



# Alpine Watershed Group

*Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps*

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## STAFF REPORT FOR APRIL 23, 2022–JUNE 17, 2022 for Board of Directors Meeting on June 22, 2022

### GRANTS AND CONTRACTS UPDATES

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

On June 7 and 8, Rachel assisted AR with flow and groundwater monitoring in Faith Valley, and Sierra assisted AR with beaver monitoring in Faith Valley and Hope Valley.

Project implementation is scheduled to begin in mid-August. Rachel has finalized the project information flyer for posting in Faith Valley and is working with Julie Fair and Brian Hansen of US Forest Service (USFS) to have the signs posted by mid-July.

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

On April 27, Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Floodplain Management Working Group Meeting.

On May 25, Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Education Working Group Meeting.

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).

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

On May 19, AWG staff and volunteers reinstalled the public exclusionary fence with "Restoration in Progress" signs around Site 1.

On June 13, Jerry Lloyd reinstalled the project sign at the Highway 88 pull-out.

Mo Loden is assisting with time-lapse camera efforts in order to capture seasonal changes at Site 1.

Site 1 is looking very good as far as willow growth and vegetation fill-in. Unfortunately, there are no signs of willow growth at Site 2. Rachel is planning to meet with the project designer and contractor in July to discuss whether or not to reinstall the sprinkler system at Site 1 this dry season. They will also discuss any actions that might be taken at Site 2 as part of the project's adaptive management planning.

#### **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 9, Kimra called into the scheduled MPUD Board Meeting, but the meeting was never convened due to the lack of a quorum.

On June 13, Kimra, Carl Ruschmeyer, Hannah Bartholomew, Jeff Schwein of Green DOT, and MPUD's engineers met with three staff members from Cardno to discuss Cardno's comments on the draft scope of work for final project design. MPUD subsequently provided all topographic survey data from the sewer upgrade project to Cardno. Jeff got Caltrans to provide survey and design information from the bridge replacement project for Cardno. Cardno will use this information to refine the scope of work. The next step for Cardno to develop a cost estimate

for final design services is to schedule a meeting to include Cardno's permitting expert and Alpine County's new Community Development staff to discuss CEQA and permitting.

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

On May 24, Kimra, Rachel, and Sierra went to Grover Hot Springs State Park with Helen Loffland of The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) to discuss the monitoring protocols and sites. Helen conducted bird point monitoring and associated vegetation monitoring on May 25 and June 10.

On June 1, Kimra and Rachel met virtually with Courtney Rowe of California State Parks (CSP) to discuss specific monitoring that AWG can assist CSP with under this grant. Rachel submitted a permit application to conduct scientific research to Courtney on June 10. This includes IBP's bird and associated vegetation surveys, as well as the monitoring by AWG staff desired by CSP: Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys where bulldozer and hand lines went in to monitor for invasive species, and Common Stand Exams in the burn areas surrounding the meadow. The permit notes that AWG staff will use the park to access USFS land to conduct tree survival monitoring on trees planted outside of State Park boundaries at the community volunteer workdays in April and May 2022; Rachel is working with Annabelle Monti and Maureen Easton of the USFS on this monitoring protocol.

On June 9, Sierra conducted photo monitoring in Grover Hot Springs State Park to update previous restoration monitoring photos.

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

On May 4, Kimra and Rachel attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop, which included a presentation on Decision Support Tools (DST)—what they are and who is using them.

After receiving a fully executed agreement from SNC on May 26, the Whitebark Institute of Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies issued a subcontract to AWG. The fully executed subcontract was received by AWG on June 17.

On June 6, Kimra met with Clint Celio to learn about his scope of work under the Alpine County Coordinator contract and to discuss AWG's efforts under the RFFCP EA funding.

On June 14, Rachel attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Meeting to learn about SNC's developing approach to regional planning and to hear about the new RFFCP funding from the Department of Conservation.

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

On June 2, Kimra received her first communication from USBR since August 24, 2021, on AWG's request for a grant extension; she was asked if AWG could still meet the June 30, 2022, end date. After talking with our local liaison about AWG's approach to and timeline for completing the grant deliverables, Kimra submitted an updated milestones chart with an end date of December 31, 2022.

#### **South Tahoe Public Utility District (STPUD, Alpine County):**

Rich presented a summary of the 4-year monitoring program of the treated effluent for Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs) and Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) to the Alpine County Board of Supervisors on May 3.

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

AWG staff received training on the aspen monitoring protocol on June 10. Rachel and Sierra began baseline aspen monitoring on June 16.

We are coordinating with NFF and USFS to lead a public field tour of part of the project area for the July 12 watershed group meeting.

## **RESTORATION & MONITORING PROGRAMS**

### **Tamarack Fire:**

#### Restoration:

AWG staff coordinated with Alpine Trails Association and Annabelle Monti of the USFS to host the May 1 Tree Planting Workday. On that day, 65 volunteers planted 2,230 trees at three sites.

Alpine County is hosting a Tamarack Fire Recovery Update Meeting on Tuesday, June 28, 5-7 p.m. at Turtle Rock Park to discuss the Tamarack Fire restoration and recovery projects. Local, state and federal agencies will be on hand to discuss their projects and how they fit into the larger landscape level picture. There will be a presentation on all projects then an opportunity for questions. The objective of this meeting is to provide an update on restoration projects and facilitate discussion towards the larger recovery. Kimra and Clint Celio are in contact to make sure Clint is aware of AWG's efforts as he finalizes the presentation.

#### Monitoring:

Sierra received feedback from Markleeville Water Company and the USFS on the Musser and Jarvis Monitoring Plan. The first monitoring of the area seeded last November will be conducted within the next two weeks.

#### Interpretation:

The Carson Ranger District's draft content for a Tamarack Fire interpretive panel was circulated to AWG board members on June 16.

### **Adopt-A-Highway:**

On May 14, Rich Harvey led volunteers for the AWG Adopt-a-Highway stretch clean-up in conjunction with the Markleeville Enhancement Committee's Spring Clean-up. Sierra participated in the clean-up. AWG has applied for the new Clean California Program, and we should be able to receive \$250 per Adopt-A-Highway Program volunteer clean-up completed until the program ends on June 30, 2024.

### **Creek Day:**

Rachel has started drafting a list of potential projects for Creek Day. Sierra has been researching in-kind food donations.

### **Monitoring:**

River Monitoring Program: Rachel and Sierra led a River Monitor Training on Saturday, May 21. Five new monitors and two returning monitors attended. On June 9, 10, and 11, Rachel coordinated the June River Monitoring Program, including preparing supplies, running turbidity samples, and participating in the monitoring with volunteers. Sierra also helped to run turbidity samples and participated in monitoring with volunteers. One more new volunteer was trained on June 11.

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring Program: Rachel has been coordinating with the Regional Board on HAB monitoring at Red Lake. Ben Ewing with California Department of Fish and Wildlife collected samples in May. AWG staff will collect samples monthly July through November. Rachel is getting Indian Creek Reservoir HAB sampling updates from South Tahoe Public Utility District. AWG will continue to coordinate with Dr. Johnson so that AWG can help with public outreach on HABs.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **Outreach:**

On April 24, Rachel tabled at the South Lake Tahoe Earth Day Festival. In addition to distributing outreach materials, she used the Enviroscope model as an interactive activity with kids.

On May 3, Kimra announced the May 1 Tree Planting Workday outcomes at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors Meeting as a public comment.

On May 7, Sierra tabled at Washoe Earth Day at the Stewart Community Center. In addition to distributing outreach materials, they used the Enviroscope model as an interactive activity with kids.

Kimra submitted an article on upcoming volunteer opportunities for the *Alpine Threads* summer newsletter; the article had an angle on stewardship leading to environmental career exploration to align with the edition's theme on job skills training.

Rachel submitted information on AWG's July meeting and Creek Day for CWSD's *Watershed Connections* summer newsletter.

Death Ride: Sierra, with support from Kimra, has been planning for AWG's role during Death Ride on July 15-16, including volunteer coordination and coordinating on trash and recycling logistics at Turtle Rock Park.

### **Partnerships:**

On April 28, Rachel attended the Leviathan Mine Superfund Site Virtual Site Tour.

On May 11, Rachel attended the Health and Wellness Coalition meeting.

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

On May 19, Sierra attended the Interagency Meeting and provided updates on the upcoming River Monitor training, HAB sampling, Hope Valley project fencing, AWG July meeting, and Creek Day.

On May 20, Rachel participated in the River Wranglers field trip at River Fork Ranch to observe the activities that River Wranglers leads on field trips.

On May 26, Kimra met with Supervisor Terry Woodrow and Rich Farrington to discuss Indian Valley and future restoration needs.

AWG staff were invited to attend the Alpine County Employee Appreciation Lunch on May 26. Kimra was honored to be included and attended briefly.

On June 7, Kimra attended the Alpine Biomass Collaborative meeting. The presentations on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with respect to forest management were particularly pertinent to AWG's NFWF grant and work at Grover Hot Springs State Park.

On June 8, Kimra attended the Health and Wellness Coalition meeting.

On June 9, Kimra attended the first of four "Wildfire Affiliate" sessions. These sessions were organized by the Key Working Group established to deliver a Joint Strategy to improve access to sustainable recreation that will be presented to California's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task

Force this fall. The purpose of the Joint Strategy is to increase access to sustainable outdoor recreation with a specific focus on actions and investments that can be made to support outdoor recreation communities in California that are exposed to wildfire and smoke impacts, whether in the past, the present, or in the future. The State of California and the USFS are co-leading the development of this Joint Strategy. California's Natural Resources Agency has made clear that they have funding available for identified projects and they are eager to see recommendations from the Joint Strategy. Fellow attendee David Griffith spoke on the need for a massive reforestation effort for a recreation-dependent community devastated by the Tamarack Fire. He also talked about the need for facilitation for planning and then implementation for Turtle Rock Park. Kimra brought up the need to also resume pre-fire sustainable recreation work, and named the three USFS areas needing funds for management plans and then implementation (East Fork Carson hot springs, Scotts Lake, and Blue Lakes Road areas). Kimra also mentioned the county-wide trail planning effort and potential county capacity needs to support that effort. Meeting organizer John Wentworth said if there is any funding gap to let him know—no idea is too crazy.

On June 14, Kimra made her first site visit to the East Fork Carson River hot springs with representatives from the Carson Ranger District, American Rivers, Nevada Offroad Association, Tread Lightly!, and Pine Nut Mountains Trail Association. They accessed the site from the Nevada side. They discussed potential partnerships to address water quality issues.

On June 16, Rachel attended the Interagency Meeting and announced the July 12 tour in Hope Valley.

On June 16, Kimra attended Sierra Nevada Alliance's Take Care Sierra Working Group Meeting.

### **Trainings:**

On April 26-29, Sierra attended the SNAP Spring Training in Chico, CA. The training included two days of building burn piles and removing Scotch broom, and one day of building beaver dam analogs in Lassen National Forest.

On May 19, Rachel attended a webinar on Assessing Reservoir Re-Operations to Improve Aquatic Habitat.

On May 26, Sierra attended a webinar through the Sierra Club Mother Lode Chapter on co-existing with bears.

On May 31, Rachel attended a webinar on climate change effects on weeds and their management.

## **FUNDRAISING**

**2023 Nonpoint Source (NPS) Grant Program – Clean Water Act Section 319(h):** Mo Loden has been in communication with AWG about this grant program. Mo is planning to expand the Lahontan Region 6 Grant Program Preferences for the 2023 NPS Grant Program Guidelines to include subbasins within the Upper Carson River watershed. The RFP release is anticipated in fall 2022. This may be an opportunity to seek implementation funding for projects identified in the West Fork Carson River Vision Plan. (Danny McClure of the Regional Board informed Kimra that the Vision Project schedule has been extended, but we do not have a date to expect the draft plan.) If added, this would make the East Fork Carson River watershed eligible for planning funding; to be eligible for implementation funding, there must be a TMDL/9-element plan. Adding watersheds to the Program Preferences requires State Water Board and US Environmental Protection Agency approval.

**California Alpine Club Foundation:** AWG submitted a request for \$2,500 for restoration, monitoring, and environmental education supplies on June 3.

**The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment:** AWG has been invited to submit a renewal request for General Support. The proposal is due on August 15.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **Staffing:**

Stacey Huber was hired as the new bookkeeper and began training with Cami and Kimra on May 17.