



# Alpine Watershed Group

*Protecting the Headwaters of the California Alps*

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## STAFF REPORT FOR JUNE 19, 2021–AUGUST 20, 2021 for Board of Directors Meeting on August 25, 2021

### GRANTS AND CONTRACTS UPDATES

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

On July 13, Mo assisted AR with flow and groundwater monitoring, and she and AR had a site meeting with US Forest Service Hydrologist Jeff O'Connell.

Project implementation is scheduled to begin on August 30. AR is working on a construction sign that will include AWG's logo as a project partner.

Mo drafted a flyer that has been submitted to US Forest Service staff for review to alert visitors that some roads and dispersed camping areas will be closed during construction. Julie Fair/AR thought that posting this flyer was less time sensitive due to the Forest Closure Order, but on August 17 Julie found that there are numerous dispersed campers in the project staging and access areas despite the closures.

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

On July 8, Mo participated in the Carson River Coalition Invasive Species Working Group meeting.

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

On June 25, Mo did post-project photo monitoring. On June 28 and 29, Mo did post-project vegetation monitoring.

AWG staff and volunteers have been running the sprinklers at Site 1 and Site 2 one to three times each week.

Mo has continued to keep CDFW staff apprised of project updates pertaining to watering events and Site 1's public exclusionary fence.

Mo has continued time-lapse camera efforts in order to capture seasonal changes at Site 1.

Mo was interviewed by the *Sierra Nevada Ally* about the project, resulting in this article being published on August 9: <https://www.sierranevadaally.org/2021/08/09/innovative-approach-hope-valley-restoration-project-shows-early-signs-success/>.

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

Mo conducted the second round of 2021 sampling on July 9.

Mo and Kimra have started assessing the budget left to plan accordingly for the last Year 4 sampling event in October.

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

On August 10, there was finally movement on the processing of AWG's request for a grant extension: Kimra was asked to revise the original milestone table with new planned start dates and end dates. Kimra had originally inquired about an extension through October; in response to this request for dates, she explained Ky's resignation and the Tamarack Fire, which impacts the recommendations we foresee making in our watershed plan/grant report. She is waiting to hear back if it is possible to shift out the end date further.

## **RESTORATION & MONITORING PROGRAMS**

### **Tamarack Fire:**

Mo collected four water samples on July 31 given the storms forecast. She worked with STPUD's lab to assess the samples for phosphorus and total dissolved solids.

Mo collected water samples on August 2 with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) staff.

LRWQCB is working on a sampling plan to capture the water conditions over the subsequent year or so post-fire. They will share the plan when it is further developed.

On August 3, Kimra, Rich Harvey, and Bob Twiss participated in the Chamber of Commerce Tamarack Fire Recovery Call. This meeting initiated the discussion on how to assess needs and disburse funds raised by the Chamber.

Mo organized a call on August 9 with the various public agencies involved in fire recovery as well as some similar nonprofits with fire recovery experience to help guide AWG in fire recovery collaboration and assistance. We are waiting to hear back from the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) co-leads to schedule field trips to key areas.

On August 13, Mo attended the Cal OES Watershed/Debris Flow Task Force – Tamarack Fire meeting as recommended by JT Chevallier.

### **Creek Day:**

Mo continued planning for Creek Day, reaching out to various agencies and individuals to help identify projects and crew leaders for the September 18 workday.

In addition to the funding already secured from Trout Unlimited Sagebrush Chapter and forthcoming from the Alpine County Tobacco Control Program for Creek Day support, Kimra secured sponsorships from Bently Heritage, Resource Concepts, Inc., Starbucks Roasting Plant, and Wildscape Engineering.

The flyer will be finalized after the board meeting discussion.

### **Monitoring:**

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring Program: Mo collected samples at Red Lake on July 12 and August 16. There were no cyanotoxin concentrations detected above the lowest trigger level in the June and July samples. August results are not in yet, and the lake continues to display healthy conditions in comparison to previous years.

Mo prepped for and coordinated water quality collections at all sites for the River Monitoring Program on August 12-14.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **Outreach:**

On July 6, Mo announced the July 13 Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) Recovery and AWG meetings and Creek Day as a public comment at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

For AWG's bimonthly meeting on July 13, following the LCT recovery meeting, we walked to Heritage Park. Kimra gave an overview of the sewer relocation project and the floodplain restoration project that will follow Caltrans' bridge replacement project.

Death Ride: On the morning of July 16, Kimra and Andy Lovell set up recycling and AWG's tent and outreach materials at Turtle Rock Park. Volunteers collected recyclables and did outreach for AWG throughout the day. Kimra helped Debbi Waldear close down the recycling and the outreach booth when the event was called off due to the Tamarack Fire.

Mo submitted an article on the environmental impacts of cigarette butt litter for the *Alpine Threads* summer newsletter.

### **Partnerships:**

On July 8, Kimra met with Alpine County's new Economic Development Director JT Chevallier to introduce AWG and our projects, specifically the Markleeville Creek Restoration Project.

On July 13, Mo and Kimra attended the Alpine County Fish and Game Commission meeting to hear the US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife presentation on LCT restoration in the Carson River watershed.

On July 15, Kimra attended the Alpine County Interagency Meeting. She announced the September 14 AWG meeting and Creek Day, and she briefed the group on the July 13 LCT presentations.

On July 21, Kimra participated in the Sierra-wide Executive Director Peer Huddle hosted by Sierra Nevada Alliance (SNA).

- Kimra asked for help connecting with watershed groups with fire recovery experience that AWG could learn from, and she was connected with several knowledgeable individuals.
- Kimra announced Creek Day, and she suggested SNA could help by serving as the point for the Great Sierra River Cleanup marketing.
- Session with strategy, governance, and finance experts:
  - 1) Rich Harvey Question #1: *Do we need a line of credit?* The experts said absolutely. Another attendee suggested a line of credit is key for managing the cash flow associated with reimbursable government grants, especially if doing a lot of pass-through for subcontractors. It was suggested that without audited financials, it will be key to have a board member or a funder with a relationship with a bank to get a line of credit; it was suggested that local connections with a local institution are key. It was also suggested that sometimes a foundation is willing to be the guarantor.
  - 2) Rich Harvey Question #2: *Do we need to reward our donors in some way? If so, how?* Yes! Some ideas included:
    - Support a local newspaper by taking out an ad to thank donors and volunteers for what they have done—angle is by contributing, this is what we've done as an organization
    - Use children's groups/camps to create pictures (or pictures of pictures) to send to donors
    - Old-fashioned thank you notes from board members
    - Board-hosted pizza parties/lunches for donors
    - Breakfast at organization—make donors feel like part of the team, ask them to participate without a money ask
    - Divide up list and have board members call donors when good things happen: "because of you this thing happened"
    - Board members have currency (and time) that staff don't have; board members should connect with donors as much as possible when don't need money
    - See also <https://socialimpactarchitects.com/nonprofit-donor-engagement/>
  - 3) The experts highly recommended using "dashboards" for helping you get from where you are to where you want to go—for strategic planning, fundraising, and programs. See <https://socialimpactarchitects.com/nonprofit-dashboards/>

On August 19, Mo and Rich Harvey attended the Chamber of Commerce Town Coffee Hour. Mo announced that we are looking for Creek Day project ideas.

## FUNDRAISING

**In-Kind Contributions:** Former AWG AmeriCorps Member Nicole Lutkemuller and her fiancé added AWG's Amazon Wish List to their wedding registry. As a result, AWG recently received new wading boots and a new pH meter for our monitoring program.

**California Alpine Club Foundation:** AWG was informed that the funding could only be used for equipment, materials, and/or supplies, not salaries of paid staff. Mo submitted a list of equipment needed for AWG monitoring programs totaling \$1,500, including a new GPS, a new camera, dissolved oxygen sensors, and waders. AWG has received the \$1,500.

**The Campbell Foundation:** AWG has received the \$2,500 for general support.

**Clarence H. Heller Foundation:** Our letter of inquiry to support AWG's staff time for the HAB Monitoring Program was not advanced to a full proposal.

### **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:**

On June 30, Kimra met at the project site with Caltrans staff, the bridge replacement contractor, and the tree removal subcontractor to assess if any trees marked for removal did not need to be removed. Subsequently needed tree removals were completed. Caltrans will pass on the tree removal report to AWG when finalized. AWG's Caltrans liaison said that following demobilization due to the Tamarack Fire, the contractor is not going to mobilize again until next construction season.

Kimra signed the Intergovernmental Grant Administration Agreement for the IRWM grant on behalf of AWG for inclusion in the Agenda Transmittal for the September 7 Board of Supervisors (BOS) Meeting. Following agreement approval, the team will seek BOS authorization to release an RFP for final design work.

We are waiting for updates from Caltrans on the mitigation agreement between Caltrans and Alpine County and the design and cost estimate for bridge abutment removal.

Alpine County, Green DOT, and Kimra met on August 12 to plan for next steps:

- Green DOT has input the project into project planning software, and Kimra can be added as a user.
- Jeff Schwein/Green DOT and Kimra will work on a more detailed budget to present to county staff so we can work toward an agreement between AWG and Alpine County, at least for the IRWM funding as we wait for the mitigation agreement.
- Jeff and Kimra will work on a proposed community outreach plan. As a first step, Green DOT will prepare an information and graphic layout for the county for a stand-alone webpage for the project.

The June 24 MPUD Board Meeting was cancelled due to there not being enough board members to have a quorum. MPUD's engineer provided AWG with the Final Feasibility Study for the MPUD sewer project on August 13.

**National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) Restoration & Resilience COVID Recovery Fund:** We were informed that our second application for \$2,500 to fund a belated “Earth Day” invasives removal event and a fall native grass planting day at Grover Hot Springs State Park was not selected; only 21 of over 180 applicants were invited to the next stage of the process.

**National Fish & Wildlife Foundation – California Forests:** On August 5, AWG submitted a proposal for “Tamarack Fire Meadow Recovery in the Upper Carson River Watershed” with a budget of \$80,545, including \$54,689 for AWG staff time, \$15,000 for Institute for Bird Populations for bird count and vegetation monitoring, and \$2,500 for American Rivers to help with monitoring and workday collaboration. The proposed scope of work includes coordination with the various agencies, partners, and private landowners; post-fire monitoring; and small meadow restoration projects for Earth Day and Creek Day 2022 and 2023. Awards will be announced in November 2021.

**West Fork Carson Project – National Forest Foundation (NFF) Partnership:** NFF is working on their grant agreement with CDFW for a portion of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest’s West Fork Carson Project; when finalized, NFF will work on agreements with AWG for monitoring and outreach, likely as separate scopes of work. Baseline monitoring is anticipated in early October 2021.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

**Staffing:** Mo and Kimra submitted all of the application materials to share an AmeriCorps Member with Sierra Nevada Alliance. They received the Partnership Agreement with SNA, Letter of Intent, and Memorandum of Understanding; these forms along with the cost share of \$8,000 are due October 1.