



Alpine Watershed Group

Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps

STAFF REPORT FOR JUNE 24, 2023–AUGUST 18, 2023 for Board of Directors Meeting on August 23, 2023

Note: This is the fourth 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

- * Summer 2023 – Wes toured the Musser and Jarvis drainage with Mary and Bill Young (June 26); conducted the first round of 2023 monitoring in the Musser and Jarvis drainage (July 5); and, with Kimra and US Forest Service (USFS) Forester Annabelle Monti, met with Mary and Bill Young to discuss the next steps for informing future work in the drainage (July 18). Wes released the [*Musser and Jarvis Watershed Restoration 2022 Monitoring Report*](#) based on the baseline and first year of monitoring (August 3). Work is funded by Sierra Nevada Conservancy – Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (SNC – RFFCP).
- * June 30 – Rachel and Wes met with Katlyn Lonergan of National Forest Foundation (NFF) to discuss this year’s monitoring and grant deliverables, including an outreach video produced by NFF that Wes will participate in. Funding procured by NFF.
- * June 30 and July 28 – Wes completed the first two sets of Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys for the year at Grover Hot Springs State Park. Through 2024, 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. Work is funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – California Headwaters grant.
- * July 10 and 11 – Rachel and Wes assisted American Rivers with stream flow monitoring, ground water monitoring, and pulling flow monitoring gauges in Faith Valley. On July 12, Rachel and Wes had the opportunity to join in a site visit with Julie Fair of American Rivers, USFS Watershed Program Manager Jeff O’Connell, and the newly hired Carson Ranger District Hydrologist Don Kozlowski. On August 14, Rachel participated in the mobilization meeting for construction season 2023. Rachel has also continued to help update project signage and drafted a project update that was included in the August AWG newsletter. Funding procured by American Rivers.
- * August 1 – Rachel watched recorded webinars on aquatic insects and impacts on water quality and on “Environmental DNA for Harmful Algal Blooms.” The latter is another in the series hosted by the State Water Resources Control Board that goes through the beneficial uses of environmental DNA, or eDNA, for bioassessment, detecting HABs, species surveillance, human health, and data analysis. This method is providing information on what causes a harmful algal bloom and how to predict them.
- * July 13 – Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project: Rachel submitted the quarterly progress report for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality

Control Board. Work is funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).

- * July 21 – Rachel attended a refresher training hosted by partner Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board on harmful algal bloom monitoring to prepare for this year’s monitoring of Red Lake.
- * July 22 – Rachel and Wes led the River Monitor Training and provided training for four new volunteers and one returning volunteer.
- * July 24 – Rachel, Wes, and two volunteers conducted harmful algal bloom monitoring at Red Lake.
- * July 27 – Rachel, Wes, and a volunteer conducted vegetation monitoring in Hope Valley at Project Sites 1 and 2. Additionally, Kimra and Wes conducted the erosion survey. Work is funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).
- * August 10 through 12 – Rachel coordinated the third round of River Monitoring. We had two first-time volunteers, who Rachel accompanied.

Restoration

- * July 19 – Rachel and Kimra met Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project designer Matt Weld in Hope Valley to discuss the impacts at Sites 1 and 2 from the high water year and potential adaptive management actions. Site 1 is looking great, and vegetation cover was measured at 75% coverage. The project goal is to exceed 75% this year and be at 90% next year, so it was decided to have a Creek Day project to add willow stakes in the western portion where vegetation is sparser. Due to high flows, at Site 2 most of the slash installed in 2020 washed away, and there is additional erosion at the downstream end. Matt did not advise any additional work at this site; the materials used are meant to decompose, and it is providing the fish habitat benefit intended from the original 2015 project. Funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).
- * July 21 – Wes visited Mountaineer Meadow to conduct a preliminary assessment of the damage from the Tamarack Fire to see if monitoring should be implemented as part of the NFWF – California Headwaters grant.
- * Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project – As documented in the quarterly progress reports submitted to grant administrator South Tahoe Public Utility District: The first monthly coordination team meeting was on July 26 with the AWG team (Kimra and Carl Ruschmeyer present), Alpine County Community Development Director Sam Booth, Markleeville Public Utility District Engineer Dave Harden, and Stantec. On August 2, Kimra met with Stantec to discuss outreach and permitting needs. On August 18, Kimra and Sam Booth met with the outgoing and incoming Caltrans mitigation liaisons to discuss changes that will be needed in the mitigation cooperative agreement due to the bridge replacement contractor needing to remove additional trees. Funded in part by an Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant.
- * Markleeville Creek Day will take place on Saturday, September 23. This year the event will be part of National Public Lands Day, Great Sierra River Cleanup, and Alpine County Washoe Mountain Gathering. Rachel has been coordinating with each program to ensure planning is going smoothly. Wes recently took over attending meetings for the Washoe Mountain Gathering planning committee. There are currently six Creek Day worksites planned: Adopt-A-Highway for AWG’s segment, Adopt-A-Highway for Desolation Hotel and Friends of Hope Valley’s segments, river cleanup in Woodfords

Canyon, weaving beaver dam analogs in Faith Valley, vegetation management at Grover Hot Springs State Park, and willow planting and t-post removal in Hope Valley. Funding from multiple grants based on worksite and additional Creek Day sponsor funding.

- * Project Development for Forest and Fire Resilience funded by SNC – RFFCP:
 - June 27 – Wes, Rachel, and Kimra attended the Restoration Projects in Tamarack Fire Burn Area Public Meeting hosted by the Forest Health Community Working Group.
 - July 19 – Kimra and Wes attended the Fire History and Forest Health field tour hosted by the Forest Health Community Working Group.
 - AWG is planning a tree planting event for Saturday, October 21 within the Tamarack Fire burn scar in coordination with the USFS and Sugar Pine Foundation. Annabelle Monti and Rachel began coordinating on this community event in the spring of 2023.

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

Partnership Development

- * June 26 – Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Agricultural Producers Working Group Meeting.
- * June 30 – Wes and Kimra toured Grover Hot Springs State Park with biologist and photographer Tim Messick. Tim co-authored *Plants of Hot Springs Valley and Grover Hot Springs State Park*.
- * July 7 – Kimra issued a letter of support to the Alpine County Supervisors in support of the new county Arts Council—Arts and Culture Alpine County.
- * July 8 – Rachel attended the Alpine Trails Association quarterly meeting.
- * July 20 – Kimra attended the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) Meeting.
- * July 26 – Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Floodplain Management Working Group Meeting.
- * August 9 – Wes attended the Alpine County Fish and Game Commission meeting. Wes tagged along for fish stocking on August 16.

Community Outreach and Awareness

- * July 8 – AWG tabled at the first Market at Markleeville thanks to Board Members Bob Twiss, January Riddle, and Zach Wood, with support by Rachel. We got 12 new sign-ups for the AWG newsletter.
- * July 14 and 15 – Rachel coordinated 10 volunteers to sort recyclables from trash and service the water station at Turtle Rock Park for Death Ride. Rachel, Wes, and Kimra staffed AWG’s outreach table at AWG’s tent both days to sell Death Ride hats.
- * July 18 – Wes attended the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting to introduce himself and announce the rescheduled River Monitor Training.
- * July 19 – At the request of Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) General Manager Ed James, Rachel presented on AWG’s programs and projects at the CWSD Board Meeting held in Alpine County.
- * August 12 – AWG tabled at the second Market at Markleeville thanks to Board Members January Riddle and Carl Ruschmeyer, with support by Kimra and Rachel. We got 14 new sign-ups for the AWG newsletter.

- * August 15 – Kimra attended the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting to announce Creek Day and remind about the next Forest Health Field Trip. She also attended to hear the item on the draft West Fork Carson River Vision Plan and the Forest Service’s monthly update, which included a discussion on when and where the 2022 Volunteers Program Citizen Stewardship and Partnerships Award presentation to AWG should take place. Kimra has requested that the award be presented at one of the September Board of Supervisors meetings and that USFS staff also announce the award and thank volunteers at Creek Day.

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:
 - AWG staff provided quarterly progress reports to Whitebark Institute for the subcontract from Sierra Nevada Conservancy.
 - AWG staff continued to participate in and help with administrative and outreach tasks for the [Forest Health Community Working Group](#), which met on July 10, July 25, and August 14. Kimra continued to work with Sierra Institute and has received a draft proposal for a stakeholder analysis for the Working Group to consider.
 - July 6 – Kimra met with the Eldorado National Forest Partnership Coordinator Michelle Wolfgang to introduce AWG and discuss possible funding sources and future project support.
 - July 6 – Wes participated in the Sierra Meadows Partnership’s nascent All Lands Subcommittee Meeting. The subcommittee’s scope is to take a watershed restoration approach that encompasses all lands and finds the overlap of meadow restoration with other land restoration efforts, such as forest health, aspen, recreation, and mine remediation.
 - July 17 – Wes carpooled with David Griffith to attend the first day of the Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) 2-day meeting in Sacramento. This provided the opportunity for Wes to make connections with many others working on forest health.
 - July 18 – Kimra attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop, which included preliminary information on the next round of RFFCP funding and discussions on resource exchange.
 - July 26 – Wes attended a field meeting with USFS Region 5 State & Private Forestry representatives to discuss post-Tamarack restoration efforts, both private and federal.

Organizational Management and Development

- * Summer 2023 – Rachel, with Wes’s help, reviewed applications for California Climate Action Corps Fellows for the term of September 2023-August 2024, and together they conducted eight interviews. They selected two candidates, both of whom have accepted the offered fellowship. Following a week of orientation with the program coordinator, the Fellows will start work with AWG on September 26.
- * July 31 and August 10 – Kimra and Carl had the first two one-on-one coaching sessions with Solid Ground Consulting sponsored by SNC – RFFCP. The first session was an orientation to discuss AWG’s needs to determine how the five hours of coaching could

most benefit AWG. The second was focused on AWG's draft strategic plan to get guidance on how to make it actionable. Kimra and Carl received excellent guidance on how the strategic plan can be made more succinct and how staff can create annual action plans. They also received excellent resources on nonprofit financial literacy, strategy screening, and mapping out tasks and roles on projects which will be shared with board and staff.

- * August 3 – AWG's returns for fiscal year ending 9-30-2022 were filed by AWG's CPA.
- * August 15 – Kimra and Carl Ruschmeyer conducted Rachel's annual review (which was due in December 2022) and Wes's 2-month review.
- * Summer 2023 – Kimra and Bookkeeper Stacey Huber worked with QuickBooks to set up AWG's own license/subscription for payroll. We discovered that AWG's payroll was under Sierra Nevada Alliance's license, and Kimra and Stacey did not have access to administrative functions.

Fundraising

- * July 24 – Kimra sent a thank you letter for being able to host a bar on June 16 at the Woollystar Music and Film Festival.
- * Creek Day Sponsorships *Received* – Lumos Engineering (\$250) and Desolation Hotel (\$1,000)
- * *Approved* – Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution Grant Program through the Clean Water Act 319(h) funding: For AWG's proposal requesting \$250,000 to complete a geomorphological assessment and sediment transport planning model and develop a project prioritization plan for the Upper West Fork Carson River watershed, on July 19 AWG was notified that the State Water Board approved the funding, contingent on receipt of the 2023 Clean Water Act 319(h) NPS Grant from the US EPA scheduled for August 2023. A condition of this funding is addressing technical reviewer comments during the grant agreement development process.
- * *Received* – California Alpine Club Foundation (CACF) 2023: AWG received a \$2,000 grant for monitoring supplies and laptops for the Fellows. AWG was allowed to spend remaining funds from 2022 grant for a laptop for Wes. AWG had the opportunity to meet with our CACF liaison in Hope Valley on July 27 when he assisted with vegetation monitoring.
- * *Invited* – Bently Foundation: AWG was invited to submit a proposal for Creek Day 2023 requesting the outstanding funds necessary to make the day a success. Application is due August 31.
- * *Invited* – The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment: AWG was invited to submit a proposal to renew general support funding. Application is due September 15.