



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 2015

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

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

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



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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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Photo courtesy of  
J.E. Wickwire

# Friends of Hope Valley Newsletter

## Volunteers Work on Projects in Hope Valley

Friends of Hope Valley had two workdays this past summer. Our first on June 7 saw a good turnout for streamside willow planting, fence repair and litter pickup on 'our' section of Hwy 89 between Pickett's Junction and Luther Pass.

Willow planting along the West Fork is thought to be moderately successful – although quantitative studies have not been done – at establishing streamside restoration by reducing bank erosion, providing shade and cover for riparian zone wildlife, reducing water temperature and slowing evaporation. After years of doing this it appears *(by direct observation and random photography)* that there are many more willows than say, 15 years ago. As important as a quantitative study is the feeling, shared by volunteers, of doing something positive for the environment. For example we can see many of the willow stakes planted last year growing.

Fence repair is only done in areas where off-highway vehicles can easily access sensitive meadows. This reduces the environmental damage that even a single vehicle can cause in a short time. Trash pickup is just like it sounds although I think an interesting sociological study could be done on what and how much of each we find – cigarette butts and beer cans/bottles predominate.

FOHV's annual meeting was held at the end of the day. The annual Benefit Concert was the next day at Sorensen's Resort. Back Forty's bluegrass music provided an afternoon of acoustic magic. Good food, music, dancing and friends create a wonderful fun summer afternoon.

On August 23 FOHV participated in the Alpine Watershed Group's Creek Day. FOHV was tasked with modifying beaver dams to reduce water impoundment. A good turnout, including kids, dogs and adults shared this earth and debris moving experience with a certain amount of wetness, good humor and dedicated work. Again, of major importance, is the shared experience of the participants, especially the younger people, who, along with the adults, can see that a small effort locally may have a ripple effect that just might soften some of the seemingly intractable global environmental problems.

## Take a Hike This Winter

About a thousand feet above Hope Valley, the volcanic Sorensen's Cliffs (formerly Indian Head) jut out from the forests below. It is a 3 mile trek to the top of the cliffs, but the views are well worth the effort any time of the year. In the fall the trail wanders through colorful aspen groves and during the winter it's a beautiful snowshoe through mixed conifers.

Starting from the middle of Sorensen's Resort head uphill to a newly constructed trail that gently switchbacks through pine, fir and cedar forest. This will intersect with an old forest service road in about 1/2 mile.

Those who don't want to climb any higher can turn right on the road and follow it back down the trail towards the resort. This makes for a short loop hike and will deposit you just west of the resort. Along the way don't forget to stop at a granite rock outcropping which will give you great views of the meadow directly across.

*(continued...)*



Friends of Hope Valley sincerely thanks all of the enthusiastic volunteers and encourages all to visit our website at: [friendsofhopevalley.org](http://friendsofhopevalley.org). There's also a link to our page on the website and we encourage your posts and pictures.

If you continue the moderate ascent to the cliff, the blue diamond markers will help keep you on course.

After about 3/4 mile you will come out into an open area with granite boulders, a perfect spot to stop for lunch or a snack on a sunny day. When you reach the junction of another old road keep to the right, following in a westerly direction until you see a large plateau to the right. Head towards the edge of the basalt cliffs (*but not too closely*) and be rewarded by the fantastic views of Hope Valley, the Carson River and distant snow covered peaks beyond.

For a longer hike, you can continue west on the trail past the Sorensen's Cliffs to Burnside Lake Road, which you can follow back to Highway 88. This is a strenuous, 10+ mile trek that is not for the faint hearted.

To return the way you came, just follow your tracks and the markers back to Sorensen's Resort. Don't forget to treat yourself with a steaming mug of housemade soup or hot cocoa with cinnamon whipped cream by the fireplace.

## Hope Valley Restoration Project

As a result of various historical uses and ongoing recreational impacts, the stream channel in large portions of the West Fork of the Carson River is incised and continues to be downcut. This processes result in areas of unstable banks and an in-stream habitat that lacks complexity and provides much more limited cover for native wildlife.

The overall goal of the Hope Valley Restoration Project is to restore the full range of ecosystem services this highly visible, well-known meadow has the potential to provide. These "services" include natural water storage, flood attenuation, cooling and filtering of water, healthy aquatic and riparian habitat, as well as recreational values.

At the last stakeholder meeting in Spring 2013, we expected to complete National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process and other permitting for the project in 2014. This process was delayed approximately one year due to Forest Service budget and work-plan constraints. We now anticipate completion of the NEPA process and other permits by Spring 2015, and aim to implement the project in Fall 2015. American Rivers, the national conservation group involved in this project, has secured funding to cover approximately half the cost of implementation and has been invited to apply to another funding source to cover the other half.

Bottom line: things are moving! Not only that--the above timeline seems a realistic one.

## Alpine's Winter Travel Plan Moves Slowly Along

Since 2006 Friends of Hope Valley, in conjunction with other user groups that include motorized recreation enthusiasts, has been working with the United States 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, as well as the installation of

new trailheads, restroom facilities, and additional parking, improving the recreational experience for all.

Several projects of the Plan have been completed. FOHV is working with the Forest Service on its next project, which will be to establish a trailhead and parking for non-motorized recreationalists. The proposed site for this 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 year-round, non-motorized recreational use.

## Aspen Festival Brings First Snow of the Season

Quaking Aspen are the most widely distributed tree in North America. Grown in clone groups known as groves, they create a magical scene when the leaves change colors in the fall. Shorter daylight and lower temperatures cause leaves to transfer green chlorophyll and plant sugars out of the leaves and into the roots and bark for winter survival. The remaining pigments give aspen leaves their characteristic golden and red colors.

The annual Alpine Aspen Festival is a celebration of the changing of the colors. To honor the beauty and vital role of aspen groves in providing clean water to millions of Californians and Nevadans. The aim of the event is to educate the public about the benefits of watershed and aspen conservation. All activities and workshops during this year's Festival had a conservation project component. They included educational hikes, artist workshops, conservation projects, music, horseback riding. The goals of the event are to raise funding for the Alpine Watershed Group ([www.alpinewatershedgroup.org](http://www.alpinewatershedgroup.org)), a grassroots organization made up of mostly dedicated volunteers, who are committed to preserving the "Alps" of California (*referring to Alpine County's peaks and their visual similarity to the Alps of Europe*) and the clean water they provide.

Mother Nature celebrated the Alpine Aspen Festival with the first snowstorm of the season. Despite the cold temperatures and wet weather, over 300 people came out to celebrate the fall colors and learn about aspen ecology. If you didn't join the fun this year, we hope to see you next fall.



## A Tale of Charity Valley's Changes

—Peter Lathrop

I'm sitting in my "office" in Hope Valley, on the bank of the river, sharing the beautiful fall colors reflected in the river with my cynical brother, Tigger. "Heard that they're going to develop Charity Valley," says he. "Going to put in a bunch of horse condominiums, which will ruin the scenery, erode the land, pollute the stream, and generally destroy the ambiance of the valley. These bloated plutocrats will overgraze the meadow and kill off the predators so that the rodent and rabbit populations skyrocket. Those degraders of the environment will ruin the spirit of the land with their big city ideas and values." "Well as usual, big brother, you are wrong. Recently Judy Wickwire, an ardent local volunteer and fly-fishing coach, and I spent a morning talking with Jim and Karen Hagen about their plans. Their vision is to share their life experiences of ranching and mountain recreation, and thereby increase public awareness of the life and history of the High Sierra," I replied. "Their plan is for twelve, low-impact campsites, primarily for horse people, which will have corrals for each horse with water and good footing, a communal bath house and a fire ring. It will be a cow camp available for visitors, students, and horse campers. Water will come from an existing public well and a septic system has already been installed. As for defacing the scenery, the campsites will be set back in the lodgepole pines along the existing Blue Lakes Road."

"The Hagens are working with the US Forest Service to fulfill their grazing allotment requirements by slowly growing their herd, taking into consideration the present drought conditions. The grazing of cattle on National Forest land will help to cut down the fire fuel loads. And that is only for the summer range season; the rest of the year the land will lie fallow. Before I even mentioned the controversy that concerns cattle and streams, Jim informed me that they are working with NRCS (*that's the National Resources Conservation Service*) and will be using fencing and water troughs, filled from a natural spring, to protect the creek."

"As for your argument about ecological balance and the spirituality of the land, the past inhabitants, and its history, brother dearest, once again you are mistaken," I explained.

"Before we really got to talking at the Hagen's place, I noticed a northern harrier landing in a tree across the valley. Not having my camera or binocs, I quietly asked to borrow Judy's powerful camera. To my surprise all the others also got excited about the sighting, quickly producing their own binocs. I was impressed; I had figured they would be jaded by such an occurrence. Their interest,

may love, of wildlife was demonstrated shortly thereafter when a coyote, which Karen identified as a young female, appeared trotting along the creek hunting. The Hagens didn't quickly reach for rifles but again for their binocs, even making sure that their dogs left the coyote alone. These were concrete examples of the Hagen's determination to preserve the unique, natural setting of Charity Valley. With Judy the conversation naturally moved to the site's history and the naturalistic beliefs of the Washoe and Miwoks. Jim and Karen comprehend the spiritual beliefs of the original inhabitants. They also demonstrated their intimate knowledge and appreciation of the history associated with the valley."

"And well they should know the spirit of the high country of Alpine County. Jim has been a wrangler and trail guide at Kirkwood for twenty-five years in the warm months and has skied the peaks in the winter. Karen is world renowned as a "naturalist" horse trainer and riding teacher, though she dislikes the terminology. Jim and Karen are well known and respected in our area both in Alpine County and Carson Valley, even though their main ranch is further west in Calaveras County. In season one can already take advantage of their expertise as the Hagens are already running rides out of their Charity Valley ranch. The Hagens do have partners, Jeff and Marny Voorhees, who have lived in your City, and agree with the Hagens philosophy about 'non-development' and nature." Thus ended my rebuttal to my brother's opening argument.

"Well, I guess I was wrong", admitted Tigger, as a windblown golden aspen leaf floated downstream. "This sounds like the kind of set-up and commerce that Alpine County could use." "Yes," I agreed, "the guests would get to experience agricultural life, its responsibilities and rewards, whether they owned horses or not. They would see that agriculture and the environment can co-exist, and would learn how ranchers can really be some of the best guardians of the land."

"As Jim Hagen has pointed out, regardless of where one lives one can learn to live in harmony, to anticipate the future but exist and appreciate the present moment. The guests would learn this balance while walking in the beauty nature can bring

to one's life," I concluded, as we watched a red tail and a raven chase each other on the winds through the fluid sky.

This fun story is factual though the quoted remarks are made up. The facts presented are based on an actual interview with the Hagens at the ranch as the story describes. Check out [kirkwoodstablesranch.com](http://kirkwoodstablesranch.com)



Photo courtesy of J.E. Wickwire