

## Lake Almanor Watershed Group Meeting

Wednesday, July 11th, 2018 2:00-4:00pm; Maidu Summit Consortium Office, Chester, CA

**Members Present:** Aaron Seandel, Lorena Gorbet, Bridie Johnston, Charlie Plopper, Sherrie Thrall, Gina Johnston, Susan Riney

**Sierra Institute staff present:** Kaily Bourg and Jonathan Kusel

**Review of agenda and approval of minutes:** Meeting minutes approved and agenda amended to include discussion on the Stream Flow Enhancement Program and Great Sierra River Cleanup

**Introductions/Announcements:** All attendees provided introductions and brief descriptions of their history and role with LAWG in light of introducing a new watershed coordinator from Sierra Institute, Kaily Bourg. Kaily mentioned her work at Sierra Institute with assessing the Department of Conservation Watershed Coordinator Grant Program. Preliminary contributed to the state's decision to allocate \$1.89 million to revitalize the program. The timeline of the reintroduction of the program is not known at this time. Jonathan discussed the history of watershed coordinators from Sierra Institute, work with the South Lassen Watershed Group and tree marking projects in Lassen National Park, and the statewide conservations that are increasingly linking forest and watershed health. He referenced reports published this year alone that discuss the need for more investment in the state's forests and watersheds including: Legislative Analyst's Office report on [Improving California's Forest and Watershed Management](#), Little Hoover Commission's [Fire on the Mountain: Rethinking Forest Management in the Sierra Nevada](#), and water policy reports from the [Public Policy Institute of California](#) that urge downstream water users to invest in the upper watersheds.

**Financials:** The group discussed the financials summary, which reflected income and expenses through May 2018. The group noted that the balance on the financials document does not reflect the fee donation from the Lake Almanor West, which will add approximately \$2,085 this year. It doesn't reflect the \$4,400 water quality contracting expenses. Approximately \$380 remains for the watershed coordinator in the LAWG budget. Jonathan assured the group that Sierra Institute would work to support gaps in funding for watershed coordination for the time being, but emphasized the need to work out a longer-term solution. Future discussion is needed on what funds in the LAWG budget and what funding opportunities could support watershed coordination. Sierra Institute's overhead charge is currently 2% on deposits and 17.48% on the expenses. Sierra Institute expects the fee on expenses to drop to 16.47% this year.

**LACC and Almanor West updates:** LACC has agreed to continue the fee donation for the current 2018 budget, however the future of their involvement is not certain. Residents are wondering why they are paying for something they think should come from the state. Aaron reminded the group that the contributions from LACC and Almanor West are not just automatic, and the group has to continue to make a case for their continued support for multiple reasons: 1) the community population is decreasing therefore there are fewer contributions, and 2) members of the board change each year and new board members may not always be aware of LAWG's work. Susan added that when a community volunteers to supply matching funds, it enhances the chances of future funding. It is also important to communicate exactly what the contributions are supporting (e.g., coordination, staffing, and water quality reports), especially considering the other taxes and fees these communities are willing to pay. Jonathan suggested communicating the importance of water quality monitoring with a changing climate and conditions, noting that the water quality of the lake is also directly linked to the economy. Locals are contributing to the process, providing seed money in which other initiatives can grow—tiny investments loom really large. The group would benefit from brainstorming ideas of how to outreach to lake residents and engage newcomers on the importance of watershed health.

**Maidu Summit Consortium:** MSC is in the process of acquiring five parcels round the Lake area. The parcels on the East Shore, Prattville, and Humbug have been passed by the Stewardship Council. Wheatland and the Bitter/Mud Creek parcels are going to the council in the next 3-4 months to be voted on. The parcel on Goose Bay was cut from 24 acres to 15 acres, which will be the MSC's trails parcel. Lorena also discussed PG&E's Prattville Dredge Project, which intends to increase cold water in the tower. MSC is in opposition to the dredge project because the project would heavily impact ancestral lands and particularly culturally sensitive areas for the Mountain Maidu community. It

seems that PG&E has not consulted the county about the project and at this point, do not intend to withhold the project. There will be a meeting on July 24<sup>th</sup> with PG&E to discuss the issue further. LAWG members agreed to write a letter of support for the MSC's opposition to the dredge project.

**Mountain Meadows Conservancy:** MMC is trying to generate funds to support recreation in Walker Lake. Charlie shared three major updates: 1) Sierra Nevada Conservancy has awarded MMC \$130,000 to construct a trail and picnic area with kayak lake access, a parking facility, and bathrooms. The money is coming soon. First year is for doing the CEQA and NEPA; 2) PG&E donated \$2,500 to buy catchable sized bass. Walker Lake will be stocked with 1,000 bass in the next couple days; 3) MMC raised enough money to purchase an access point just south of Westwood. The plan is to open the shore to public access, having a substantial trail to the lake shore. An unknown donor has donated \$75,000 to the cause.

**Tahoe Gardens Project:** Susan will provide an update at a later meeting.

**Water Trails:** MMC received funding from National Parks Association to help with the organization of the Water Trails program and update the map. Updates will include significant Maidu areas, and more feedback will be requested from the public for map improvement ideas. Kaily and Charlie discussed developing a survey to gather map trails, which could be issued at the Grebe Festival. Of the current printed maps, there are few left.

**Stream Flow Opportunity:** Charlie presented a grant opportunity from the Wildlife Conservation Board for the Stream Flow Enhancement Program. Streams in the Lake Almanor Basin that could be possibly be eligible for project work include: Hamilton Branch, Clear creek, Bailey creek, North Fork, and Silver Creek. Charlie will check in with Uma on whether or not the grant opportunity is feasible for LAWG. The group brainstormed general project ideas, including: monitoring on Clear Creek and Bailey Creek, native plant integration, gauges to monitor stream responses to enhancement efforts, and monitoring impacts of MSC projects with the IRWM program.

**Grebe Festival and Great Sierra River Clean up:** The Grebe Festival is August 25<sup>th</sup> and Great Sierra River Cleanup is September 15<sup>th</sup>. Kaily will connect with Peggy to discuss LAWG plans for the events. The group offered some ideas, such as displaying water quality reports and laminated maps, selling the water trails map and issuing a survey to collect community feedback on how it can be improved.

**County Updates:** Sherrie provided updates on the relicensing of Bucks Lake and potential release of the EIR before the end of the year and discussions regarding the reintroduction of salmon above Caribou in the Seneca reach. The reintroduction of salmon could help mitigate the thermal curtain. There is a Caltrans project to replace the culvert in the canyon; bigger culverts improve fish passage. The EIR is currently out for comments.

**Chester Junk Yard:** Participants briefly discussed the status of the junk yard in Chester and whether anything is being done about it. The county has tried everything to force a cleanup, including Caltrans encroachment, Lady Bird, and groundwater, but the junk yard is not technically breaking any of these rules. However, in a positive light, the junk yard is a resource center for many for items like cars parts, and it serves a place to dump, which mitigates dumping in the forest.

**Next Steps, Group Focus:** It may be useful for the group to review the Watershed Management Plan and have a more detailed conversation of where to focus efforts. The group discussed focusing on next, a feasible project that can achieve success. For example, the group might focus on the off-site mitigation of nutrient loading issue (i.e., small projects that would reduce the flow of nutrients and decrease algal blooms). Having a small success on a project would benefit the motivation of the group internally and increase external awareness of the group's activities. A participant noted the success with LAWG's previous work with the zebra mussel, which ultimately led to a statewide program.

**Action Items/ Homework/Topics for Next Meeting:** Kaily to work with Alisha at MSC to develop a letter of support. Charlie to follow up with Uma regarding the Stream Flow grant program. Kaily to work with Charlie to develop a Water Trails survey for the Grebe Festival. All to review the Watershed Management Plan before the next meeting. The next LAWG will be Wednesday, September 12 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm.