



Friends of Hope Valley Newsletter

Spring, 2011
Volume 26, Issue 1

For the preservation
of the scenic,
recreational, and
historic use of Hope
Valley and Alpine
County's eastern
Sierra slope.

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FOHV President Debbi Waldear Receives CWSD Award for Exemplary Service

John Barr

Only six individuals have been honored by the Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) with its Andy Aldax Carson River Watershed Award. Created in 2007 the award has been given to individuals for their exemplary service in the conservation and protection for the Carson River Watershed. This year Debbi Waldear, President of Friends of Hope Valley, received this award.

In the mid-1980s Hope Valley was threatened by several proposed projects, including a Sierra Pacific Power gravel mine, Sacramento Municipal Utility District power lines, and AT&T's optic cables, any of which would have permanently altered Hope Valley's serenity and breath-taking scenery, threatening the water quality of Carson River's headwaters. Debbi was one of the founders of the Friends of Hope Valley (FOHV). They brought various players together including ranchers, the U.S. Forest Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Trust for Public Land to successfully protect 25,000 acres of open space in Hope Valley and eastern Alpine County.

Debbi has shepherded FOHV to become the strongest advocate for the preservation and protection of the

unspoiled beauty, recreational and historic values of Hope Valley and other pristine places of Alpine County's eastern slope. She is a tireless volunteer who regularly participates in citizen water quality monitoring and bio-assessment programs. Many photographs have captured Debbi in waist-deep water toiling away during restoration projects for the East and West Forks of the Carson River, restoration projects that she often has designed and organized.

The Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) is a unique multi-county, bi-state agency dedicated to establishing a balance between the needs of communities within the Carson River Watershed and the function of its river system. The organization has representatives from the agriculture community and five counties—four Nevada counties and Alpine County. The CWSD works within existing governmental frameworks to promote cooperative action for the Carson River Watershed, preserving its rich history and unique resources; this watershed crosses agency, state and county boundaries.

The Carson River—beginning as two separate tributaries in Alpine County, the East Fork originating south of Ebett's Pass in the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness and the West Fork near Lost Lakes—journeys 184 miles through its 3,400 square mile watershed terminating at the Carson Sink in Churchill County, Nevada. The CWSD's mission is to improve watershed conditions so that all lands and waterways (both surface and underground) safely receive, store,

and release clean water for the people, environment, and natural resources of the Carson River Basin.

CWSD created this award to honor Andy Aldax, a life-long resident, farmer, and dairyman in Carson Valley, a member of the CWSD BOD since the organization's inception. Debbi's name will be added to the list of individuals who have given so much of their time and effort to preserve, enhance and restore Carson River's Watershed.

'You Got To Know When To Hold Em, Know When To Fold Em': FOHV's Pleasant Valley Trail Settlement Agreement

John Barr

For more than a hundred years, the public used Pleasant Valley in a wide variety of ways, including fishing, camping, hiking, and for access to the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), the Mokelumne Wilderness Area, and the surrounding high country. Then, in the summer of 1999, the owner of most of the Valley floor posted no trespassing signs and placed a gate across a road that leads to the Valley. During the years after the road's closure, FOHV tried to persuade the landowner to voluntarily reopen the trails through the Valley for public use. For many of these years the owner refused to answer, much less acknowledge, FOHV's letters asking for an opportunity to discuss this issue.

During these years, lawyers—referring to a California court decision, *Friends of the Trails v. Blasius (2000)*—wrote that it appeared that the public's long history of public use of the Pleasant Valley trails had created a public easement over the trails. (An easement is the right to use an area of land without ownership of the land itself.) In the course of the landowner's 2003 application process for a use permit to build a resort at the end of Pleasant Valley, members of the eastern Alpine County community spoke in support of the development, while requesting that these trails remain open to the public. In 2008, FOHV hired the San Francisco law firm of Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP to evaluate the options for restoring

public access to the Pleasant Valley trails. After trying unsuccessfully to reach an agreement with the owner, FOHV filed a lawsuit in October 2009 to reopen the Pleasant Valley trails. The case was to be tried before a jury in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in March of this year.

During the lawsuit's discovery process we learned that the landowner's predecessors had acquired several crucial portions of the land in Pleasant Valley from the federal government only in 1969, rather than in the nineteenth century, as everyone (including apparently the current landowner) had believed. This recent acquisition would make it impossible to demonstrate an easement over significant portions of the Pleasant Valley trails. According to California law, to acquire an easement over private land based on extended public use, the public must have used the land for at least five years prior to March 1972. However, the public cannot acquire easements over federal land in this manner. Because key portions of the property in Pleasant Valley were in federal ownership until 1969, FOHV could not show five years of use of those portions while they were in private hands.

Although portions of the trails were unaffected by this complication, it would have been difficult for FOHV to prove sufficient public use of the remaining portions. Because the law forced us to focus on events of 40 years ago, it was a massive challenge to find enough witnesses to testify about use of those remaining portions of the property.

As a result, FOHV faced an expensive trial without much hope of success. We aggressively tried to settle the case in a way that would preserve public access while protecting the landowner's property, but were unable to make any progress. This February, FOHV and the landowners agreed to a settlement in which FOHV agreed to dismiss the lawsuit.

It is disappointing that the public cannot retrace the steps of Jedediah Smith through Pleasant Valley, part of the route he used to cross the Sierra. But ... there was a trail from the PCT into the southwest end of Pleasant Valley that did not cross private land, a trail that provided spectacular views of falls on Pleasant Valley Creek and surrounding vistas. FOHV is discussing plans to find and, with permission of the U.S. Forest Service, reconstruct this trail on public land.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

Debbi Waldear

The Caltrans Adopt-A-Highway Program is an opportunity for organizations to help maintain sections of roadside within California's State Highway System. The Adopt-A-Highway program, which began in 1989, has been one of the most successful government-public partnerships of our time. More than 120,000 Californians have cleaned and enhanced more than 15,000 shoulder miles of road. Friends of Hope Valley has recently adopted a section of Highway 89. This four-mile stretch of road is from the top of Luther Pass down to the junction of Highway 88 (Burnside/Picketts Junction). The road is "awe inspiring," a section of highway that drops down into Hope Valley, affording a spectacular panoramic sight of the valley and its surrounding peaks. We are looking forward to keeping its roadside litter free.

EVENTS

June 12th is Friends of Hope Valley's first Workday of the year. Volunteers will be planting willows along the West Fork of the Carson River. This on-going successful project is beginning to have demonstrable measurable effects on this reach of the river. Its banks, once denuded of vegetation, are now lined with willows, stabilizing the banks, preventing further channelization, reducing sediment accumulation, and keeping the water temperatures cool.

Meet in Hope Valley at the junction of Hwy 88 and Hwy 89 (Burnside/Picketts Junction) ... 9 a.m. sharp. Bring gloves, clippers and be ready to have some fun in the Carson River.

THE BACK 40 IS BACK...they will be playing on June 12th at 1p.m., after Workday earlier that morning. The Back Forty, a local favorite, will return for this Friends of Hope Valley benefit concert. Ten Dollar Pony will also be playing their lively blend of original and cover tunes, encompassing many styles...folk, pop, blues, and country rock, to name a few. This event will take

place at Sorensen's Resort located on Highway 88 in Hope Valley, near Burnside/Picketts Junction. The afternoon will include great bluegrass and folk music as well as a tasty BBQ (no host). The cost of the concert, a donation to FOHV, is \$10.

The Alpine Watershed Group will be hosting it's 10th annual Markleeville Creek Day, Saturday, September 17th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This event is free, and all ages are welcome.

Participants will meet at the Markleeville Library Park at 9:00 a.m. to sign up for a project. Groups will depart for project sites by 9:30 a.m. We will have projects in Hope Valley, and along Markleeville Creek and the Carson River. It is important to arrive promptly in order to join one of the work teams.

Projects will include: invasive weed removal, stream bank stabilization, and the Great Sierra River Clean-up. Children can help their parents with these projects or spend the day with a youth group learning about water quality and protection, stenciling storm drains, and doing a small restoration project of their own.

We recommend you wear work clothes, gloves, and sunscreen. Bring a bag lunch, water, and maybe a camera. Providing your own hand tools such as hoes, shovels, loppers, or wire clippers would be appreciated.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Friends of Hope Valley Workday

Sunday, June 12

9:00 AM

Picketts Junction (junction of Hwys 88 and 89)

THE BACK FORTY and TEN DOLLAR PONY

Sunday, June 12

1:00PM

Sorensen's Resort

MARKLEEVILLE CREEK DAY

Saturday, September 17

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Markleeville Library

DON'T FORGET TO LOOK UP

Ann Robertson

Aside from the exquisite beauty of the Sierra Nevada, many locals and visitors take great pleasure in observing the wildlife that resides in its mountains and valleys. Bears, mountain lions, bobcats, and deer all have their unique beauty. On a smaller scale, the Sierra is home—at least for part of the year—to a great variety of birds, which are a marvel to behold for anyone who is patient and willing to take time to seek them out.

Since the banning of DDT, Bald Eagles have been brought back from the edge of extinction and are often observed in Alpine County. For years pairs have nested near Heenan Lake, Red Lake and Indian Creek Reservoir. If you are lucky, you can see them soaring and skimming the surface of the water to capture fish in their talons. Ospreys, on the other hand, dive headfirst and, at the last second, rotate in order to submerge their talons into the water. The reservoir is also home to a variety of wild fowl, including American White Pelicans, Canada Geese, and many kinds of ducks. On rare occasions, you might even see a Tundra Swan.

Many hawks live in the area, the Red-tailed Hawk probably being the most common. This past spring there were three Red-tailed Hawk nests in the trees along Foothill Road, between Emigrant Trail and Centerville. Golden Eagles reside here as well and can be seen on occasion soaring along the edge of the mountains in search of a meal.

It does not take much effort to attract birds to your residence. Wild birdseed scattered on the ground or placed on a platform; a sunflower seed feeder; an oriole or hummingbird feeder; a sock filled with thistle seed; or a suet feeder will suffice. One can then watch the show.

The sunflower feeder will attract the chickadees, Western Scrub and Steller's Jays, Black-headed Grosbeaks, finches, and many more. Goldfinches love the thistle seed. Both hummingbirds and

orioles will go to either the hummingbird feeder or the oriole feeder, since they both contain the same food (one part sugar mixed with four parts water). Woodpeckers enjoy the suet; many other birds will take advantage of this high calorie diet.

Unfortunately, bird populations are on a steep decline. This is resulting in part from widespread construction, destroying vast amounts of habitat. It is also due to climate change, which is upsetting the migration patterns of the birds. But as humans become more aware of their behavior's impact, we will have the opportunity to pursue more enlightened choices. In this way humans and wildlife will live together in harmony, and many future generations will be able to enjoy this same spectacular panorama of beauty.



Acorn Woodpecker
Photograph by Suzanne Barr

Horsethief Canyon: A Conditioning Hike With A View

Jim Donald

This is an excellent conditioning hike with possibilities for off-trail excursions or point to point travel. Nice rock formations, old growth conifers and occasional displays of wildflowers make for an interesting outing.

Begin by driving west on Highway 88 from Woodfords. In 3.5 miles reach a marked trailhead on the right at an elevation of 6,600 feet. Switchback up the steep north face of Woodfords Canyon, stair-stepping up and around granitic boulders as necessary. Enjoy cross canyon views of the rocky north slopes of Hawkins Peak.

This canyon was named for horse thieves who purportedly stole emigrant's horses in Woodfords Canyon, drove them up to the high meadows to rest, and then took them down to the Carson Valley to be sold to other emigrants.

The trail levels briefly as it enters Horsethief Canyon then begins a moderate climb north paralleling a tumbling stream. Switchback through a deadfall, step lightly through an alder seep and continue climbing. As you climb notice the volcanic cliff formations on the right and contrast them with the granitic rock nearby. Consider that the large volcanic rocks in the streambed were part of the same formation and may be remnants left in place by erosion or could have tumbled down from above.

The old Jeffrey pines, white and red fir in this area, are there because this section of the canyon was too steep to log back in the day when much of eastern Alpine County's timber was cut for mining ventures. Juniper, lodgepole pine and mountain mahogany are common here as well as aspen further up.

A good side trip to the flat top of the largest volcanic buttress can be made by crossing the creek and picking your way carefully up steep loose slopes just to its north and scrambling to the top. Good views west to the Sierra crest and a great lunch stop can be had or just explore the park-like forest to the east.

Back on the trail, continue climbing, round an open area above the stream and breathe easier as the trail levels, enters mixed conifer and aspen forest, passes through a seasonal cattle gate and undulates above meadows on the right.

At about two miles and 1,200 feet up from the trailhead cross Forest Road 025. This closed road is how the cows get here. A six-mile leg west (left) on this road will bring you out on Highway 89 in Hope Valley roughly one-half mile north of Pickett's Junction.

To climb Cary Peak (elevation 8,726) make a slow arc to the right to avoid descending into Hidden Canyon and, in two miles, ascend the steep rocky north slope of the peak to an airy perch 3,000 feet above Woodfords with good views to the south and east. This side trek is all off trail so be confident of your route finding ability and wear clothing appropriate for encounters with brush.

Continuing on the Horsethief trail, cross meadows and seeps with wildflowers and arc gently northeast. Now on the right side of the creek on mostly open slopes, the trail gets faint, and in just under two miles reaches a saddle. The first drainage to the east is Fredericksburg Canyon. Cross, continuing northeast, several descending tributaries and in about two miles reach a ridge at 8,400 feet that overlooks Faye-Luther Canyon. Switchback, as necessary, down very steep slopes at the head of this canyon and find the Faye-Luther trail that terminates on Foothill Road in Douglas County. This through hike is a strenuous, off-trail bushwack that from start to finish will take most of the day. Route finding skills, map use and a compass are necessary and a GPS can simplify this trek.

If all that sounds like too much, simply turn around at any point and return to the trailhead. The steep descent can make your legs feel rubbery but it's a good workout.

Don't forget the 10 essentials, especially lots of water, check the weather at the NOAA Web site and have a good hike.

**Check out our website at
www.hopevalleyca.com**



Friends of Hope Valley
PO Box 431
Markleeville, CA 96120

The Friends of Hope Valley wants 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 2011

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Name (Print clearly) _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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The FOHV email list is used only for the purpose of alerting our members and friends about time sensitive issues.

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

Please return this form and your tax deductible check to:

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