



Alpine Watershed Group

Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps

STAFF REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 23, 2024–APRIL 19, 2024 for Board of Directors Meeting on April 24, 2024

This Staff Report is formatted according to the AWG Strategic Plan to help 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

- * March 7 through 9 – Rachel coordinated the first round of River Monitoring with support from Bella and Kaitlyn.
- * March 11 and March 15 – Rachel and Bella attended webinars focused on groundwater data and modeling during 2024 Groundwater Awareness Week.
- * March 28 – Rachel and Bella attended a webinar on “Clear Lake’s Toxic Legacy: Exploring Cyanotoxin Production and its Impact on Beneficial Uses.”
- * Through April 1 – Monitoring Impacts of Tamarack Fire for Meadow Recovery: AWG received The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) *Final Report Summarizing Post-Tamarack Fire Bird Survey Results for the Grover Hot Springs Meadow in 2022 and 2023* and a memo summarizing IBP’s GIS exercise to identify potential unmapped meadows in Alpine County. Rachel and Kimra completed as much work as possible on the grant final programmatic and financial reports, both due June 1, 2024, since no hours can be billed to the grant after April 1, 2024, when the Period of Performance ended. Work is funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – California Headwaters grant.
- * Through April 19 – Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project: Rachel submitted the quarterly progress report for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Rachel has been working on securing a California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) practitioner for the post-project CRAM survey required this fall. Work is funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).
- * Through April 19 – West Fork Carson Prioritization Project: Rachel worked with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and State Water Board staff to make progress on the grant agreement and submitted a CEQA notice of exemption for the project. She wrote an article on the project for [Alpine Threads Spring 2024 edition](#) to start getting the word out to our community. She also drafted a letter on the project that was sent to landowners adjacent to the West Fork Carson River and its tributaries in Alpine County, coordinating with Alpine County Community Development staff to pull addresses for recipients and mail out the letter on AWG’s behalf. Rachel also began drafting the RFP for the project consultant. Work is currently funded by the Carson Water Subconservancy District grant.

Restoration

- * Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project – As documented in the quarterly progress reports submitted to grant administrator South Tahoe Public Utility District: A February monthly coordination partners meeting was held with various representatives from the AWG team, Alpine County Community Development, Caltrans, Markleeville Public Utility District (MPUD), and Stantec; the March monthly meeting was canceled due to having no pressing items to discuss. Kimra continued to coordinate with MPUD on the sewer upgrade project and with Stantec and Alpine County on project permits and the CEQA addendum, which is finalized but needs to be taken to the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. Stantec’s budget is very tight, and they initiated a discussion with some options that Kimra needs to work out with Alpine County as Stantec suggested that the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) be shifted to the future contractor’s scope of work. Due to the sewer project funding delay which will push the floodplain restoration project implementation to 2025, there is more time for the floodplain restoration project to complete permitting and 100% design, as well as to take items to the Board of Supervisors, including the amendment of the mitigation cooperative agreement between Caltrans and Alpine County. On March 14 Kimra and Bob Twiss attended the MPUD Board Meeting. Funded in part by an Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant.

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

Partnership Development

- * February 27 – Kimra attended the fourth 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 (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). This meeting was focused on review of a case study of other hot springs and their management put together by a new NPS team member, and a presentation by our RTCA liaison synthesizing the responses received from the group assignment to provide input on the management of the site; he identified our many areas of agreement.
- * February 28 – Rachel attended the Carson River Coalition Education Working Group Meeting.
- * March 20 – Kaitlyn attended the Carson River Coalition Agricultural Producers Working Group Meeting.
- * March 20 & April 19 – Bella attended the planning meetings for the 2024 Alpine County Washoe Mountain Gathering.
- * March 22 – Bella and Kaitlyn met with Ed Kleiner and toured Comstock Seed. This visit was the basis for Kaitlyn’s Climate Corner article in the AWG April 2024 Newsletter.
- * March 22 – Bella and Kaitlyn attended Create the Good at the Hung-A-Lel-Ti Firehouse.
- * March 27 – Rachel attended the HELP Meadows Collaborative Workgroup Meeting.
- * March 27 – Bella attended the Alpine County Health and Wellness Coalition meeting.
- * April 9 – Rachel attended the Alpine Trails Association meeting to announce the Whale Tail Grant Program and partnership with ATA.
- * April 9 – Bella attended the Sierra Meadows Partnership bimonthly call, which included a presentation by Dr. Cody Reed of Point Blue who presented on her work refining the Sierra meadows GIS layer and updating the Sierra Meadow Prioritization Tool.

- * April 11 – Kimra attended the third meeting of the new Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) working group focused on fisheries coordination and developing community engagement materials.
- * April 16 – Bella and Kaitlyn participated in the Alpine Trails Association (ATA) tool maintenance workshop. ATA allowed AWG to bring our tools to sharpen them for the upcoming field season.
- * April 19 – Bella attended Create the Good at the Hung-A-Lel-Ti Firehouse.

Community Outreach and Awareness

- * March 5 & 6 – All staff attended the Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) Forum, learning about a variety of watershed topics and making personal connections with others working in the watershed. Bella and Kaitlyn presented on the California Climate Action Corps program and the work that they have accomplished with AWG so far, as well as their future aspirations.
- * March 18 – Kaitlyn and Bella attended the Central Sierra Healthy Soils Information Session so that we could better understand [this program](#) available to Alpine County farmers and ranchers.
- * March 26 – AWG staff released AWG’s [March 2024 Newsletter](#).

Environmental Education

- * March 13 – Rachel and Bella attended the Diamond Valley School staff meeting to get input on AWG’s in-classroom lessons and field trips this spring.
- * Through April 19 – Enhancing Environmental Education in Alpine County: Rachel coordinated with Alpine County Unified School District to get AWG’s curriculum on the May School Board Meeting agenda. She has also reached out to partners including the Washoe Tribe for collaboration on lesson creation. She met with Alpine County Library staff to discuss future school field trips and summer reading program outreach. Kimra attended grant orientation regarding invoicing. Work is funded by California Coastal Commission’s Whale Tail Grants Program.

California Climate Action Corps (CCAC) Fellows

- * Ongoing – Rachel has attended California Climate Action Corps Site Supervisor meetings monthly. She continues to submit timecards bimonthly for each Fellow and has continued to work with Bella and Kaitlyn to submit Monthly Climate Reports that are required through the program. On March 19 she conducted mid-term evaluations with Kaitlyn and Bella.
- * March 14 – Bella and Kaitlyn attended a mid-term retreat for their program.
- * Bella completed the new display board for AWG’s tabling events.
- * Kaitlyn started an 11-week UCLA extension virtual course on Soil and Plant Nutrition.
- * Bella and Kaitlyn have participated in many webinars related to climate change and forest resilience, including:
 - ArcGIS trainings (free through ESRI): GIS Cartography Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) – Goals are to learn the cartographer’s craft from experienced professionals; apply the latest ArcGIS Pro 2D and 3D map design tools; author beautiful, effective information products and publish them online; and acquire valuable GIS mapping skills that employers seek.
 - Webinar in 2025 Update to California’s Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy series “Croplands”

- Webinar by North America Invasive Species Management Association “Annual USGS Invasive Species Research Forum – Better Living Through Modern Invasion Science”
- Webinar by Outdoor Learning Team “Enhancing Climate Change Education Through Active Learning”
- Webinar by Soil Food Web School “Cultivating Living Soils: Why Soil Matters and How to Further your Education in Soil Regeneration”
- Webinar by North America Invasive Species Management Association “Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing the Next Plant Invasion”
- Webinar by California Department of Fish and Wildlife “Annual Salmon Information Meeting”
- Webinar by Western Landowners Alliance “Irrigation Efficiencies and Modernization for Agricultural Producers”
- Virtual Workshop hosted by the Nevada Silver Jackets “Nevada Watershed University”
- Webinar by California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment “Vegetation and Wildfires”
- Webinar by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Forest Stewardship Education Program “Bear and Predator Conflict and Mitigation in a Changing Landscape”
- Webinar by San Francisco Estuary Institute, Aquatic Science Center, California Ocean Protection Council “Focus Group: Northern Region – Statewide Plastics Monitoring”
- Webinar by The Fire Networks “California’s Prescribed Fire (R)evolution: Changing Hearts, Minds, and Landscapes”
- Webinar/Virtual Workshop by University of Wyoming (and other partners) “Defending and Growing the Core by Breaking the Cycle of Annual Grass Invasion”
- Webinar by The Plastics & Climate Project “Plastics & Climate: Exploring What We Know, Impacts on Vulnerable Communities, and How to Solve the Problem”
- Webinar by Soil Food Web School “‘Ask Me Anything’ with Dr. Elaine Ingham”
- Webinar by the Outdoor Learning Team “The Wonders of Water: Practical Ideas and Resources for Educators”
- Webinar in California Fire Science Webinar Series “Victims or Survivors? The Cost of Culture in Fire Recovery”
- Webinar by Tribal Forestry “Understanding Current Issues and Challenges in Contemporary and Traditional Management of Forested Landscapes”

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 Sierra Nevada Conservancy – Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (SNC – RFFCP):
 - AWG staff provided quarterly progress report 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 \(FHCWG\)](#), which met on February 27 and March 19.
 - AWG staff had several meetings with various FHCWG partners to plan for the second annual Alpine County Arbor Day event to be held on April 26. Sugar Pine Foundation is providing Jeffrey pines to be planted on BLM property around Curtz Lake. AWG staff

worked with Alpine County Wildfire Project Coordinator Clint Celio on outreach for the event, including Bella and Kaitlyn creating the flyer. AWG staff met with Clint to discuss seedling survivability survey protocol.

- AWG has been coordinating the logistics for the June 5 FHCWG public meeting, at which USFS Forest Ecologist Ali Paulson will present on post-Tamarack Fire monitoring data.
- March 8 – Bella and Kaitlyn virtually attended SNC’s Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Summit
- March 19 – Kimra, Bella, Kaitlyn, and Clint Celio attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop, which included updates on the program accomplishments, including SNC staff sharing [this video](#) featuring former AWG Forest Health Coordinator Wes Mosley.
- March 19 – Kaitlyn and Bella attended the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) Office Hours, this one focused on reforestation, specifically planting techniques and densities.
- March 25 – Kimra, Bella, and Kaitlyn participated in the conceptual design meeting led by the [Fuels and Vegetation Education \(FAVE\) Program](#) for a prescribed burn workshop that FHCWG is planning for this summer.
- April 17 – Kimra participated in the Sierra Nevada Cohort Call hosted by CARCD. This conversation was focused on CARCD getting feedback on what workshops have been most useful to subgrantees and getting input on future workshops.

Organizational Management and Development

- * Forest Health Coordinator: Kimra conducted phone screenings of the applicants and worked with Carl and Rich to set up in-person interviews.
- * April 16 – Kimra and Carl Ruschmeyer conducted Rachel’s annual review.

Fundraising

- * Woollystar Bar – On March 21, Kimra and Amy Mecak of Alpine Trails Association met with Woollystar Festival organizers Daniel Strickland and Frank Gibbs to touch base on potential product donations and other logistics for the bar.
- * *Received* – California Climate Action Corps Fellowships: AWG has been approved for two fellows for the 2024-25 program (September 16, 2024 – August 14, 2025).
- * *Pending* – Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD): Following her presentation, Ed James informed Kimra that the CWSD Finance Committee recommended funding AWG’s full funding request of \$30,000 for Upper Carson River Watershed Programs. The CWSD Board approved the FY 2024-25 Tentative Budget on March 20, which included AWG’s funding request.
- * *Pending* – The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment: AWG applied for a \$5,000 Professional Development Grant to covers fees and staff time for a variety of professional development opportunities desired by AWG staff.
- * *Pending* – 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 for the Upper East Fork Carson River watershed, Rachel and Kimra responded to comments and questions on AWG’s application.

- * *Pending* – SNC – RFFCP Round 3: Alpine County was invited to submit an agreement development form to include a subgrant to AWG. On April 16 the Board of Supervisors authorized the Board Chair to sign the finalized agreement, with JT Chevallier as the day-to-day contact. The form is due on May 4, 2024. Kimra is working with Clint Celio to fill out the form.
- * *Rejected* –The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment: AWG was not selected to apply for a Tech Capacity Grant, nor to participate in the foundation’s Deep Dive Tech Capacity opportunity at this time. Kimra asked for feedback, and was told that they had an enormous response to this RFP, with so many organizations having urgent tech needs, and they couldn’t invite as many organizations to apply for funding as they would have liked; there was no specific feedback on our application.