



Friends of Hope Valley Newsletter

Fall 20011

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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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Silver King Creek Paiute Cutthroat Project Halted

Jim Donald

Federal Judge Frank Damrell, in a decision issued September 6, 2011, permanently enjoined California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) from proceeding with the Silver King Creek Paiute Cutthroat Trout (PCT) Project. This action spares an 11 mile stretch of Silver King Creek, from Llewellyn Falls down through Silver King Canyon, from the use of rotenone to extinguish all gill breathing wildlife for 2, and perhaps 3 years running.

In his decision, Judge Damrell cited the competing values of preserving wilderness character versus restoration of the PCT and stated, "having shown merit on their Wilderness Act claim...plaintiffs are entitled to a permanent injunction because: (1) using rotenone would wipe out all macro-invertebrate life in a reach of Silver King Creek and re-colonization would likely not occur; (2) the balance tips in plaintiffs favor because there is no exigency for the Project now; and (3) the public interest favors the preservation of unimpaired wilderness."

Silver King Creek, a major tributary of the East Fork of the Carson River, which flows through the Carson Iceberg Wilderness, will thus remain unsullied among this wilderness gem of high peaks and grassy valleys.

Opponents, including Friends of Silver King Creek, Californians for Alternatives to Toxics, and Wilderness Watch, contested the need for the project citing that the Paiute Cutthroat Trout has already been restored in the upper reaches of Silver King Creek. Further, the fish has been restored to sustainable populations in four other streams in the Sierra and White Mountains. It should be noted that USFWS lists the PCT as threatened, not endangered.

Friends of Hope Valley supports this action. FOHV strongly supports the Endangered Species Act, but not in this case where sustainable populations of PCT exist and wilderness character would be so damaged.

Rotenone is a piscicide (suffocates gill breathers) that has been banned for use on land in the US, banned for use in US coastal waters and lagoons, and banned entirely in Europe. But in the US, it is allowed to be used in fresh water lakes and streams, baffling many wilderness users and scientists.

The judge's decision culminates an effort begun by the plaintiffs in 2001.



Hope Valley Restoration Project: A Collaborative Effort

John Barr

The West Fork of the Carson River meanders down the Sierra through Hope Valley and on into the Carson River Basin, providing valuable habitat for wildlife and clean water for drinking and irrigation downstream. As an integral component of this interstate watershed, Hope Valley Meadow provides natural water storage, flood attenuation, cooling and filtering of water, aquatic and riparian habitat, and is a popular recreational destination that brings visitors to eastern Alpine County from throughout California and Nevada.

American Rivers received a grant from Sierra Nevada Conservancy to assess restoration needs in Hope Valley Meadow and develop designs to improve hydrologic function and wildlife habitat within the meadow. Partners in the project include: United States Forest Service, Institute for Bird Populations, Carson Water Subconservancy District, Alpine Watershed Group, Friends of Hope Valley, CalTrout, and California Department of Fish and Game. The project's overall goal is to enhance the full range of ecosystem services that this highly visible and well-known meadow provides.

The California Unified Watershed Assessment has identified the Upper Carson Watershed as a Category I priority watershed for water quality improvement, defined as "watersheds that are candidates for increased restoration activities due to impaired water quality." The West Fork of the Carson River, from its headwaters to Woodfords—including Hope Valley Meadow, is on the California Water Quality Control Board's 303(d) listing of impaired waterways, with high concentrations of nitrogen, sodium, and phosphorous.

Hope Valley Meadow is the largest natural reservoir for water storage in the Upper Carson River Basin. If this restoration project would increase this reservoir's storage capacity, the project would be a significant example demonstrating that organizations—federal, state, county, and non-profit organizations—can work together for the Sierra-wide initiative to increase natural water storage capacity through meadow restoration.

The project team invites interested stakeholders to participate in the design process. Friends of Hope Valley (FOHV) and Alpine Watershed Group (AWG) have received sub-grants from American Rivers to recruit and train a core group of Hope Valley Meadow Stewards to be involved in assessment work. The AWG, with the assistance of FOHV, will also help American Rivers coordinate public meetings to solicit input and comments on conceptual restoration designs from all community stakeholders. This is an exciting opportunity for FOHV to partner with other non-profit organizations, federal and state agencies, and its community.

This truly is a work in progress. The project's specific goals will be clarified as the collaborative effort gathers data assessing the meadow's overall condition, including its hydrologic and ecological function, and evaluates various conceptual designs—and their limiting factors—to restore Hope Valley Meadow. For more information, visit <http://www.americanrivers.org/hopevalley>. To be notified of planning meetings please email bnylen@americanrivers.org

Winter Recreation Plan Moves Forward

Debbi Waldear

Since 2006 Friends of Hope Valley, in conjunction with other user groups—including motorized recreation enthusiasts, has been working with the United State Forest Service on the Winter Recreation Plan for Eastern Alpine County. The project has improved motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities for all groups. The plan includes the designation of motorized and non-motorized areas, and the installation of new trailheads, restroom facilities, and additional parking, improving the recreational experience for all.

Several projects of the Plan have been completed. Restrooms have been placed at Centerville Flat. Using a Friends of Hope Valley grant, maps have

been printed and signage has been installed. This summer, new parking and restroom facilities were built on Blue Lakes Road, reducing parking congestion along the road—and Highway 88.

FOHV is hopeful that the Forest Service's next project will be the establishment of a trailhead and parking for non-motorized recreationalists. The proposed site for a trailhead is a few miles up Highway 88 from the Blue Lakes Road turnoff, at a location called the "Red Corral". This area provides access to a variety of terrain choices for non-motorized recreation use.

Restoration Work Days

Debbi Waldear

In September, Friends of Hope Valley partnered with the Alpine Watershed Group on a West Fork of Carson River restoration project in lower Hope Valley, where its riverbanks are unstable and eroded due to incision and down cutting. To help

the river function properly, we stabilized the banks using the bioengineering technique: willow vertical bundle installation. A hearty energetic group of volunteers showed-up early in the morning, beginning the project by collecting many tens of 6 to 8 feet in length willow branches.

Our project was to create vertical bundles of willows, attempting to reestablish willow growth on the riverbank. Placing the bundles of willows vertically allows the plants to sprout along their sides as well as on top. The key to vertical bundle installation is to ensure that 8-12 inches of the bundle remain in water throughout the year, during both high and low water flows. This usually entails digging down into the streambed during installation. Cutting these trenches from the top of the bank was the challenge, the bank being over three high. Once the digging was completed we installed tight bundles of willows into the water and up into the trenches. That was the fun part; we had to get into the water to complete the project.

We typically have Volunteer Workdays in the spring and the fall. Please consider joining us next year.

The Passing of Yvonne Chen: How Can I Help?

Debbi Waldear

Yvonne Chen and Sam Barron came to Alpine County to retire. Their idea of retirement was much different than that of most Americans. They came to Alpine County to enjoy the mountains, hike, and ski and to become involved in their community. And that they did... with their knowledge, skills, and experience, they quickly became integral members of several local groups.

The first time I heard from Yvonne was when she and Sam sent their first donation to Friends of Hope Valley, including a note from Yvonne asking, "How can I help?" For a small environment organization this is rare that someone who, unsolicited, asks to get involved. Help she did, and soon after Yvonne joined Friends of Hope Valley's Board of Directors.

Since that time I have had the privilege to get to know Yvonne as a board member, a hiking and skiing partner, and as a friend. Yvonne – and often Starbucks, the dog – always participated in FOHV's workdays. They were fun to work – and play – with.

Yvonne taught the FOHV's Board the importance of inquiry: by asking questions, learn as much as one can about an issue before making a decision. Yvonne always made the extra effort to dig deeper into the facts related to an environmental issue before giving us her opinion. Yvonne always did her homework, encouraging us all to do the same.

Yvonne – a true environmentalist, a lover of Alpine County's natural beauty – will be missed.

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 2012

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Friends of Hope Valley is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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Friends of Hope Valley, PO Box 431, Markleeville, CA 96120