

Lake Almanor Watershed Group Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm

[Zoom Meeting](#)

Attendees

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Bella Bledsoe | Kevin Price |
| Brandon Janssen | Lorena Gorbet |
| Bridie Johnston | Mark Miller |
| Carl Felts | Peggy Fulder |
| Charlie Plopper | Phil Datner |
| Eric Schmidt | Sherrie Thrall |
| Fred Schmidt | Susan Padilla |
| Gina Johnston | Thomas Tisch |

Approval of Agenda and May Minutes & General Announcements

The group introduced themselves to Bella and other new members at the meeting.

Brandon Janssen, representing Cal Trout, made an announcement that Cal Trout plans to challenge PG&E's effort to drain five times more water from the lake (250 cubic feet per second withdrawal). Cal Trout is considering litigation efforts. Cal Trout is very concerned about the lake warming up, trout dying, possible algal blooms, and the collapse of the lake fishery. Brandon also mentioned that there had been a town hall meeting recently in which many angry citizens showed up, and the PG&E representative had decided not to join.

Mark Miller joined the meeting. He is interested in the water situation in the lake, as water levels are very low. Mark has been hearing information about water being released from the lake to reduce stream temperatures below the lake. He does not feel like that makes sense and worries about the impact on tourism and property values. Mark is a local resident.

There is a motion to approve the agenda and the May minutes; the agenda and minutes are approved.

Financials

There were no changes in income in May. Expenses, salaries, and benefits were up \$345.26. The listed balance was \$17,701.02. Pledged monies totaled \$1,739.64. The available balance was \$15,961.38.

Member Updates and Announcements

Update from Scott

- Scott deployed a dissolved oxygen logger at 15 meters. The dissolved oxygen monitor for 10 meters needs to be serviced and have the data on the logger retrieved. This will cost approximately \$120. This kind of servicing likely needs to be done on an every

other year basis. Kevin has the logger that needs to be serviced and will help make sure that happens.

- Additionally, one of the temperature loggers will be put in next time Kevin and Phil go out to monitor.
- Scott mentioned that PG&E put their buoy about 30 meters away from LAWG's buoy. Likely they are doing this so they can dispute LAWG's data if our data shows something dissatisfactory.
- Scott also mentioned that PG&E's effort to create a cold water habitat below dams for salmon reintroduction does not make much sense.
- Scott signs off the call.
- The group asks Kevin why Scott thought that salmon reintroduction would not make sense.
- Kevin and Gina clarified that because salmon are anadromous fish and have to return to the ocean to mature, they were unlikely to thrive in some of these tributaries. Dams and other fish barriers prevent their movement, so cold water alone is unlikely to help.
- Lorena added that two fish passages have recently been completed by CalTrans--one on Soda Creek and one on Rock Creek. CalTrans built two fish ladders so that fish can get to the cold water. Lorena is not sure why PG&E wants to withdraw cold water when the fish can get to cold water using the fish ladders.
- Sherrie added that restoration would be helpful as well. She has consistently advocated for adding shading plants to keep the water cool and for restoring culverts.
- Sherrie also thanked everyone for writing letters to FERC.

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Manual

- Kevin asks if anyone has comments or feedback on the manual. He wants to get it to a finalized place, so it can go on the Sierra Institute website as a resource.
- Kevin is thinking about how to put together a volunteer program so LAWG can continue to collect water quality monitoring data. Kevin and Phil are currently collecting data, and Kevin thinks it is important to continue cultivating volunteers for data collection.
- Gina mentioned the importance of creating a liability form for monitoring volunteers. Given that volunteers will be out on the water, it is important to release LAWG and Sierra Institute of any liability.
- Tom thinks the manual is excellent. He mentioned that it includes information on how deviation in temperature leads to variation in other chemical and biological factors. However, he wishes there was something written on how deviation in pressure also leads to variation in other chemical and biological factors.

Outreach & Engagement

- Kevin introduces an interactive map that he has been working on that displays water quality monitoring data.
- Kevin recommends that water quality monitoring data is still housed with the Department of Water Resources. The map that Kevin produced is not for data storage, but rather it is an outreach tool.
- Carl mentions that he would like the tributary outside his house included on the map, and he is happy to take the appropriate water quality monitoring data.

- Carl also mentioned that Kyle Rodgers compiled extensive data as well, including data on fish. He is interested in this data being added to the map as well.
- Mark Miller is wondering why LAWG has chosen the water quality monitoring locations they have.
- Gina described that the chosen water quality monitoring locations are historical sampling spots. We have the exact coordinates for these spots so we can make sure the monitoring is accurate and repeatable.
- On another outreach and engagement-related topic, Bella asked LAWG members to share authors, poems, short stories, or pieces with her and Moorea for monthly emails. These pieces can describe the Sierra Nevada region, lakes, restoration, or anything related to the mission of LAWG's work. Short pieces of writing help provide an emotional appeal in monthly emails.
- Susan mentioned a woman named Betty Bishop, who is known for photography of Lake Almanor. She is very talented, and Susan wonders if we might partner with her and use some of her photography in the monthly emails.

Lake Almanor West Association

- Moorea has agreed to speak at the WACC meeting on June 14 at about 9:15 am.
- Susan also mentioned that any type of handout or summary on the current lake level/water withdrawal issue would also be appreciated because it is such a hot issue right now.

Lake Level Meeting Update

- Sherrie discussed the yearly lake level meeting. At the meeting, PG&E started by saying that this is the second critically dry year in a row. We are in a critical water situation this year.
- Sherrie also mentioned that "<https://www.project2105.org/>" is a great resource for charts and quantitative data. There is both information on Lake Almanor and Bucks Lake.
- We should expect to see a steady drop in lake level until the end of September, and Lake Almanor is also starting with less water than usual. The lake level will look very similar to 2014.
- No one expects FERC to do anything until the end of the summer or the end of the year. So we will not see impacts from their decisions for a while.

FERC Relicensing Update

- There is a huge amount of rumor and misinformation circulating. FERC relicensing has been going on for 16 years. There are lots of players with diverse interests. It is incredibly challenging to understand all the nuances. Sherrie is disappointed how many people are getting charged up by false information.

MSC Update

- Maidu Summit Consortium planted 60 oak seedlings and 300 elderberries with the help of some volunteers.
- There is another volunteer day this Friday, June 11th, to build beaver dams. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be helping.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife is also hiring three Maidu youth for the summer.

- The campground is open, and a covered wagon train came to stay at the campground with students from Paradise.

Lake Almanor Watershed Management Plan Hard Copies

- Bella will work on getting hard copy management plans for the next meeting, printed at Sierra Institute.

Closing Comments

- Maidu Summit Consortium had their proposal rejected because they have limited experience in hydro projects, even though the powerhouse has not been in use since 2018. MSC is looking for a partner who is experienced in hydro projects so that they can reapply.
- Tom mentions that water quality and water level elements are not addressed in conservation easements. The easements do preserve public benefits, including recreation and natural habitat. However, none of the water quality issues or fish issues are included in the easement activity.
- Discussion around how Bella can best support efforts to continue using the Management Plan will be postponed until the next meeting.

Action Items

- Bella will talk to Sierra Institute about developing a liability form for water quality monitoring volunteers.
- Bella will send a PDF copy of the Management Plan to Mike Miller.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: July 14th (Online)