



# Alpine Watershed Group

*Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps*

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## **STAFF REPORT FOR JUNE 18, 2022–AUGUST 19, 2022 for Board of Directors Meeting on August 24, 2022**

### **GRANTS AND CONTRACTS UPDATES**

#### **American Rivers (AR) – Meadow Restoration in Faith Valley:**

Project staging began on August 15, with anticipated start date of August 22. Rachel has continued to help with project information flyers, with flyers posted in early July. New flyers specific to areas being closed were designed and printed in late August. Julie Fair of AR passed the updated draft of the construction sign by Kimra and Rachel; it includes AWG's logo as a partner.

On July 6, Rachel assisted with replacing a cap and lock for a water level logger in the downstream portion of the project area.

On August 17, Kimra and Rachel participated in a site tour of the project given by Julie Fair for CWSD's Board at the request of Ed James.

#### **Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD):**

On July 27, Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Floodplain Management Working Group Meeting. After the meeting, CWSD inquired about filming at this year's Markleeville Creek Day to capture footage for their Watershed Moments public service announcement series.

AWG continues to help amplify CWSD's Watershed Moments public service announcement series. Check out all of the videos released on the [I Am Carson River Watershed website](#) (scroll down; released videos have a red "PLAY" button).

On August 17, Kimra gave a presentation outlining AWG's current programs and projects at the CWSD Board Meeting in Alpine County. She highlighted post-fire monitoring and restoration activities.

#### **Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project, Phases II & III (National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, or NFWF):**

Photo monitoring was completed on June 15 by Rachel.

On June 24, Rachel and Sierra conducted vegetation surveys for Site 1, Site 2, and Site 1 access route.

As stated in the previous staff report, Site 1 is looking very good as far as willow growth and vegetation fill-in. Unfortunately, there are minimal signs of willow growth at Site 2. Rachel and Kimra are planning to meet with the project designer and contractor on August 22 to discuss any actions that might be taken at Site 2 as part of the project's adaptive management planning. Given how Site 1 continues to look, the sprinkler system at Site 1 has not been reinstalled, but Rachel will be monitoring weather and site conditions to determine if supplemental water is needed.

#### **Markleeville Creek Restoration Project — Tahoe Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant and Caltrans Mitigation Funding for the Floodplain Restoration Project and Markleeville Public Utility District (MPUD) State Revolving Fund Planning Grant for the Sewer Pump Station Relocation Project:**

On June 24, Kimra met with Caltrans regarding the mitigation agreement, project schedule, design coordination needs, and construction funding.

On June 28, Kimra, Jeff Schwein of Green DOT, MPUD engineer, and MPUD engineer's environmental consultant met with design consultant Cardno's staff, including their CEQA specialist. They discussed MPUD's experience with creating an addendum to the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the sewer upgrade project, and how an addendum to the IS/MND for the floodplain restoration project might be approached. The outcome was that Cardno's CEQA specialist felt that the environmental review for the floodplain restoration project could be done under an addendum.

On July 11, Kimra and Jeff Schwein of Green DOT met with Community Development Director Sam Booth and Community Development Deputy Director Ethan Gray to introduce the project to these new county staff.

On July 26, Kimra met with Hannah Bartholomew, Carl Ruschmeyer, and Jeff Schwein of Green DOT regarding the draft scope of work, budget, and schedule received from Cardno on July 20.

On August 4, Kimra, Hannah Bartholomew, and Alpine County Community Development Deputy Director Ethan Gray met with Cardno to learn what the county being the lead agency for a CEQA addendum for the project entails. The second part of the call, mostly without Ethan, was a discussion on Cardno's draft scope of work, budget, and schedule. Kimra and Hannah explained the budget constraints and clarified the phasing of the project between AWG contracting Cardno to get to 100% design and a bid package, and then Alpine County taking over for the bid process and construction administration. The group discussed services that would not be needed by Cardno, clarifying that AWG and Alpine County will handle most of the project outreach, and exploring the idea of AWG drafting the permit applications, with support from Cardno, as AWG did for the latest Hope Valley Project. Kimra notified Cardno that Caltrans will need all of 2023 to complete the bridge replacement, so the sewer upgrade and floodplain restoration projects will be not implemented until 2024. Kimra received an updated budget based on a phased approach from Cardno on August 11 and passed it on to Jeff, Hannah, and Carl on August 16.

On August 5, Kimra and Hannah Bartholomew met with the Caltrans mitigation specialist to discuss Caltrans' progress with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on approval of Caltrans' Habitat Restoration and Mitigation Plan.

In late July, the new STPUD grant coordinator informed AWG that California Department of Water Resources (DWR) was just then starting the amendment process which was to include our schedule change. Kimra met with STPUD staff on August 5 to provide an overview of the project for the new grant coordinator and to discuss the project construction schedule now extending past the grant deadline due to Caltrans' delayed bridge replacement project; she also explained that by providing mitigation for the Caltrans project, we will at last have the balance of funding for construction. STPUD advised Kimra to document the issues and barriers in detail in the quarterly progress report, which Kimra did. STPUD will communicate the complexities of our project to the funder, DWR, and let us know their recommendations.

On August 8, Kimra, Jeff Schwein of Green DOT, Hannah Bartholomew, Community Development Director Sam Booth, Community Development Deputy Director Ethan Gray, and two engineers from Cardno met with nine Caltrans staff to discuss how Caltrans, Cardno, and Alpine County will coordinate on the abutment removal design.

### **National Fish & Wildlife Foundation — California Forests:**

On June 27, Rachel and Sierra met with Courtney Rowe of California State Parks to walk through the monitoring desired at Grover Hot Springs State Park.

On June 30 and 31, Rachel attended a training on Sierra Meadows Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Protocol (SM-WRAMP) in Clover Valley. This protocol provides standardized

monitoring protocols to guide land managers in determining restoration needs, evaluating restoration efficacy, and informing adaptive management actions. It is the protocol that California State Parks is planning to use to assess Grover Hot Springs State Park.

On July 29, Rachel completed the first set of Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys for the year at Grover. For the next two years, AWG staff will be conducting EDRR surveys in June, July, and August to identify invasive species in areas impacted by fire suppression tactics and remove them.

### **Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) Early Action (EA) Funding:**

On July 19, Kimra attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop. The purpose was to provide feedback to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) on their capacity building program design (e.g., What type of assistance/training is desired? How do we want to receive it?). Sierra Nevada Alliance also presented on their SierraCorps Fellowship program.

Rachel attended the RFFCP – East Side stakeholder meeting on July 27 which largely discussed project prioritization in the Eastern Sierras.

On August 9, Kimra and Rachel met with Jessica Gwerder of Natural Resources Conservation Service, Karen Buhr and Sophia Lemmo of CARCD, and County Coordinator Clint Celio. Jessica had reached out to AWG as she is hoping to start an effort towards creating an active Alpine Resource Conservation District Board. The meeting was set up to explain AWG's RFFCP grant and to start this conversation. Clint and Kimra had a meeting after the discussion to discuss next steps.

### **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) WaterSMART Grant (community outreach/partnership development, data collection, and restoration planning):**

On June 24, AWG was notified that our time extension of December 31, 2022, has been approved, and the official modification document is being worked on by the Grants Officer.

Sierra worked on organizing Ky's fish and wildlife section notes into a draft and added citations.

### **West Fork Carson Project – National Forest Foundation (NFF) Partnership:**

On June 24, Sierra and Rachel completed baseline monitoring for the aspen groves.

On July 12, Rachel, Kimra, Annabelle Monti of US Forest Service, and Katlyn Lonergan of NFF led a public field tour. Twenty-seven people attended the tour, and it was a great conversation.

On July 21, Kimra attended the indoor presentation portion of the Central Sierra Aspen Workshop at Turtle Rock Park, and Sierra attended the afternoon tour of sites in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. On July 22, Kimra participated in the tour of aspen sites in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Alpine County.

## **RESTORATION & MONITORING PROGRAMS**

### **Tamarack Fire:**

#### Restoration:

AWG staff attended the Tamarack Fire Recovery Update Meeting on Tuesday, June 28. Kimra spoke to the work that AWG has done and plans to do specific to post-fire restoration.

### Monitoring:

Sierra and volunteer Bill Young completed the first round of monitoring for the Musser and Jarvis drainage on July 5.

### Interpretation:

Kimra and Andy Lovell met with John Bowers and Annabelle Monti of the Carson Ranger District on June 24 to discuss comments on the Tamarack Fire interpretive panels, sign placement, and the pamphlet to be created. Kimra provided AWG board members with the draft pamphlet content on July 14, and she provided AWG's comments on the pamphlet to the Carson Ranger District on July 18.

### **Creek Day:**

Rachel has reached out to several people and agencies to gather project ideas and recruit crew leaders for this year's Creek Day community workday on Saturday, September 17. So far we have four projects confirmed and a couple pending. Sierra has secured donations from Safeway (\$50 gift card) and Starbucks (coffee service). Kimra has confirmed sponsorships from RCI and Wildscape Engineering, and she has applications in to Alpine County Chamber of Commerce and Lumos & Associates. As soon as we hear back from a few more sponsorship requests, we will finalize the flyer and begin promotion.

On June 29, Rachel attended the Great Sierra River Cleanup Site Captain Coordination Meeting.

### **Monitoring:**

Sierra participated in sampling on July 26 with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB).

River Monitoring Program: Rachel and Sierra led River Monitoring on August 12 and 13. Rachel coordinated volunteers, switching around the schedule after the road closure. Rachel and Sierra prepared supplies, ran turbidity samples, and entered data. Rachel also went to the sites south of the road closure to hand off materials and sample.

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring Program: Rachel has continued to pass along messages to Dr. Johnson on HABs detected at Indian Creek Reservoir. Sierra sampled at Red Lake on July 19 with help from LRWQCB staff. Rachel, Sierra, and volunteer Bill Young sampled at Red Lake on August 16. Due to the visual indicators, Sabrina Rice at LRWQCB advised putting up "Caution" signage at Red Lake. Ben Ewing of CDFW will be posting signage on August 22.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **Outreach:**

On June 21, Kimra announced the July 12 West Fork Carson Project Tour at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors Meeting as a public comment.

On July 5, Sierra announced the July 12 West Fork Carson Project Tour at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors Meeting as a public comment.

On August 16, Kimra announced the upcoming Creek Day community workday at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors Meeting as a public comment.

Death Ride: On July 15-16 Sierra worked with 13 volunteers to sort recyclables from trash, and service the water station at Turtle Rock Park. Sierra also staffed AWG's outreach table at AWG's tent both days.

### **Partnerships:**

On May 25, Kimra volunteered at the Friends of Hope Valley workday.

On June 18, Kimra attended the Alpine Trails Association meeting.

On July 5, Kimra attended the Alpine Biomass Collaborative meeting, featuring a presentation by University of California Cooperative Extension Forestry Advisor Susie Kocher on the results of her research on what worked and what didn't with respect to restoration after the 2007 Angora Fire.

On July 8, Kimra tagged along with Mother Lode Land Trust (MLLT) and PG&E for the first part of their annual monitoring of MLLT conservation easements around Blue Lakes.

On July 13, Rachel attended the Health and Wellness Coalition meeting.

On July 19, Sierra attended the virtual Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) Meeting.

On August 2, Kimra and Sierra attended the Alpine Biomass Collaborative meeting, featuring a presentation by University of California Cooperative Extension Forestry Advisor Susie Kocher on using prescribed fire in the Sierra Nevada.

On August 3, Sierra assisted CDFW with electrofishing in the Pleasant Valley Creek watershed. The objective of the study is to get an idea of rainbow trout and Lahontan cutthroat trout distribution from a downstream waterfall up to Tamarack Lake.

On August 18, Kimra attended the Interagency Meeting and provided updates on Creek Day.

### **Additional Trainings:**

On June 28, Rachel virtually attended a portion of the 2022 Water Boards Water Data Science Symposium.

On July 14, Rachel attended a portion of the Post Fire Restoration Symposium hosted by Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group and SOFAR Landscape Design Team.

On July 28, Rachel watched the recording on "Restoration for Managing Invasive Plants" by Roger Sheley, Ecologist at the Range and Meadow Forage Management Research Unit in Burns, OR.

### **Letter of Support:**

On June 28, Kimra submitted a letter to Alpine County Chamber of Commerce regarding AWG's internet reliability and bandwidth issues for inclusion in a packet of letters that the Chamber presented at a meeting with a commissioner and staff from the California Public Utilities Commission on the need for high-speed broadband in Alpine County.

## **FUNDRAISING**

**Bently Foundation:** AWG submitted a two-part funding request that included \$4,181 for Creek Day and \$10,000 for monitoring and restoration efforts in the Tamarack Fire burn area on July 29.

**California Alpine Club Foundation:** The foundation's board approved AWG's request for \$2,500 for restoration, monitoring, and environmental education supplies.

**The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment:** AWG submitted a renewal request for \$16,000 in general support on August 15.

**Trout Unlimited Sagebrush Chapter Conservation Grant Program (due Nov. 1):** Kimra has received the 2023 grant application, and she and Rachel will discuss funding needs and update the board.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

**Staffing:** Sierra's last day with AWG is September 29.