Understanding the Public Trust on Owens Lake

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CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION
Who We Are

A Land and Resource Manager

Sovereign Lands
- 4 million acres
- 120 rivers and sloughs
- **40 lakes**

School Lands
- ~460,000 acres surface fee
- ~790,000 acres mineral interest
Who We Are

Core Values and Resources

- **Common law public trust doctrine:** Lands and resources are held in trust for **ALL** the people of the State.
- **Began with traditional uses:** Commerce, navigation, and fishing.
- **Courts have expanded:** Recreation, access, open space, cultural resources.
- **Implementation:** Adaptive & collaborative management for public benefit.
The CSLC and Owens Lake/Patsiata

Jurisdiction
- The Lake was commercially navigable prior to aqueduct
- Now dry, but still impressed with Public Trust

Current leases/uses
- DWP lease for dust control 1999, amended 23 times
- Mineral and surface leases to US Borax
- Grazing leases
- Wildlife habitat
Management of Owens Lake/Patsiata

Exploring the complexities

- The Lake is dry, but the Trust still applies.
- Apply the Trust to current issues and collaborative management priorities like:
  - Protection and enhancement of Public health and safety
  - Protection and preservation of habitat and environmental values
  - Respecting and protecting Native culture, values, and resources
Owens Lake/Patsiata Collaborative Solutions

Avoiding a Collision Course

- Balancing public health concerns, legal dust abatement requirements, habitat maintenance, access, and tribal values
- Avoiding inconsistent activities – aesthetics, habitat, cultural resource impacts