

## Lake Almanor Watershed Group Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 10th, 2019 2:00-4:00pm; Maidu Summit Consortium Office, Chester, CA

**Members Present:** Aaron Seandel, Bridie Johnston, Susan Riney, Peggy Fulder, Sherrie Thrall, Charlie Plopper, Nils Lunder

**Sierra Institute staff present:** Kaily Bourg, Moorea Stout

**Review of agenda and approval of minutes:** November meeting minutes were approved with minor modifications. The January agenda was approved.

**Introductions/Announcements:** Charlie noted that Nils Lunder will join the meeting later.

### Financials

Bridie provided a review of the financials record, having no major concerns. Income has not changed since the group's last review in November. Little expenses were incurred over the month of December and include primarily watershed coordinator tasks. Bridie noted that it does not appear that Sierra Institute's overhead rate was subtracted. Kaily will follow up with Amy, Sierra Institute's financial manager.

### South Lassen Watershed Group (SLWG) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

LAWG members were given a chance to review the SLWG MOU. A LAWG member expressed concern regarding the first goal listed under *Hydrology and water resources*, "Manage project area watershed, including meadows and wetlands, to sustain/enhance native species and their habitat." The question concerned the likelihood of native species taking preference over nonnative species, specifically in regard to fisheries. The group speculated that nonnative fish spawning and habitat restoration could likely be supported by SLWG if it achieves other objectives, such as those related to recreation and socioeconomic outcomes. Any issues with the MOU can be discussed at the upcoming SLWG meeting in February, as the MOU will likely periodically be updated. The group made a motion to sign the MOU. Kaily will submit the signed copy to Leana Weisberg, who is the current SLWG coordinator.

### Water Trails and Mainstreet Retrofit Update

Charlie reminded the group about the National Park Service support for a water trails update. He also shared about efforts to convert Main Street in Chester into a "city street." City streets include the addition of pedestrian friendly elements such as sidewalks and bike lanes, and improved infrastructure in general. Greenville and Susanville were awarded the same "city street" funds from the state program in recent years. In order to receive the funds, the town/community has to be considered disadvantaged by the state's definition. The County's transportation department approved the application. Carlos Espana, is a key point of the contact for the project, and is also considering another application for a Chester visitors center. The visitors center would ideally complement trail efforts around the lakeshore and showcase the Lake Almanor fisheries.

### Mountain Meadows Conservancy (MMC) Update

Nils shared about the numerous exciting projects happening in 2019, including efforts funded by the Stewardship Council to increase public access near the dam outside of Westwood. It is currently in a planning phase, with survey work completed. MMC is working with Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) to develop a parking area on part of their property and reinforce the property line. SPI has a timber sale planned from Hamilton Branch to Westwood, including area around Walker Lake. The adjacent land owned by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) is overtaken by white fir and is considered a major fire hazard. PG&E has not returned calls recently, likely due to their recent bankruptcy claim. MMC is also working to complete CEQA for a 0.5-1 mile trail and a pit toilet. MMC is working on interpretive signage, featuring the Red Mill Lumber Company, and with help from the Westwood Museum. As a result of good outreach, Lassen County Public Health and the Lassen County Building and Planning Department are involved; the project is intended to be completed by 2020. Aaron agreed to connect Nils with Mitch at Red River Lumber Company. MMC is also working to develop a property management group to purchase a piece of property from Feather River Land Trust and develop a land management plan. Part of this project includes improving the public parking area and constructing a kiosk, and engaging Westwood schools to help with the management plan. Nils also discussed efforts to develop a regional trail plan, slated for completion by September 2019.

### **Water Quality Meter Inventory and Youth Education Opportunity**

Kaily shared updates from Scott and Gina. Scott was unable to make it up for this meeting as he is busy with sampling the Camp Fire. He is working this month to obtain more information regarding steps to donate sampling equipment to LAWG or local schools. Kaily shared an update from Gina: Water temperatures were generally higher than in 2017. This was probably due to the decrease in spring precipitation and decreased inflow from tributaries. In 2018 oxygen depletion was not as severe as in previous years and cool water with oxygen levels around 4 ppm was available throughout most of the summer in the eastern arm. In July water entering the lake from Hamilton Branch was 9 °C cooler than the lake surface water, so it continued to provide a refuge for cold water fish species. At LA-02 the volume of algae was increasing from 2013 to 2016, but has dropped back to less than its 2014 value. The algal volume at LA-03 has been stable or decreasing slightly since 2015. The changing amount of algae overall were probably due to changes in nutrient input and water temperature, which were ultimately controlled by changes in precipitation. 2018 was a relatively dry year compared to 2017. Gina is awaiting the chemical data from Scott, so we can't say anything about nutrients at this time. Overall, it was a very good year as far as water quality goes. Algal populations stayed low and the bluegreen algae were not numerous in the summer. Oxygen conditions were favorable for fish and spring water inputs from Hamilton Branch kept water temperatures cool in the eastern arm of the lake.

The group discussed ways of disseminating water quality data to the public. Members agreed that publishing monthly articles in the newspaper, each highlighting a different water quality measure, would be an effective strategy. Kaily agreed to send an article highlight 2018 water temperature and trends to the newspaper by the end of the month or beginning of February.

### **Shoreline Gardens Project**

Kaily shared information about some of the demonstration sites around Lake Tahoe, including the North Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden, UC Davis Demo Garden at Tahoe City Field Station, Truckee Demonstration, Lake Tahoe CC Demonstration Garden, Evans Family Garden, and local elementary school gardens. The group discussed areas where a demonstration project could be a best fit. A first step might be to identify areas with the poorest water quality. Starting on PG&E lands would likely be a challenge; a good start may be along the shores of the golf course, Lake Almanor Country Club, and Lake Almanor West Community. Nils mentioned that the group might contact Dean Martin with NRCS who is also working to develop a gardens program.

### **Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grant Application**

Kaily discussed the Sierra Institute's application to the Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Program. The proposal supports full-time coordination divided between SLWG and LAWG. Some goals in the application include, but are not limited to: 1) developing SLWG's strategic planning, including an update of the Lake Almanor Management Plan and expansion of water quality monitoring in priority areas; 2) identify gaps and increase connectivity among stakeholders in Indian Valley and the Almanor Basin and coordinate efforts between the upper and lower watershed; 3) increase natural resource-based learning opportunities for local schools and the public, including involvement with the Lake Almanor water quality monitoring program; and 4) integrate Maidu Traditional Ecological Knowledge into projects. The application is due February 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Fundraising/Outreach Strategies**

Moorea presented a template of a membership program form she developed and asked for feedback. The group suggested lessening the membership cost, adding a student and family option, and indicating that it is tax deductible. She will send out an updated draft of the form via email for further discussion and approval. Aaron mentioned the Almanor Fishing Association's work with Chester High School to bolster German Brown Trout populations.

### **LAWG Leadership, Chair Election**

LAWG members voted to renew the co-chair positions for 2019. Peggy and Bridie remain in the co-chair position.

### **Closing Remarks, Next Steps**

Kaily announced that she will be leaving Sierra Institute in February, and this will sadly be her last meeting with the group. The next LAWG meeting will be Wednesday, March 13, possibly with an earlier start time.