



# Alpine Watershed Group

*Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps*

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## STAFF REPORT FOR AUGUST 19, 2023–OCTOBER 20, 2023 for Board of Directors Meeting on October 25, 2023

*Note: This is the fifth Staff Report re-formatted according to the AWG Strategic Plan to better identify where growth within the organization needs to be developed.*

**Goal 1: Alpine County’s watersheds and the waters that flow through them are protected, conserved, and restored.**

### **Watershed Assessment and Monitoring**

- \* August 25, August 31, September 29, October 4, and October 18 at Grover Hot Springs State Park – Wes completed the third set of Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys for the year to identify invasive species in areas impacted by fire suppression tactics and remove them; Wes and Rachel had a refresher training from California State Parks staff on monitoring methods; and Wes, Rachel, Bella, and Kaitlyn completed the common stand exam surveys over several field days. AWG staff was trained by Julie Fair on post-fire meadow assessment protocol at this site so that AWG staff can conduct assessments at other meadows impacted by the Tamarack Fire. Work is funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – California Headwaters grant. A grant extension was received for work to extend to April 1, 2024.
- \* August 28 and September 25 – Rachel, Wes, and several volunteers conducted harmful algal bloom (HAB) monitoring at Red Lake. Three volunteers helped on August 28 and two on September 25. We now have two staff and four volunteers who are able to complete HAB monitoring.
- \* September 7 through 9 – Rachel coordinated the fourth round of River Monitoring.
- \* September 14 – Kimra submitted all required reporting and grant deliverables for the US Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant for AWG’s “Alpine County Watershed Planning and Partnership Development” project.
- \* September 27 – Wes, Kaitlyn, Bella, Bill Young, and Mary Young conducted the second round of 2023 monitoring in the Musser and Jarvis drainage. Work is funded by Sierra Nevada Conservancy – Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (SNC – RFFCP).
- \* October 3 – Wes, Bella, and Kaitlyn completed West Fork Carson Project aspen monitoring in Hope Valley. Funding procured by National Forest Foundation (NFF).
- \* October 5 and 6 – Rachel, Bella, and Kaitlyn assisted American Rivers with stream flow monitoring and beaver monitoring in Faith Valley and Hope Valley. On October 10, Rachel assisted American Rivers with stream flow monitoring after Carson Water Subconservancy District released water from Lost Lakes. Rachel also coordinated additional signage for the area closures and public outreach on the project. Funding procured by American Rivers.
- \* October 11 – Bella and Kaitlyn attended a meadow monitoring training at Thompson Meadow on the west slope hosted by Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group. This approach is to determine how well conifer removal methods help with stopping encroachment on the meadow.

- \* October 15 – Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project: Kimra submitted the quarterly progress report for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Work is funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).

## **Restoration**

- \* August 22 – Rachel, Wes, and Kimra met with grant liaison Nina Perez and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Biologist Shelly Blair to tour the project sites, pass on details from the July site visit with the project designer, and discuss how the remaining project funds might be used and if a grant extension might be possible. In follow-up discussions, it was decided that Site 1 will be assessed for any adaptive management needs after next winter; meantime, over the winter AWG staff will come up with other project ideas for the project area, as well as document why no more work will be done at Site 2. On September 19 Rachel, Kimra, and Mo Loden toured the project sites and walked the river reach in between the sites to brainstorm possible projects. Funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).
- \* Markleeville Creek Day took place on September 23, part of National Public Lands Day, Great Sierra River Cleanup, and Alpine County Washoe Mountain Gathering. Fifty-two volunteers worked at five sites; see [Projects & Outcomes document](#) for details. Rachel was the lead on coordinating the event. Wes attended the final meetings for the Washoe Mountain Gathering planning committee, and Rachel attended a post-event debrief; partners, including the Inter-Tribal Council of California, have already started to plan for next year's event, scheduled for September 13, 14, and 15. Funding from multiple grants based on worksite and additional Creek Day sponsor funding.
- \* AWG will host a Volunteer Tree Planting event on Saturday, October 21 at Turtle Rock Park in partnership with the US Forest Service (USFS) and Sugar Pine Foundation. Wes took over from Rachel on being the lead on this event, which included coordinating with Alpine County on shifting the planting location from USFS land to areas of Turtle Rock Park managed by Alpine County that will not be impacted by future park rehabilitation.
- \* Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project – As documented in the quarterly progress reports submitted to grant administrator South Tahoe Public Utility District: The second and third monthly coordination team meetings were held with various representatives from the AWG team, Alpine County Community Development, Markleeville Public Utility District (MPUD), and Stantec. Between the second and the third monthly meeting, the Stantec Project Manager left Stantec, and AWG is now working with a new Project Manager and other new support team members at Stantec. Kimra, sometimes with Carl Ruschmeyer and/or Hannah Bartholomew, also participated in various other meetings with Alpine County staff, Caltrans, Stantec, and permitting agencies. Although some Caltrans bridge replacement work will be wrapped up in 2024, the current schedule is still for MPUD to implement their sewer upgrade project followed by the floodplain restoration project in 2024. Key activities in the next few months are submitting permit applications for the floodplain restoration project, presenting an updated mitigation cooperative agreement between Caltrans and Alpine County to the Board of Supervisors, and presenting the updated floodplain restoration project design to the Board of Supervisors. Funded in part by an Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant.

- \* Project Development for Forest and Fire Resilience funded by SNC – RFFCP:
  - August 26 – Kimra and Wes attended the Specific Projects in Eastern Alpine County public field trip hosted by the Forest Health Community Working Group.
  - September 19 – Wes attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop covering the topic of RFFCP Round 3 funding.
  - October 18 – Wes attended a meeting with residents in Hope Valley along with Alpine County Wildfire Projects Coordinator Clint Celio and USFS Forester Annabelle Monti. This project came out of the August 26 Forest Health Community Working Group Field Trip.

**Goal 2: Community awareness and participation in watershed stewardship is increased.**

**Education**

- \* October 13 – AWG hosted a Snapshot Day site in Hope Valley for 55 students from Diamond Valley School (DVS). Rachel, Bella, and Kaitlyn respectively led stations on water quality monitoring, stream assessment, and the watershed model, and Alpine County Library staff led a station on nature journaling. DVS’s principal expressed interest in doing this field trip for next year’s Snapshot Day.

**Partnership Development**

- \* August 23 – Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Education Working Group Meeting.
- \* August 29 – Kimra attended the Alpine County Health and Wellness Coalition Meeting.
- \* August 30 – Wes assisted the Alpine County Fish and Game Commission with fish stocking.
- \* August 31 – Kimra participated in Congressman Kevin Kiley’s Alpine County roundtable. She was invited to share about AWG’s work and, upon learning about the USFS Volunteers Program Citizen Stewardship and Partnerships Award, Congressman Kiley said he will get a congressional proclamation when we have the press release to share.
- \* September 21 – Kimra attended the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) Meeting. Out of this discussion, it was decided to start a subgroup to work on developing community engagement materials. Trout Unlimited is organizing those meetings, and Wes will participate.
- \* October 6 – Wes, accompanied by Ron Hames, attended the Upper Mokelumne Regional Watershed Authority Meeting and East Bay Municipal Utility District’s annual Pardee BBQ.
- \* October 12 – Kimra attended the first stakeholder meeting organized for the East Fork Carson River hot springs thanks to the technical assistance procured by the Carson Ranger District from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.
- \* October 17 – Rachel, Wes, Bella, and Kaitlyn attended the Carson River Coalition Agricultural Producers Working Group Field Tour of Ace Hereford Ranch and Woollystar Ranch.
- \* October 19 – Bella, Wes, and Kimra attended the Alpine Sierra Speaker Series presentation by Herman Fillmore on Washoe Language and Cultural Resilience.

- \* October 20 – Rachel, Wes, Bella, and Kaitlyn attended Create the Good at the Hung-A-Lel-Ti Firehouse.

### **Community Outreach and Awareness**

- \* August 23 – Wes participated in a video recording for the West Fork Carson Project. Funding procured by NFF.
- \* August 23 and September 25 – Rachel attended the first planning meeting and Kimra the second for the [Alpine County flood awareness open houses](#) on October 24 being held in Markleeville and Bear Valley. AWG staff will have a table with the Enviroscape model at the event at Turtle Rock Park.
- \* August 29 – Rachel attended a virtual meeting with Alpine County Public Health, Washoe Cultural Resources Department, and CDFW to continue planning for interpretive signage focused on Washoe culture and language in Hope Valley. CDFW will be working with the Tribe to make sure they have high quality images and content for the signage.
- \* September 16 – AWG tabled at the third Market at Markleeville thanks to Board Member January Riddle, with support by Wes. We got two new sign-ups for the AWG newsletter.
- \* September 19 – Kimra attended the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting to remind the public about Creek Day. At this meeting, Carson Ranger District Deputy District Ranger Kalie Crews presented Kimra, Rachel, January Riddle, and Bob Twiss with the 2022 Volunteers Program Citizen Stewardship and Partnerships Award. At Creek Day, Chris Eddie with the USFS made an announcement about the award and recognized AWG volunteers.
- \* September 19 – Rachel presented on AWG’s programs and projects at the Trout Unlimited – Sagebrush Chapter meeting in Reno.
- \* September 28 – Rachel, Wes, Kaitlyn, and Bella tabled at the Tour des Trees bicycle tour stop at Turtle Rock Park. One person signed up for AWG’s newsletter.
- \* October 3 – Kimra attended the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting to introduce AWG’s new Fellows, share Creek Day outcomes, and announce the Volunteer Tree Planting event.
- \* October 7 and 8 – Bella and Kaitlyn tabled at Friends of Hope Valley’s aspen celebration at Pickett’s Junction. Thirteen people signed up for AWG’s newsletter.
- \* October 17 – Wes attended the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting to remind the public about the Volunteer Tree Planting event.

### **Goal 3: AWG has increased capacity and a plan for sustainability.**

#### **Regional Coordination and Collaboration**

- \* Organization and Local Capacity-building for Forest and Fire Resilience funded by SNC – RFFCP:
  - o AWG staff provided quarterly progress reports to Whitebark Institute for the subcontract from Sierra Nevada Conservancy.
  - o AWG staff continued to participate in and help with administrative and outreach tasks for the [Forest Health Community Working Group](#), which met on August 30 and September 28.

- AWG staff provided support to the Alpine County Wildfire Projects Coordinator’s team in the completion of a grant application for Alpine County to the SNC Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant Program that would fund a stakeholder analysis and a strategic plan for the Forest Health Community Working Group. This included drafting verbiage for a section of the grant and writing a letter of support.
- August 29 – Wes attended a virtual meeting with presentations on “Tribal Data Sovereignty and Partnerships” through The Watershed Center. The intent was to present keys to successful and respectful partnerships, as well as discuss the need for a universal understanding that sacred data should remain sacred.
- August 30 – Wes attended the RFFC Eastern Sierra Nevada subregion working group virtual meeting. Topics discussed focused on the successes and failures different organizations have had and if there would be benefits gained in creating a more formal umbrella organization to support local Fire Safe Councils and others involved in wildfire resilience efforts.
- August 31 – Rachel started a three-part weekly virtual workshop series on practical statistics. Due to scheduling conflicts, she will complete the series by watching the recordings.
- September 7 – Wes, Kimra, and Clint Celio attended the Woodfords Community Council Meeting to introduce the Forest Health Community Working Group. AWG also shared Creek Day flyers.
- September 19 – Wes attended California Association of Resource Conservation Districts first Office Hours, this one focused on Tribal Partnerships.
- September 30 – Kaitlyn attended the Lake Tahoe Fire Festival to see if this sort of festival might be a good event for the Forest Health Community Working Group to host in Alpine County.
- October 5 – Wes virtually attended a portion of the Northern California Regional Meeting of the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force.

### **Organizational Management and Development**

- \* August 24 – Kimra and Carl had the third one-on-one coaching sessions with Solid Ground Consulting sponsored by SNC – RFFCP. This session was focused on board development. Kimra and Carl received excellent templates for a Board Member Engagement Survey—how board members will participate on the board in the coming year—and Board Self Evaluation Survey—how the board as a whole performed its duties as a body and how the member performed as an individuation board member. Both will be personalized for AWG use and distributed to board members.
- \* Ongoing – Rachel has attended California Climate Action Corps Site Supervisor Meetings and completed the 30-day Scope of Work for the Fellows. After a week of offsite orientation, Fellows Kaitlyn Garber and Bella Kurtz started work at AWG’s office on September 26. Rachel led orientation for the Fellows and is working on the scope of work for specific projects, with support from Wes. Kimra attended the first Mentor Info Session and had her first monthly mentor one-on-one meetings with the Fellows.

## **Fundraising**

- \* Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution Grant Program through the Clean Water Act 319(h) funding: The State Water Board opened the 2024 Request for Proposals through December 15, 2023. Rachel and Kimra met with AWG's Lahontan Regional Board 319 liaison Mo Loden to discuss submitting an application to complete a geomorphological assessment and sediment transport planning model and develop a project prioritization plan for the Upper East Fork Carson River watershed.
- \* Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFC) Round 3: On October 16 Kimra, Wes, and Bob Twiss met with members of the Forest Health Community Working Group to complete the required internal assessment. The interview with SNC staff has been rescheduled for November 3.
- \* Trout Unlimited – Sagebrush Chapter – The 2024 Conservation Grant application is due November 1, with an in-person presentation of the grant on November 14.
- \* Creek Day Sponsorships and Grants *Received* – Alpine County Chamber of Commerce Sponsorship (\$250), Resource Concepts Inc. Sponsorship (\$250), and Bently Foundation Grant (\$4,000)
- \* *Received* – AWG received a \$10,000 grant for general support from the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, with a non-binding multi-year commitment for \$10,000 in 2024 and \$10,000 in 2025.
- \* *Received* – AWG received a \$3,650 grant for Tax and Audit Prep for AWG's fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, from the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment.
- \* *Pending* – AWG submitted an Office Beautification Grant application for \$4,408 to the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment.