



Alpine Watershed Group

Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps

STAFF REPORT FOR DECEMBER 9, 2023–FEBRUARY 22, 2024 for Board of Directors Meeting on February 28, 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

- * Winter 2023-2024 – Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project: Wes reinstalled the reprogrammed time-lapse camera to resume taking periodic photos. Rachel submitted the Annual Monitoring Report to the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the quarterly progress report for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Bella transferred all photo monitoring photos into the new photo monitoring template. Work is funded by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (Kirkwood settlement).
- * Winter 2023-2024 – Wes organized the 2023 aspen monitoring data collected for the West Fork Carson Project and submitted it to the National Forest Foundation. Funding procured by National Forest Foundation (NFF).
- * Winter 2023-2024 – Monitoring Impacts of Tamarack Fire for Meadow Recovery: Rachel, Bella, and Kaitlyn met with American Rivers staff to discuss their work on meadow assessment in the Caldor Fire burn scar. Kaitlyn began spatial analysis of the meadows analyzed by AWG in 2023. The intent is to identify potential restoration projects upstream, downstream, and in the meadows burned during the Tamarack Fire. Work is funded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – California Headwaters grant.
- * December 13 – Rachel attended a Regulatory Program Workshop webinar on “Submittal of Monitoring Reports, Section 401 Water Quality Certification Process, 2023 Amended Water of the US.”
- * January 31 – Rachel attended an EPA webinar on “Algal Blooms, Hypoxia, and Nutrients Research – Development and Application of Harmful Algal Blooms Forecasting Science.”
- * February 1 – Rachel attended a workshop hosted by Nevada Department of Environmental Protection on using the upgraded Pollutant Load Estimation Tool created by the Environmental Protection Agency. This is helpful for writing nonpoint source pollution grants.

Restoration

- * Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project – As documented in the quarterly progress reports submitted to grant administrator South Tahoe Public Utility District, monthly coordination team meetings continue to be held with various representatives from the AWG team, Alpine County Community Development, Caltrans, Markleeville Public Utility District (MPUD), and Stantec. The schedule is still for MPUD to implement their sewer upgrade project followed by the floodplain restoration project in 2024, but the timing is very tight as

MPUD is still waiting for their implementation grant contract. Stantec has submitted the permit application to California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Stantec passed on the draft CEQA addendum for AWG and Alpine County review. Key activities in the next few months are submitting the remaining permit applications for the floodplain restoration project; and presenting a project update, the CEQA addendum for approval, and an updated mitigation cooperative agreement between Caltrans and Alpine County for approval to the Board of Supervisors. On December 14 Kimra and Bob Twiss attended the Markleeville Public Utility District 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

- * December 11 – Rachel, Kimra, Bella, and Kaitlyn participated in CWSD’s interview with Alpine County Community Development staff to update the Carson River Floodplain Management Plan, and AWG staff subsequently provided verbiage for various updates needed.
- * December 12 – Bella and Kaitlyn attended the Sierra Meadows Partnership bimonthly call, which included presentations by Katie Lundquist of Occidental Arts and Ecology Center’s Bring Back the Beaver Campaign and Valerie Cook of California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Both spoke to the utilization of beaver reintroduction to support habitat restoration efforts in California.
- * December 29 – AWG issued a letter of support for Alpine Fire Safe Council’s CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grants Program application for fuels reduction work at three areas in Eastern Alpine County, two in the Woodfords area and one in Marklee Village.
- * January 9 – Kimra attended the third 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. Although there was not Alpine County staff or Board of Supervisors representation at this meeting, Friends of Hope Valley and Alpine Trails Association joined the conversation, which was focused on identifying all of the routes being used to access the hot springs and a brainstorm of other hot springs with management plans that might inform this site.
- * January 9 – Rachel attended the Alpine County Health and Wellness Coalition meeting.
- * January 11 – Kimra attended the second meeting of the new Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) working group focused on fisheries coordination and developing community engagement materials.
- * January 11 –Kaitlyn and Bella attended a webinar on “Understanding Social Vulnerability Maps and Models.”
- * January 18 – Kimra attended the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson RIT Meeting.
- * January 19 and February 16 – Kaitlyn and Bella observed the Washoe Environmental Protection Department pile burning for the willow thinning project on Tribal land that they assisted with in December.
- * January 23 – Kimra, Rich Harvey, and Mary Young attended the Alpine Trails Association meeting.
- * January 24 – Kaitlyn and Bella attended the Carson River Coalition Floodplain Management Working Group Meeting virtually.

- * January 31 – Rachel and Kaitlyn attended the Carson River Coalition Agricultural Producers Working Group Meeting.
- * February 7 – Bella attended the planning meeting for the 2024 Alpine County Washoe Mountain Gathering.
- * February 13 – Kaitlyn and Bella attended the Sierra Meadows Partnership bimonthly call, which included a presentation on “Carbon Stocks and Total Belowground Carbon Fluxes” by Brian Morra with the Nevada Soil Ecology Lab of University of Nevada, Reno and US Department of Agriculture.

Community Outreach and Awareness

- * December 20 – AWG signed on to Sierra Nevada Alliance’s Take Care Sierra Working Group Charter. The mission of Take Care Sierra is to spread positive and informative messages to the residents and visitors of the Sierra Nevada that teach them how to interact with the delicate ecosystem without being disruptive. By signing on, working group members agree to try to attend at least 50% of the bimonthly meetings, and members’ logos, websites, events, and calls to action will be linked to on the [Take Care Sierra webpage](#). Alpine Trails Association also signed on.
- * January 3 – Rachel was interviewed by a UC Irvine researcher regarding drought and climate change in Alpine County. The project will include a collective of interviews for all over the state on community impacts and priorities around mitigation of drought and other impacts associated with climate change.
- * February 7 – Rachel attended the Take Care Sierra Working Group Meeting.
- * February 8 – Bella and Kaitlyn tabled at the Eagles & Agriculture Opening Reception & Photography Exhibit. They interacted with 25 people and got three new newsletter sign-ups.
- * After Rachel attended several webinars by AWG’s email newsletter service provider to understand the new requirements by Google and Yahoo for sending email newsletters, AWG purchased the email address info@alpinewatershedgroup.org to comply with the requirement that future newsletters be sent from a domain email address.
- * Articles in partners’ newsletters:
 - o [Alpine Threads Winter 2024](#) “Alpine Watershed Group Welcomes Two New Team Members” and county staff write-up on “Alpine County 2023 Cigarette Butt Audit”
 - o CWSD [Watershed Connections Winter 2023/Spring 2024](#) “Climate Action Fellows Join AWG” and “Tree Planting Spawns Survey”

Environmental Education

- * January 27 – Bella attended the Master Gardeners of Douglas County seed swap to learn about seed bombs for a future youth environmental education lesson.
- * January 30 – Rachel, Bella, and Kaitlyn attended a webinar “Starting Strong: Tips for Creating a Conservation Education Program with Limited Resources”

California Climate Action Corps (CCAC) Fellows

- * Ongoing – Rachel has attended California Climate Action Corps Site Supervisor meetings. She continues to work on the scope of work for specific projects, has been submitting 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.
- * Kaitlyn has been doing extensive research on community and school composting programs to provide support to Alpine County for upcoming CalRecycle requirements. This included

touring a South Tahoe Unified School District campus during lunchtime to observe the school composting system, and setting up a tour for AWG staff of Full Circle Composting facility.

- * Bella researched and purchased a new display board for AWG’s tabling events, and has been working to update all of the display board content, which is nearly ready for printing.
- * Bella and Kaitlyn created an ArcGIS Storymap, which was a required project for all CCAC Fellows intended to showcase their work with their host partner organization. The Storymap detailed the American Rivers-led Faith Valley beaver dam analog (BDA) project, and the impact that beavers have on climate resilience.
- * Bella and Kaitlyn have participated in many webinars related to climate change and forest resilience, including:
 - ArcGIS trainings (free through ESRI): GIS Going Places with Spatial Analysis Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) – Goals are to understand why location really matters in a wide range of business and policy decisions, understand some of the distinguishing characteristics that make spatial data special, learn how to identify and describe uses of several spatial analysis techniques, and gain hands-on experience with authentic spatial analysis workflows in a cloud-based mapping environment.
 - Webinar “A Special Conversation with Rosanna Zia—California Against the Sea”
 - Webinar “Forest Health Grants and Forest Practice Documents: Can They Be Used Together to Create a More Resilient Landscape?”
 - Webinar “California Water Data Consortium Data for Lunch”
 - Webinar “Applications of the Lost Meadows Model for Management” — This model is informing AWG’s ArcGIS mapping of meadows within the Tamarack Fire burn scar. We are currently collaborating with this USFS team to produce a model localized to the Alpine County region.
 - Webinar “Post Fire Response and Regeneration: A Permaculture Perspective”
 - Webinar “Defending the Legitimacy of New Jersey Community Water Monitoring Data”
 - Webinar “Rancher Innovations to Support Soil Health and Water Management Amidst a Changing Climate”
 - Webinar “Water & Weather Briefing” by National Weather Service – Reno
 - Webinar “Managing Eco-Anxiety through Outdoor Learning”
 - Webinar “How to Address Climate Change by Talking About it” with Katharine Hayhoe
 - Webinar “The Future of Farming” with Dr. Vandana Shiva and Dr. Elaine Ingham
 - Webinar “Vulnerable Communities: Using Data Tools to Apply for Grants”
 - Webinar “Overview of Prescribed Fire Liability in State Law”
 - Webinar “Mixed Species Orchard: Little Dog Farm’s Regenerative Story”
 - 2025 Update to California’s Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy webinar series: “Kick-off,” “Grasslands Virtual Workshop,” “Sparsely Vegetated Lands,” “Shrublands and Chaparral,” and Developed Lands”
 - Webinar “Is Use It or Lose It an Absolute: Historical Consumptive Use in Colorado and Understanding Your Water Rights” — Hosted by the Western Landowners Alliance, this webinar provided useful insight into the dynamics of agriculture and water usage.
 - Webinar “Saving Salmon: State Actions Needed to Recover Salmon Populations in California” — This California Natural Resources Agency webinar was particularly insightful and timely with the dam removal movement happening in California right now. Perspectives were well accounted for, and the webinar informed us on issues surrounding anadromous fish.
 - Webinar “A Look at the Mysteries and Secrets of Harmful Algal Blooms”

- Webinar “PFAS Basics, Part One” of a seven-part webinar series — Provided a review of the chemistry and nomenclature, sources of PFAS in the environment, exposure pathways and risk, a glimpse of the varied guidance and regulation that is available nationwide, and an introduction to various sampling and analytical considerations
- Webinar “Tribal Forestry: Understanding Current Issues and Challenges”
- Webinar “Reflections from 20 Years Examining the Social Dynamics of Fire Management”

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.
 - January 16 – Kimra, Bella, and Kaitlyn attended the RFFCP Subgrantee Workshop, which featured a presentation by researchers on “What Does Collaborative Capacity Make Possible.”
 - January 28 – Mary Young and Kimra joined Annabelle Monti/USFS to present on the Musser and Jarvis Restoration outcomes and other post-Tamarack Fire restoration work for the Society for Range Management Tour stop in Alpine County.

Organizational Management and Development

- * Forest Health Coordinator: Wes Mosley’s last day with AWG was December 15. The job announcement was finalized and released on January 25. On February 6, Kimra made a public comment asking for Board of Supervisors assistance with getting the word out.
- * With support from our SNC – RFFCP liaison, Kimra launched a new staff timesheet which uses a pivot table. This will allow staff to easily pull reports on tasks for grant reporting.
- * Kimra implemented the new operating reserve policy: She estimated that three months of operating costs based on the approved budget for fiscal year ending 9-30-2024 is \$51,054, and she made the transfer necessary to bring the Bank of America Savings – Unrestricted account to that amount.
- * AWG has received an extension on filing 2022 tax returns; the new due date is August 15, 2024.
- * December 21 – Kimra had the final one-on-one coaching sessions with Solid Ground Consulting sponsored by SNC – RFFCP. The session was focused on the topics of matching donation campaigns and partnering with our local Tribe.
- * January 23 – Kimra attended the California Employment Law Update 2024 offered by one of AWG’s insurers. A change in the law regarding paid sick time requirements will require an update to AWG’s policy/Employee Handbook.
- * February 23 - Carl Ruschmeyer conducted Kimra’s annual review.

Fundraising

- * *Pending* – California Climate Action Corps Fellowships: Rachel submitted an application for two Fellows for September 2024-August 2025. The program anticipates letting partners know if application is approved in March.

- * *Received* – AWG received a \$10,000 grant for general support from the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, the second year of the three-year commitment.
- * *Pending* – Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD): Kimra submitted a funding request for \$30,000 for Upper Carson River Watershed Programs. On February 6, Kimra requested and received approval for a letter of support for the grant application from the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. Kimra will present the proposal to the CWSD Finance Committee on February 26.
- * *Pending* – Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution Grant Program through the Clean Water Act 319(h) funding: Rachel submitted a proposal requesting \$250,000 to complete a geomorphological assessment and sediment transport planning model for the Upper East Fork Carson River on December 15. Part of the proposed work will be to determine priority areas within the watershed to assess.
- * *Pending* – SNC – RFFCP Round 3: The proposal went to the SNC management team on January 22. If progressed, we will receive a proposed outline of the agreement and the agreement development form. If both capacity building (AWG) and project development (Alpine County) funding is provided, we will need to determine which entity will take on the agreement with SNC.
- * *Received*– Trout Unlimited Sagebrush Chapter Conservation Grant Program: AWG received \$6,460 in funding for the project “Engaging Our Community in Upper Carson River Watershed Health” to help support Creek Day 2024, Snapshot Day 2024, AWG’s involvement in the East Fork Carson River Hot Springs planning group, and AWG’s involvement in Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Carson RIT meetings.
- * *Received* – Whale Tail Grant Program: California Coastal Commission approved \$18,787 in funding for the project “Enhancing Environmental Education in Alpine County” to fund eight classroom lessons and four field trips for Diamond Valley School students and eight classroom lessons and two field trips for Bear Valley students in 2024 and 2025, as well as materials to support the lessons and for the Alpine County Library summer reading program.