

**Lake Almanor Watershed Group Meeting**  
**Wednesday, December 13th, 2023, 1:00 - 2:00 pm**

**Attendees**

Bella Bledsoe  
Gina Johnston  
Jeanie Hinds  
Lorena Gorbet  
Peggy Fulder  
Rich Breuer  
Tom McCubbins  
Vincent Vitale

**Call to Order, Approval of Agenda, and November Minutes**

The agenda and minutes are approved. The group did introductions for Vincent, who is attending his first LAWG meeting and recently started at SI.

**Financials**

The stated balance is \$17,550.29. There are still allocated monies for the Maidu Plant Project (\$1,000.00), 2023 Water Quality Testing (\$4,125.00), and SI testing support (\$1,292.89). The working balance is \$11,132.40.

**Member Updates and Announcements**

**Water Quality Monitoring**

- Gina and Tom contacted Bret, and he agreed to let us borrow a boat for the November sampling. We went out Friday, right after the November LAWG meeting. We got it done and collected the data for November. The boat made it to all three of the Lake stations. It took a while, and it was a bare-bones boat, but we had a great pilot, and we made it to all the stations. Everything went fine, but it was very cold. Bret really came to our rescue, and he provided the gas.
- Tom wants to recognize Bret for this. Tom is thinking we can acknowledge him in the water quality report. Bella will also write a thank you card for Bret. Gina will also mention Captain Rob and any other volunteers in the report so that everyone is properly acknowledged.
- Gina is hoping to have a draft of the report in January.

**Funding Updates**

- Lake Almanor Country Club: Gina reiterated that LACC cut LAWG's funds down to \$2k for next year from \$5k.
- Bread for the Journey: They kindly donated \$1k to LAWG; Bella will send a Thank You Card to them.

**Plumas Corp Project Update**

- Jeanie reported that Plumas Corp completed the Mountain Meadows Creek Restoration Project this year. Jeanie shared that the project is adjacent to Mountain Meadows Reservoir. It is in the 7k acre meadow complex around the reservoir. Plumas Corp has been involved with a number of planning efforts over the years and about 2,400 acres of meadow restoration. Not all these acres are implemented yet. Mountain Meadows Creek is a bit over 400 acres.
- The Mountain Meadows Creek project is on Red River forest land. This is the fourth project we have done with them. Some of this land has gone to Collins Pine recently, but Collins still supports these restoration efforts. Like many meadows in the Sierra, there were legacy impacts like railroad construction and agriculture. We were seeing erosion and incisions in the meadow. There were numerous down-cut channels. The depth of the incision was pretty striking. The meadow was no longer functioning as a floodplain, and there was conifer encroachment.
- The main gully was up to 17 feet. Further down, the main channel was 6-8 ft deep but about 150 feet across. We also had eroded ditches that were contributing to draining the meadow, as well as conifer encroachment. Most of the riparian vegetation was transitioned to conifer. There was evidence of cottonwoods, and we think there was a riparian cottonwood forest in the past. Most of the cottonwoods were killed in the Dixie Fire, but there were some survivors. There is too much shade in the riparian corridor and no seasonal inundation, so there is very little natural regrowth. Plumas Corp will plant cottonwood in restored areas.
- There was also a road right through the meadow.
- At the bottom of the project area, Mountain Meadows Creek was dredged historically. There is no riffle pool habitat; the area was completely backed up and mucky.
- The meadow was much drier than it should have been, and there was no wetland habitat at all.
- It took 6 years to get through the design and monitoring phase. We also had Covid and the Dixie Fire, on top of this being a complex project. We implemented work this Fall (2023).
- We ultimately wanted to restore the floodplain connectivity. We did pond and plug treatment. We placed fill in the channel. This created 21 acres of pond. We also reactivated old channels and placed riffles and rock structures in channels. We removed the 3,000 ft of road that crosses the meadow. We also did 70 acres of mastication in the meadow and 70 acres in the riparian corridor.
- Jeanie showed a series of pictures of the completed work. Groundwater started to recover very fast, and the ponds filled quickly. It was really cool to see that just a week after construction, water started to spill over into the meadow.
- Plumas Corp also seeded. Peggy and Ron came out as volunteers. We spread a lot of seed and native grass straw.
- We have a lot of ongoing work ahead, including extensive monitoring. We will be doing more revegetation, fencing, and grazing management.
- Peggy asked how much time Plumas Corp staff were commuting for this project.

- Jeanie answered that a few folks actually rented an apartment in Westwood. We tried to make the commute easier.
- Gina wondered if there were any materials that Jeanie could share about the project.
- Jeanie mentioned that she can share the slides from today or even do a short summary write-up.
- Gina said she would love a summary write-up. Jeanie also commented that monitoring reports will be created at some point. Gina wants to be able to track all the things that are happening in the area and the watershed; she is particularly interested in how nutrient flows might impact the Lake as restoration projects are completed. Gina thinks the work is tremendous.

### **Goodrich Springs**

- There is new ownership of some lands near Goodrich Springs. This area is critical because it provides drinking water to many Californians. The Forest Service has leased grazing rights on the property there. The cattle can come up and trample the springs. Ron would like to approach Collins and put some of these areas into a conservation easement. Another option would be for Collins to even sell some of these acres to folks who want to protect this area; maybe the Forest Service would be a good fit. A conservation easement would be great. The goal would be to limit grazing in these wet areas.
- Collins might consider putting a conservation easement on that property and try to keep the cattle out of the springs. The public should be interested in protecting that specific area.
- Jeanie - Collins has been great to work with. We also worked with them on Rock Creek. They have been supportive of protecting meadows and riparian areas. I think they would be open to fencing the springs off; it may not even require a conservation easement, but more just a change in how they are managing it.

### **Others Group Updates**

- Lorena - the beavers in Humbug Valley are doing great. The families have settled in and built houses. Even the babies are alive and running around. The trail cams are showing them. We even had a big bull elk come up to the camera. Maybe we need an elk management project. Fish and wildlife put several cameras out there to keep an eye on the beavers. Peggy - How many beavers did CDFW put into the meadow? Lorena - two families of beavers. Once we show that they stay and don't die, hopefully, we can get more.

### **Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:** January 10th