

Lake Almanor Watershed Group Meeting

Wednesday, September 8th, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm
Zoom Meeting

Attendees

Bella Bledsoe	Phil Datner
Bridie Johnston	Scott McReynolds
Charlie Plopper	Sherrie Thrall
Gina Johnston	Susan Padilla
Lorena Gorbet	Thomas Tisch
Peggy Fulder	Virginia Pritchard

Approval of Agenda and August Minutes & General Announcements

Each group member introduced themselves to Virginia, the new water quality monitoring lead from Sierra Institute. There is a motion to approve the agenda and the August minutes; the agenda and minutes are approved.

Financials

The financial report covers the last two months, given that Bridie was unable to attend the August meeting. Salaries and benefits were up \$134.42. There was \$15.20 in postage expenses and \$100.21 for a logger replacement cap. This totals a \$249.83 increase in expenses. There was no change in income. There is \$1,000 allocated for the Maidu, and \$4,040 for water quality testing. This leaves a total balance of \$18,995.61 and a working balance of \$13,215.97. We are still waiting on a donation from Almanor West. Susan will check in with Sonia about the status of the donation.

FERC Relicensing Update

There has been no activity on 2105, and we are still waiting to hear something from FERC. Tom Tisch asks if it is appropriate to send an additional letter, given the recent fire and watershed damage. Tom feels like all the previous conversations about downstream mitigation are no longer applicable until we evaluate current lake conditions. Lake Almanor itself is potentially threatened in terms of water quality; we cannot afford to threaten it any further. No new action can be suggested at this point because everything about the system has changed. Tom will draft a follow-up letter to FERC.

Lake Almanor Watershed Management Plan

The group will discuss this further at the next meeting. Peggy added several comments about her review of the Management Plan. Peggy feels like after the Dixie Fire, the importance of biomass plants is clear because they make it cost-effective for people to do chipping. Westwood had a plant for 25 years, but it is now closed. Peggy also feels that supporting fire safe communities and councils is important. Additionally, people need assistance who are evacuated. Many people have lost food, or are still struggling to get consistent electricity. There is plenty of work ahead. LAWG needs to stay together and continue to assess where our attention is needed.

Member Updates and Announcements

Water Quality Monitoring

Scott McReynolds joined the LAWG meeting to discuss water quality monitoring post Dixie Fire and some possible funding that may exist to continue monitoring.

Additionally, Virginia Pritchard introduced herself. Virginia is the Hydrology Project Specialist. She has a background in environmental science and microbiology. Virginia was a previous field and lab hydrologist for the Forest Service.

Moving onto the feasibility of September water quality monitoring, Neal Carter is concerned if he will be able to get his boat into the lake and if the boat ramps are functional given the low water level. Gina will ask around to see if the Lake Almanor Country Club or Lake Almanor West ramps are usable. No one has heard that they are not usable. The Hamilton boat ramp may also be available. Gina thinks we need to get to the lake this month for monitoring. She thinks that there could be a blue-green algae bloom due to the high temperatures. Gina feels we need to document that. September is usually our worst month for oxygen in the lake. It would be best to do monitoring during the week of the 20th- 24th.

LAWG will continue to discuss September water quality monitoring via email to solidify which boat they will use and which boat ramp. Additionally, sampling is usually split between two days, and stream samples do not require a boat. Stream sampling can hopefully be in a similar timeframe (September 20th -24th). Virginia recommended that everyone wear a hardhat who goes out to do stream sampling, given the hazards created by the fire.

Scott added that we are currently under a state of emergency due to the Dixie Fire, and it is a good time to request resources from Cal OES for water quality monitoring. PG&E should be doing extensive water quality monitoring, but Scott does not think they monitor pathogens or bacteria. Now is the time for LAWG to ask for those resources; emergency money is only available when we are in a state of emergency. Scott recommends that LAWG try to connect with the Plumas County Emergency Response effort so that LAWG can ask for the money to look at pathogens, bacteria, E. coli, total coliform, and other indicators of water quality. We can request that DWR help us with this monitoring. It will likely be a La Niña year, and we could get a ton of water, causing a lot of sediments and nutrients. Lake Almanor could have a bad blue-green algae season next year. We should try to get a baseline of water quality post-fire before we get any rainfall. Scott added that any letter to Cal OES requesting support for water quality monitoring should come from the county. Sherrie will broach this issue with the Cal OES liaison. Sherrie is also willing to help get Gina's letter asking for more resources (support from DWR) to the correct Cal OES representative. Scott emphasized the importance of starting that process now while we are in a state of emergency.

Bella asked how the group might want to share their water quality monitoring work and results with the public. Sherrie suggested a presentation at the Chamber. The Chamber hosts town talks that are about 30 minutes and provides time for questions and answers. Sharing water quality monitoring results at a town talk may be a good avenue to share with the public. Tom also suggested that we communicate water quality monitoring information to the Lake Almanor Country Club, and ask them to circulate it. Susan reminded the group of the outreach event at the Collins Pine Museum. It was a nice meet-and-greet with horderves and wine. There was a group of organizations tabeling, including the Audubon and the Feather River Land Trust. People were milling about, and that was a good avenue for outreach.

Lake Almanor West Association

Susan has nothing to report because everyone has been scattered over the last few months; many people just returned home. Susan is planning to catch up with people soon.

MSC Update

Lorena has no new updates from MSC. The office is open again, and everyone is required to wear masks.

Feather River Land Trust

Nils Lunder provided an update on what the Feather River Land Trust (FRLT) has been doing in response to the Dixie Fire. FRLT is trying to get to their properties to see the damage. Erosion prevention is a really high short-term priority, as well as just documenting what has happened. Culvert repair is also a short-term priority. Long term, FRLT wants to partner with landowners because landowners are really in need of assistance. As of now, the FRLT is not sure how they will support MSC. Scott added that erosion control efforts are effective at keeping pollution out of waterways after wildfires. Erosion control should be a primary goal in the short term. Nils wonders if local groups and organizations can band together and collectively start looking at the landscape for priority areas for erosion control. Maybe we can create a shared database about where erosion control should be employed and start thinking about where priority areas are as a local community.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: October 13th (On Zoom)

Action Items:

- Susan will check in with Sonia about the Almanor West donation.
- Tom will draft a followup letter to FERC.
- Gina will write a letter to Cal OES requesting support (assistance from DWR) to help with more extensive water quality monitoring in Lake Almanor.
- Sherrie will talk with the Cal OES liaison about more resources for water quality monitoring in Lake Almanor.
- Lorena will see if MSC is open for LAWG meetings or whether the office is still closed to the public.