



# Alpine Watershed Group

*Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps*

---

## STAFF REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 20, 2021–APRIL 23, 2021 for Board of Directors Meeting on April 28, 2021

### GRANTS AND CONTRACTS UPDATES

#### **Alpine County District Attorney Environmental Fund:**

Kimra sent a letter to District Attorney Michael Atwell on April 1 regarding AWG's use of funds from the District Attorney Civil Penalty Account #500-512-25599-000 which was fully expended in the quarter ending on June 30, 2020. The letter introduced Alpine Watershed Group to the new District Attorney and provided an update on the Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project. Mr. Atwell acknowledged received of the letter on April 12 and asked to be on AWG's mailing list.

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

Mo presented on AWG's [Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\) Monitoring Program](#) at Carson River Coalition's March 10 Watershed Wednesday on Recreation and on the [Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project](#) at the March 17 Watershed Wednesday on Floodplain Protection, and she participated in both days' panel discussions. Mo, Kimra, and Ky coordinated so that the most pertinent staff member(s) watched the pre-recorded Watershed Wednesdays presentations and attended the live panel discussions. The playlists for each of the five Watershed Wednesdays are available here:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7gdKmh76lPiV\\_sgflG-0nQ/playlists](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7gdKmh76lPiV_sgflG-0nQ/playlists)

Mo presented on the Hope Valley Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project at the CWSO Board of Directors meeting the evening of March 17. She responded to a few questions, including about the project costs and funding sources. Director Jacobs suggested this would be a good project site to visit when field trips resume. Her presentation (same recording as for the Watershed Wednesday) is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWE4ZbqzUzU>

CWSO launched their second video in the I Am Carson River Watershed Campaign series, "[Water Connects Us All.](#)" Mo Loden and many other familiar faces can be seen!

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

The large project info sign was rehung on April 12.

After assessing the current snow melt and the weather forecast and consulting the project contractor, Mo started the access route seeding on April 12, but she ran into technical difficulties with our seed spreader. She was able to do seeding with a push spreader on April 13.

Mo continued looking into Site 2's unauthorized use matter with appropriate California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, and US Department of Agriculture staff, but we have not yet resolved the issue.

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

At the PPCP Committee meeting on March 15, the committee decided that the remaining budget will likely afford all of the normal/regular sampling in 2021, and we might be able to accommodate microplastics, duplicates, or blanks. The committee will reassess the budget at the

end of the summer to determine if there are funds remaining to allow those additions to the last sampling event in October.

Mo continues to work with California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) staff to upload AWG's results to a public database.

Mo conducted the first round of 2021 sampling on April 23.

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

Kimra is planning for the May 11 AWG virtual meeting, which will continue the conversation started at the March 9 AWG meeting on recreation. Kimra and Cindy are coordinating on the fourth and final Vision Plan forum, to be focused on ranching, for later in 2021.

Ky has reached out to most prospective Projects Committee members and received several positive responses to assist on sections of the plan related to their area of expertise.

## **RESTORATION & MONITORING PROGRAMS**

### **Restoration:**

Rich is planning to lead the AWG Adopt-A-Highway spring cleanup on May 8 in conjunction with the Markleeville Enhancement Committee spring event.

### **Monitoring:**

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board again received funding from the State Water Board to pay for lab fees for Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) sample analyses. Mo has received the plan for 2021, which includes a sampling schedule for Red Lake similar to 2020 (monthly June through November), as well as a few sampling events at Heenan Lake and potentially Kinney Lake around the holidays (Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day).

Mo prepped for and coordinated water quality collections at all accessible sites for the River Monitoring Program on March 11-13. Mo created an online [AWG River Monitoring Tutorial Video](#) to support new or returning volunteer monitors with their river monitoring skills.

Mo is working on the water quality objectives report for 2020 monitoring data.

Mo and Kimra fielded Christine Aralia's report about a suspected illegal miner on the East Fork Carson River below Hangman's Bridge. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) sent Warden Pica to check the area but found nothing to report. He plans to continue to patrolling the area for possible future violations.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **Outreach:**

On March 2, Kimra announced the March 9 AWG meeting as a public comment at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

For AWG's virtual bimonthly meeting on March 9 on "Recreation: Trends, Impacts, and Solutions for the West Fork Carson," 53 people signed up and 40 people signed into the meeting. Cindy Wise gave an overview of the West Fork Carson River Vision Project; Brian Hansen presented on the public lands managed by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in the watershed; and Shelly Blair presented on the public lands managed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife in the watershed.

Kimra submitted a blurb on the Watershed Project Ideas Survey for the Diamond Valley Elementary School newsletter mailed out in March.

Alpine Watershed Group was featured in California Alpine Club's March 2021 *Trails* newsletter as one of the foundation's grant-funded organizations.

Mo and Kimra assisted Rich Harvey in getting Alpine County Public Works to order two replacement signs for the edge of the highway above Markleeville Creek near Elizabeth Coyan Park to direct visitors to use the trail to access the creek instead of cutting down the hillside and causing erosion.

Mo created a flyer and a coloring page for an [Earth Day Challenge](#) for Alpine County youth. She prepared 120 sets of the challenge for distribution at the Teddy Bear Parades on April 24 at Markleeville Library and April 30 at Bear Valley Library.

After John Wentworth's presentation on the Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Initiative at the April 20 Board of Supervisors meeting, Rich Harvey announced the May 11 AWG meeting that will continue the conversation on recreation issues to help build coordination and cooperation for public lands management.

### **Partnerships:**

On February 24, Mo participated in the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) Recovery Public Meeting that included a brief overview of LCT biology and the updated goals and objectives for LCT conservation actions.

On March 1, Kimra participated in the Health and Wellness Coalition meeting. The next 3-year tobacco work plan (for 2022-2025) will be written in 2021, and a health assessment is used to plan for that. This coalition meeting was the start of the health assessment.

On March 2, Mo attended the Alpine Biomass Collaborative virtual meeting at which Dr. Stanley Kitchen presented on aspen restoration in Utah with applicability to the intermountain west; the information is applicable to our staff for the West Fork Carson Project in partnership with the National Forest Foundation (if funded). Mo announced AWG's March meeting and plugged the Watershed Project Ideas Survey.

On March 9, Kimra attended the Sierra Nevada Alliance (SNA) meeting on Sierra-wide Earth Day Coordination & Sierra Stewardship Campaign. SNA presented daily themes for Earth Day week based on South Lake Tahoe's Earth Day week themes; after receiving partner information, SNA would prepare a web page to advertise all Earth Day events in the Sierra. SNA is also working with the Take Care Tahoe consultant to potentially work on a similar unified stewardship campaign for the Sierra Nevada (SNA has pending grants to fund this project). There will be a stewardship campaign committee to plan for campaign rollout throughout the Sierra; the next meeting will be in May.

On March 25, Kimra participated in the Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP) quarterly workshop on "[Planning for Climate Change in the Sierra Nevada.](#)" The three panelists—Danna Stroud, Jason Kuiken of the Stanislaus National Forest, and Mikey Goralnik of Mariposa County—offered helpful perspectives on cross-jurisdictional collaboration to achieve more sustainable and more inclusive recreation and overall resiliency.

On April 1, Mo and Rich Harvey participated in the California Bicycle Coalition Stakeholder Meeting focused on promoting safe road bike travel while stimulating local economies.

On April 6, Mo attended the Alpine Biomass Collaborative virtual meeting with presentations on prescribed burning and regulation of smoke due to prescribed burns. This meeting connected Mo with Phill Kiddoo of the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, who offered to help Mo on the guidelines she is drafting on working with volunteers in smoky conditions.

On April 13, Kimra participated in the bimonthly Sierra Meadows Partnership call, which included a presentation by Helen Loffland from the Institute for Bird Populations on meadow bird response to restoration.

On April 13, Mo and Kimra had a call with CWSD staff to discuss the next steps in addressing the issues at the East Fork Carson hot springs.

On April 15, Kimra attended the Interagency Meeting. She announced AWG's May meeting and Earth Day Challenge and the May 8 Markleeville Enhancement Committee spring event.

## **FUNDRAISING**

### **The Campbell Foundation:**

On March 31, Kimra submitted an application for \$10,000 in general support.

### **Carson Water Subconservancy District:**

Kimra presented AWG's funding request for \$25,000 for 2021-2022 for AWG's Upper Carson River Watershed Programs to CWSD's Finance Committee on March 1, and this request was recommended for full funding to the CWSD Board on March 17. She presented the CWSD funding request at the March 2 Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting. The Board of Supervisors suggested that in the future AWG request a letter of support for their CWSD funding request rather than request approval of the funding proposal; the application does not need to be drafted and included in the agenda transmittal requesting the letter of support.

Kimra presented AWG's funding request for \$27,911 for 2021-2022 to support finalizing planning for the Markleeville Creek Floodplain Restoration Project to CWSD's Finance Committee on March 1; the committee did not recommend funding this request.

**Clarence H. Heller Foundation:** Mo followed up but still has not received a response on our letter of inquiry to support AWG's staff time for the HAB Monitoring Program.

### **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 Relocation Project:**

Kimra has not received the draft proposal for CDFW from Caltrans' Senior Mitigation Specialist, but she did receive a draft schedule, which included notification that the bridge replacement construction contract was awarded on March 18, 2021. The goal is to have the Final Habitat Restoration and Mitigation Plan to CDFW in July after tree removals have been documented, and a draft cooperative agreement for county review in May.

On March 11, Kimra participated in the MPUD Board Meeting, at which the Board adopted the CEQA Addendum. MPUD's engineer could not predict how long the implementation funding will take to be approved once the application packet is submitted, which is anticipated to be this summer, but he notified the board that not having the required audit could hold up the application, and he suggested they start the audit process. AWG and Alpine County received the CEQA Addendum on March 15. The Draft Feasibility Study Report for the Sewer Pump Station Relocation was submitted to the State Water Board for review and comment on March 31, and it was forwarded to AWG and Alpine County on April 2.

**National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) Restoration & Resilience COVID Recovery Fund:** Mo submitted an application for \$2,500 to fund a summer "Earth Day" invasives removal event and a fall native grass planting day at Grover Hot Springs State Park.

**Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE):** We were informed that Mo was not selected to participate in the PACE program.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **Finance Committee:**

Zach Wood, Michael Barton, Cami Chavez, and Kimra met virtually on April 21. Cami explained the details of how re-appropriating the Bank of America savings account that was formerly used for the DA Trust Fund for use as a “Deferred” account would work: Any grant funds that AWG receives in advance of work being completed will be placed in the “Deferred Savings Account,” and then at the end of each quarter the amount expended will be transferred into AWG’s checking account. This currently would apply to funds from CWSD, Trout Unlimited, and the Alpine County Tobacco Program. Cami explained that this is standard operating procedure for most organizations, and it is a very clean way to operate. The other committee members agreed with this approach, and Cami will set up the new “Deferred Savings Account” as part of Q2 quarter-end work.

The committee also concurred on advancing the updated Financial Policies and Procedures for board approval and reviewed how Cami creates the Billable Rates spreadsheet. Michael, Zach, and Kimra will collaborate on Michael briefing the board on key things to look at on financial reports at the June board meeting.