



THERE IT IS – TAKE IT!

OWENS VALLEY AND THE LOS ANGELES AQUEDUCT, 1913-2013

About the project:

There It Is—Take It! is a self-guided car audio tour along U.S. Route 395 through Owens Valley, California, examining the social, political, and environmental history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The tour illuminates how this divisive water conveyance infrastructure has impacted the people and environment of the Owens Valley—before and after the Los Angeles Aqueduct became operational in 1913. Stories of the aqueduct are told from multiple perspectives and viewpoints through the voices of historians, biologists, activists, native speakers, environmentalists, litigators, LADWP employees, and residents from both Los Angeles and the Owens Valley.

Designed as a free, 90-minute audio program, *There It Is—Take It!* seeks to shed light on the mutual past, present, and possible future of Los Angeles and Owens Valley—centered around its complicated and intertwined water history. The project illuminates the historic source of drinking water for the Los Angeles municipality while simultaneously revealing the complex relationship of these two regions through an innovative aural program incorporating interviews, field recordings, music, and archival audio that educates the listener while experiencing scenic Owens Valley landscape firsthand along U.S. Route 395. Optionally, the program may be experienced online. Optionally, the program may be experienced online at thereitistakeit.org.

How to travel the tour:

There It Is—Take It! is ideally experienced as a 90-minute self-guided car audio tour while traveling through the physical landscape of Owens Valley, California along U.S. Route 395. The tour itself is not location-specific, but rather it moves through time illuminating specific issues, events, and histories that have developed over the last 100 years of the aqueduct's existence. Several geographical points of interest are mapped with GPS coordinates on a few of the website's individual track pages.

How to experience the tour:

- Listen to individual audio tracks online thereitistakeit.org.
- Download and burn a CD (requires two CDs for entire program) or upload the tour to your mobile device.
- Stream the program from: <http://soundcloud.com/kstringfellow/sets/there-it-is-take-it>.

This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, an independent non-profit state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, visit calhum.org. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in *There It Is—Take It!* do not necessarily represent those of the California Council for the Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.



AUDIO TOUR TRACKS:



Track 1: Chris Plakos
LADWP Public Relations Officer Chris Plakos describes the infrastructure of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system.



Track 2: Alan Bacock
Big Pine Paiute tribal member Alan Bacock recounts the landscape of his ancestral people before Euroamerican settlement.



Track 3: City of Destiny
William Kahrl and John Walton outline events leading up to the completion of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913.



Track 4: There It Is—Take It!
William Kahrl and John Walton overview acts of deception and civil unrest within the Owens Valley during the 1920s.



Track 5: Mark Bagley
OVC's Mark Bagley illuminates environmental impacts within the Owens Valley that ushered in the modern the "Water Wars."



Track 6: Greg James
Former Inyo County Water Department Director Greg James helped shape the 1991 Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement.



Track 7: Stan Matlick
Three generations of Matlicks have ranched in the Bishop area on land they originally homesteaded over 100 years ago.



Track 8: Harry Williams
Bishop Paiute tribal member Harry Williams discusses the ancient irrigation systems of the Northern Paiute.



Track 9: Daris Moxley
Daris Moxley's family has operated a 200-acre LADWP ranch lease in Bishop since the 1930s.



Track 10: Benett Kessler
Sierra Wave Media's Benett Kessler has reported on LADWP related issues in the Owens Valley for thirty-seven years.



Track 11: Thaddeus Taylor
Thaddeus Taylor shares an ongoing dispute with LADWP over surface water flows through the 40 Acres community.



Track 12: Brian Tillemans
LADWP Water Resources Manager Brian Tillemans discusses the Lower Owens River Project.



Track 13: Ted Schade
Ted Schade of the GBUAPCD explains why Owens Lake is considered the largest single source of PM-10 in the nation.



Track 14: Mike Prather
Environmental activist Mike Prather describes the return of migratory bird populations on the newly rewatered Owens Lake.



Track 15: Sam Wasson
Sam Wasson, a retired LADWP employee and long-time resident of Keeler, recounts an Owens Lake dust storm event.



Track 16: Bill VanWagoner
LADWP's Bill VanWagoner explains the department's dust mitigation efforts being implemented on Owens Lake.



Track 17: Nancy Masters
Citizen activist Nancy Masters elucidates on community activism and the future of Owens Valley.

FACTS & FIGURES:

The Los Angeles Aqueduct is a water conveyance system maintained and operated by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power—the largest publicly-owned utility in the nation. The first Los Angeles Aqueduct, constructed in 1913, stretches 233 miles from the Owens Valley to its terminus in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles. Efficiently designed as a gravity-flow conduit that generates electrical power, the original aqueduct has a flow capacity of 485 cubic feet per second (cfs) and cost the city \$23 million to construct. A second 137 mile-long aqueduct with a capacity of 290 cfs was completed in 1970 at a cost of \$89 million. The two aqueducts are capable of delivering a combined average of 430 million gallons of water to Los Angeles a day, supplying a 465 square-mile service area with more than 3.9 million residents.¹

The original aqueduct constructed in 1913 begins at the Owens River intake located centrally in Owens Valley and continues 233 miles across mountains and desert to its terminus at "the Cascades" located on the east side of the Golden State Freeway (near the I-5 and 405 merge in Sylmar). The second aqueduct starts at the Haiwee Reservoir just south of Owens Lake, roughly paralleling the original one until it ends at the Cascades. It is important to note that unlike the first aqueduct, which operates and produces electricity through its gravity flow design, the second aqueduct requires supplemental energy to pump water for export. The combined infrastructure of the system is made up of sixty-one miles of lined and unlined channels, 161 miles of concrete conduit, forty-three miles of lined tunnels and eighty-one miles of steel and concrete pipe. Eight storage reservoirs plus ninety-nine tanks and smaller reservoirs are located within city limits. Both aqueducts took five years to construct.²

The primary source of water for the aqueduct system is seasonal runoff containing snowmelt from the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada that drains into the larger Owens Valley watershed providing surface and sub-surface water for export. In addition, LADWP collects and exports water from the Mono Basin and its related watersheds through its second aqueduct. In order to access this water for export, the City of Los Angeles pursued an aggressive policy to acquire water rights and land within the Owens Valley in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Today, the city is the largest private owner of the seventy-five-mile-long Owens Valley with its 314,000 acres predominantly located within the valley's floor. Most of this land, about 260,000 acres, is leased for ranching purposes with a small percentage leased for commercial or recreational use that involves strict management requirements to ensure the productivity and overall health of the watershed. Nearly 95 percent of lands within Inyo County are either owned by the City of Los Angeles, the state of California or the federal government.³

Historically, the Los Angeles Aqueduct system provided nearly 75 percent of the city's water supply up through the 1980s. However, due to restrictions and reallocation of water for environmental concerns this amount has been reduced dramatically.⁴ According to 2012 LADWP figures; 36 percent of Los Angeles' water comes from the Los Angeles Aqueduct system; 52 percent from the Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) Colorado River Aqueduct supply; 11 percent from local ground-water sources; and one percent is from recycled sources.⁵ About 72 percent of this water is for residential use; 25 percent is for commercial and government use; and 3 percent is for industrial use.⁶ Some areas, such as San Pedro, are served water from the MWD exclusively, others, such as Eagle Rock and east Los Angeles, are served a mix of MWD and Los Angeles Aqueduct water. The remaining areas are predominately served a mix of water from the State Water Project combined with water from the Los Angeles Aqueduct.⁷ Most agree that the highest quality and best-tasting water comes from the Eastern Sierra supply.

The Los Angeles Aqueduct may no longer be the exclusive municipal water supply for the city—but it continues to be the symbolic source of its drinking water.

Footnotes: 1. "Los Angeles Aqueduct: Facts & History," LADWP (website), accessed September 24, 2012. 2. "Los Angeles Aqueduct: Facts & History." 3. Greg James, "Changing Perspectives on Groundwater Management: The Owens Valley (2002)," Inyo County Water Department, accessed September 8, 2012. 4. Interview with Fred Barker, Waterworks Engineer, Manager of Transmission Operations, LADWP, at his office in Los Angeles in March 2012. 5. Based on a five-year average as stated in "Facts & History," LADWP (website), dated March 16, 2012. Last accessed September 24, 2012. 6. "The Los Angeles Aqueduct," Aquaforma (website), accessed September 24, 2012. 7. Fred Barker interview.

