



# FRIENDS OF HOPE VALLEY

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## NEWSLETTER



### WINTER 2025

### A HOPEFULLY MINE AND HOLE IN HOPE

By Peter Lathrop

*A non-profit, grass roots organization dedicated to the preservation of the scenic, recreational and historic use of Hope Valley and other pristine places of Alpine County's eastern Sierra slope. Members share a deep affection for the unspoiled beauty of the Sierra eastern slope of Alpine County.*

*FOHV was formed in 1985 in response to a proposal to run a transmission line through Hope Valley. The group has been successful in their ongoing protection efforts, including preserving over 25,000 acres of open space in Hope Valley and eastern Alpine County.*

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**Oh, rich mines in Hope Valley?** Well, no, thank goodness. Look at ecological disasters that occurred in the California foothills, around Virginia City, and in other parts of Alpine County. But thousands of people passed through here wild for the gold on the other side of the Hill. These immigrants, as they were by this time, missed the few poorer mines in Hope Valley.

The first was Uncle Billy Rodger's copper mine, believed to be the first copper mine in California. Because the mine has been reworked many times afterwards, the final time for tungsten, there are still interesting things to be seen. A wooden head-frame stands over the open shaft, which is full of water. Rails extend from the mine around a small



hill to an elevated loading dump. The tailings holding up the rails have been found to contain garnet crystals. Near-by are the remains of the bottom logs of a fairly large log cabin. Other prospects extend up the hill between the two structures. At the top is a newer, but closed up mine with trace samples of copper minerals to be found in the mine tailings. This is an interesting area to poke around in, also a quiet, peaceful environment to relax, to renew ones spirit. And to wonder at the lengths and amount of work people exerted to "get rich quick".

Above and to the south on the road that passes the upper closed mine is a very interesting tunnel into solid granite. Is it a round tunnel, about eight feet in diameter and over fifteen feet deep. There is nothing on the floor of the tunnel, and no veins or faults in the wall, just solid, pure granodiorite. Outside is a large, very thick medal structure that looks like it would fit in front of the opening. The only hushed hints I have harvested entail the Cold War in the 50s, the army, and a howitzer. There is no sign of the latter. But the area gives me the willies.

*There will be more on this topic in later newsletters.*



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## FOHV UPDATES



### Park Ranch, east of Carson River

The east fork of the Carson River is 132 miles long, spanning two states (California and Nevada). The town of Markleeville is adjacent to the river, the river and tributaries provide water for the community. Adjacent to the town is a 1,690 acre property called Park Ranch. The land includes a variety of trees, willows, sage, mountain meadows (currently used as grazing lands) and a section of the Carson River (a popular fishing area).

Western River Conservancy (WRC) plans to purchase the property and convey it to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). This project will take several years to be complete. First WRC will get approval and funding to purchase the land. The next step is for CDFW to find the funding to purchase the land from WRC.

Although it's in the beginning stages, CDFW's plan will be to manage it as open space for the public. Fishing, hiking and some grazing will continue. Ultimately, Park Ranch's future will be one that benefits fish, wildlife and recreationists alike, while maintaining the open space and character of the area's ranching legacy. We will keep you posted as this project develops.

### Lands Pass

The Lands Pass is a required fee to visit public lands managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The Lands Pass requirement was officially established in Hope Valley on CDFW lands.

Friends of Hope Valley worked with the Alpine County Board of Supervisors to request an exempt from the program in Hope Valley. The rich heritage and beauty of the area is a place to share, not an area to charge a visitor fee. Friends of Hope Valley was the leading group in creating Hope Valley in becoming public lands.

CDFW has now dropped the Lands Pass requirement. It may be a year or so before the signs are taken down.



### Annual Spring Work Day

Several projects were completed. Heavy snow load created havoc in Hope Valley. The disabled fishing piers needed repair and gravel from the river had to be swept off. Fences and gates had to be put back or replaced. And as always, as part of the Adopt-A-Highway program we picked up litter along Highway 89 coming down from Luther Pass.

### New Facebook Page

We have set up a new Facebook page: HOPE VALLEY FRIENDS. You may remember an earlier version called Friends of Hope Valley, but no one has posted anything to it in years and we can not get the password or the original email address that was used to set it up, so we can't use it or even kill it.

HOPE VALLEY FRIENDS is the new site and its list of friends has increased 2,600% since it started! This means we started with one friend and now have 26 as this is being written. We went through the membership list to send friend requests to everyone we could find, but the more common names were not contacted unless there was some way to make a guess.

We have linked in a half dozen local organizations and government pages that contribute interesting material. We need our friends to also post anything they can that would relate to our mission and which may be of interest to the reader.

Facebook AI often directs searches for the new page to the old one. We need to get more visitors, more friends, and more links to raise the AI awareness to the new page.

Members and friends please look for the new page if you have a Facebook account or sign up if you are so inclined. If you are not a Facebook person you can still suggest material or links by email to me at Peterjsmith@att.net and we will post it to the Facebook page if it pertains to our mission.

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## A DEVOTED “FRIEND” PATTY BRISSENDEN

As a founding board member of Friends of Hope Valley, Patty helped steer the organization in its initial years. The first battle was against the proposed power line in Hope Valley. It soon became apparent that local ranchers in Hope Valley could no longer make a living in the valley. The rancher wanted to sell their holdings. FOHV founders lead by Patty “walked the halls of congress” acquiring federal dollars to purchase Hope Valley and Bagley Valley from local ranches. She also worked with California Department of Fish and Wildlife to purchase other land in the Hope Valley area. Thanks to Patty’s hard work most all the land in Hope Valley became open to the public.

Patty, with her dear friend Laurel Ames, moved forward to create the Sierra Nevada Alliance, a network of affiliates and partners protecting and restoring the Sierra, lands, water and wildlife. At the time, under this newly-formed organization, conservation groups up and down the Sierra banded together to exchange knowledge and tactics to save their own special places, to attract resources for the benefit of the entire network (later resulting in the founding of the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorp Partnership). The group united the network together in advancing state and/or federal support for the needs of the Sierra.

In 2004 Patty engaged in efforts to establish a state conservancy to enhance and restore natural resources of the rural Sierra. Since the “Conservancy” was formed over a 589 projects have been funded. Projects include promoting wildlife, climate resilience, and promoting outdoor access. The agency has awarded over \$299M in grants over the last 20 years.

Patty has recently been honored by the Sierra Nevada Alliance and the Sierra Business Council for all her amazing accomplishments benefiting the Sierra Nevada.



## EXPLORING GRASS LAKE TO HOPE VALLEY

Early ski season always presents a dilemma as to where to go. Usually there’s not enough snow on the passes because large rocks and rough terrain require more snow to make the trails safe and negotiable.

An area that’s usually pretty reliable in early season is Grass Lake on Luther Pass (Hwy 89). Access is easy and minimum snow pack is usually ski-able. If you’re out there first know where the open water was and that the ice is thick enough to support your weight.

The terrain is flat, flat, flat... but variety can be added by skiing across the meadow to the gentle lower slopes of Waterhouse Peak. These slopes are, for the most part, treed, but at the western end of the meadow there are some nice open slopes. Climb as high as you want and ski down or, if the snow is sufficient, just tour through the forest.



A two-car point-to-point ski into Hope Valley is a great way to finish a day after limbering up on Grass Lake meadow. Park a second car at one of the turnouts on Hwy 89 in Hope Valley and follow the old road from the east end of the meadow.





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 2025

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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**

