throughout the study area and supplies power to rural areas and tribal lands. Municipal utilities organizations provide power and water to their local customers, but often have limited resources. In addition to water and other resource management agencies, Inyo and Mono County governments have their own planning departments and documents, as do the municipal governments of Bishop and Mammoth Lakes. Their influence on the lands of the Eastern Sierra is, however, limited because federal agencies and LADWP maintain majority land ownership in the area. While not an exclusively local organization, the Sierra Club was a party to the 1991 Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) along with the LADWP and Inyo County Water Commission, and wields considerable lobbying resources at the state and federal levels. CalTrans owns and operates all lands related to CA 395, the major north-south transportation artery in the study area. California State Parks operates two parks in Mono County: Bodie State Park near the far northern limit of the study area, and Mono Lake Tufa Natural Reserve on the southern shores of Mono Lake. The state operates no parks in Inyo County.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders affected by the decisions of the aforementioned agencies include Owens Valley and Mono Basin residents as well as tourists from outside of the study area. Some of the more influential stakeholder groups include the Owens Valley Committee, which advocates for water rights and public engagement, and the Mono Lake Committee, whose focus is preservation and restoration of the Mono Lake ecosystem and environmental education. School districts, chambers of commerce, business owners, historical societies, ethnic groups, Native American tribes, and other citizen organizations and groups also add to the population of local stakeholders. Interested parties from outside the study area (and within) include bird-watchers, hunters and fishermen, OHV enthusiasts, hikers and campers, winter sports enthusiasts, and many more. The pool of stakeholders expands exponentially when the end-users of water from the study area are taken into account.



Figure 17. Additional Decision Makers

*The glaciers are the pass-makers, and it is by them that
the courses of all mountaineers are predestined.*

– John Muir