



PO Box 431
Markleeville, CA 96120

The Friends of Hope Valley want to thank you for your past support. We hope that you will continue your membership in this non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic, recreational and scenic values of Hope Valley and Sierra Nevada's eastern slope in Alpine County. With your help we can continue to address the sensitive environmental concerns of the eastern Sierra.

FRIENDS OF HOPE VALLEY 2017

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FRIENDS OF HOPE VALLEY, PO BOX 431, MARKLEEVILLE, CA 96120



FRIENDS OF HOPE VALLEY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2017

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For the preservation of the scenic, recreational and historic use of Hope Valley and Alpine County's eastern Sierra slope.
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- Debbi Waldear**
President
- John Barr
- Jim Donald
- Greg Hayes
- Peter Lathrop
- Kelly Keith

.....
*Photos courtesy of
Judy Warren-Wickwire*

The Alpine Biomass Committee: a new collaborative.

By David Griffin

"Unifying partners to promote forest and watershed health, and local economic development" is the mission statement of the Alpine Biomass Committee (ABC). The ABC is a new collaborative group in Alpine County that believes that by improving forest and watershed health, the risk of catastrophic wildfire can be reduced, and by using local labor to do this, our local economy will benefit. The ABC received a \$12,000 Capacity Building grant from the National Forest Foundation in March, 2016.

Ninety five percent of Alpine County is Federal land and is managed by four National Forests straddling two Regions, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Historically there has been little coordination between the different land managers, or between the land managers and non-government organizations, such as the Alpine Watershed Group (AWG). Each organization has its own independent planning procedures and priorities that generally don't take into consideration what the other organizations are planning. As an example, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest may have a fuels reduction project near Markleeville, the Eldorado National Forest may be doing a trails building project near Blue Lakes, the BLM may have a tree-planting project near the airport, and the AWG may have a meadow restoration project in Hope Valley. While each of these projects has merit on a local scale, to maximize the impact of the available resources, it is much better for the different organizations to collaborate, so that each organization's projects compliments the other projects. There will be a positive impact at the watershed or landscape scale. The ABC facilitates this collaboration getting us closer to the second half of "Think globally, act locally." The ABC does not plan on completing any projects. Its role is to help other organizations maximize the impact of their own projects.

It is also important that as much of the work as possible on these projects is done using local labor, supporting the local economy. Several months ago the ABC introduced the Hung-A-Lel-Ti Washoe Community to the Calaveras Healthy Impact Solutions (CHIPS) organization. CHIPS trains and hires people to do forest and watershed restoration, archeological investigation, and shortly will be adding prescribed fire use. The CHIPS-Washoe crew currently consists of 13 individuals who have been working for the BLM on restoration after the Butte Fire, but has also done some small jobs for the Alpine Fire Safe Council locally. The CHIPS-Washoe crew has also been fielding inquiries as to their availability from as far south as Yosemite, and north to the Tahoe Basin. Organizations and individuals that have used their services speak very highly of them. If you need help with your defensible space or fuels reduction, contact Irvin Jim at 775-400-6122.

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The ABC's monthly meetings are normally held the first Tuesday evening of the month at Turtle Rock Park. The meetings are open to the public, and usually there is a presentation by an expert on some aspect of forest and watershed health. To receive meeting notices please send an email to dGriffith.9@gmail.com. To learn more about the ABC please visit www.alpinebiomasscommittee.wordpress.com.



Pickett's Junction Gets New Signs

By Judy Warren-Wickwire

After several years working with California Fish and Wildlife (CFW) to replace the three panels of the kiosk at Pickett's Junction (road junction of Highway 88 and 89 in Hope Valley) FOHV finished this project this summer. The panels had faded beyond readability. The kiosk frame was sanded and repainted in preparation for the installing of the new signs.



Stop by and look at these new panels.

Judy Wickwire worked with CFW to update the language, including the Washo Tribe's heritage and travel in Hope Valley. The panels describe the flora and fauna of the area. Bruce Forman with the CFW and FOHV funded the project. Peter Lathrop, Judy Wickwire, Debbi Waldear and Ben Ewing (CFW Fishery Biologist) completed the panel installs.

Waste Fishing Line Kills Wildlife

By Judy Warren-Wickwire

Every day, improperly discarded fishing line causes devastating problems for wildlife and the environment. Fish, birds and even mammals are injured from entanglements with or ingesting fishing line, often dying as a result.



Containers – "tubes" – for discarding fishing line were installed at five locations in Hope Valley. Plans for later installations along the East Fork of the Carson River are on the calendar. Judy Wickwire, Debbi Waldear and Peter Lathrop are to be congratulated for the placement of the black PCV pipe holders with California Fish and Wildlife (CFW) logos and information signs. And we thank Lowes of Carson City (Doug Busey) for donating some of the materials.

Fishing line from these tubes will be collected periodically and sent to Berkley Recycling where it will be reconfigured into Fish-Hab. The Fish-Hab attracts fish and encourages plant growth almost immediately, providing the natural cover essential to the growth of a healthy fish population. Encouraging folks to clean up discarded fishing line found on the stream and using the line for a worthwhile project is a win-win situation.

NOW IS THE TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2017

Members share a deep affection for the unspoiled beauty of the Sierra's eastern slope of Alpine country. Formed in 1985 in response to a proposal to run power transmission line through Hope Valley, the Friends have been successful in their on going protection efforts, including preserving over 25,000 acres of open space in Hope Valley and the eastern Alpine County.

Dam Tigger

By Peter Lathrop

One morning last week my brother, Tigger, and I were watching the water surge through a break in a beaver dam we had visited two weeks earlier. Then, the three foot high dam was whole, backing up water all the way to the beaver's lodge. "You're the expert on these dams, can't those overgrown rodents build decent dams?" asked my brother.

"I just observe the dams, recording what is happening with them: they are being built, are holding, have been breached, are being rebuilt, or if their remains are becoming part of the abiotic environment. In science we try to be unbiased in our observations," I replied. "We are only collecting data, recording reality."

"Well then, what are your numbers and what are your conclusions?" Tigger inquired. "On second thought I've seen the long lists of dams, pictures and numbers on your computer, why don't you just give me a summary."

"This is a work in progress. Initially I just counted the dams in Hope Valley. But as it developed, at the suggestion of others, I added pictures, descriptions, coordinates, and tributaries. Dams located by others have been added. And we are still working on this autumn's observations." I explained. Most of my conclusions are commonsensical. The dams decrease in numbers during spring due to high run-off. This can also take place at other times of the year, six dams, including this one were breached by the run-off from the storm during the weekend after the Alpine Aspen Festival. With heavier winter snow pack, there is a greater run off and a greater destruction of dams. During the summer the number of dams increases. If an established dam is breached, beavers build many smaller ones, which are more likely to be breached by the run off. There is also the variable of the beaver's life cycle. After about two years the surviving kits are kicked out of the den and must find a new place to start a colony. I have found it interesting that in the study area the new dams are usually up-stream from the old established dam," I expounded.

"Well if you started out just counting the dams how much have their numbers increased? One guy at the Festival told me that their population is growing like that of rabbits, another pesky rodent," Tigger laughed.

"Actually rabbits are lagomorphs, not rodents. For this study a rough estimate of the beaver's population is based on the number of dams observed in the study area. So far this fall we've only covered Hope and Faith Valleys. The number of dams of this area has been fairly constant at around 65 for the past few years," I said hopefully not in my teacher voice. Then to appease my older brother I pointed out that although I have learned a little about beavers and their dams, there is a lot I don't know. "I've read that beavers will work to stop the sound of running water. Their ponds, especially behind established dams, are important to water fowl, are nurseries to fishes and other aquatic animals, and are excellent wildlife habitat. The water held back by the dams soaks into the soil and is slowly released during the summer providing an important source of water down-stream for both people and nature. Some people may think that the water 'trapped' behind a beaver dam is lost, but once a dam is established the amount of water coming into the pond is the same as that going out through the dam. Beaver dams are not impervious structures like human dams, demonstrated by trout's ability to pass up drainages 'blocked' by beaver dams. But as we complete these surveys more questions arise, the answers for which I haven't found in my research. For example why some dams - such as this one - are repeatedly rebuilt even after being totally destroyed while another dam is abandoned with just a small breach? How can one tell if a dam and its pond are no longer in use even if the dam is still standing? Or, again like this dam which is breached on only one bank, how can one determine whether the breach was caused by an over flow of water, by predators, or by humans?"

"Well why do these over grown rats go to all the trouble to build dams in the first place, just so they can swim around? Or just to stop up the water like we used to do?... OK, still do," admitted my engineer brother.

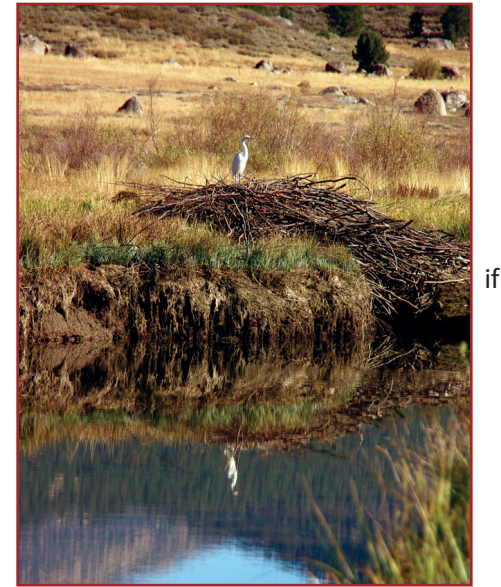
"Actually it is for protection. Beavers, which are in a different family than rats, can get rather large. However adults and especially their kits are easy prey for predators. They are safe underwater. That's also why they dig those long, deep channels from their ponds to their food sources; like the one that gave you so much enjoyment when I fell into it. Water depth for safety is even more important in winter when beaver need water that is deep enough for the ice to form, giving them enough room to swim under. In fact in deep, slow moving rivers, as found in the sloughs in Carson Valley, beavers don't need to build dams; rather they dig their dens into the side of the banks."

"You are still a teacher" responded Tigger, "I now see that the beavers in the West Carson drainage are a rather important part of the riparian ecosystem. Guess you've seen a lot of beavers in all of your surveys."

"Actually we have only seen two beavers", I had to admit.

"Well why was that, and who is this 'we' you keep talking about?"

"The answer to both of those questions is basically the same," I answered with a laugh. "The 'we' used to be Luna, our dog and sometimes Baillie, the neighbor's dog, but now it is puppy Tallie and I. The dogs move around making noises, and investigate anything that moves, or smells interesting. But that's why we haven't seen any heffalumps either."



Egret on beaver hut