



# Friends of Hope Valley Newsletter

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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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## Artifact Dig

Jim Donald

During the summer of 2012 an unauthorized artifact dig took place in Hope Valley. A group of rock-climbers bouldering at the site reported this to the Alpine County Sheriff on September 4.

Subsequent investigation by Sheriff's deputies, Fish and Game and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) enforcement personnel led to the identification of a suspect at the dig site and recovery of stone artifacts. It is unclear whether these artifacts are from this site, however. According to Rita Vollmer, Public Affairs Officer for the HTNF, investigation by Forest Service personnel with a "person of interest" is ongoing and when concluded, if the facts merit, will be referred to the US Attorney's office for further action.

The dig was remarkable in size and depth. Soil was disturbed to a depth of over 2 feet in a rectangular area of about 400 square feet. Boulders and tree roots were undercut. According to Joe Garrotto, USFS archaeologist, the site is now too damaged to conduct a good scientific dig and has since been backfilled. Garrotto is working closely



with Darrel Cruz in the Washoe Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Carson City.

The dig site is on Forest Service land on the margins of Hope Valley in an area that appears to be ideal as an encampment for the Hungalelti or southern band of the Washoe people. For 9000 years the Washoe, with Lake Tahoe as the focal point of their culture, established seasonal camps and trade routes with neighboring tribes in an area bounded by Sonora Pass in the south and Honey Lake in the north and the Pine Nut Range and Sierra Crest in the east and west respectively.

These ancestral campsites have great spiritual significance to the Washoe people. They represent the ways of those who came before, a map of their world and detail their knowledge of the land. To be successful as hunter-gatherers, the Washoe needed to know and recognize much more about the natural world than their colonial counterparts. The placement of a single rock, for instance, might have great significance to the Washoe.

In a society where land is not owned and the earth, air, animals, vegetation and water were considered one with the people, places where the ancestors lived are sacred and disturbance of such sites is deeply troubling.

Friends of Hope Valley appreciates the action of the climbers who filed the initial report and urges the Forest Service to conduct a fair and rapid investigation that brings justice to any suspects and is sensitive to Washoe culture. At the same time Friends of Hope Valley offers support to the Washoe people in the preservation of their historic sites.

There are a number of laws, including the Archeological Resource Protection Act and the Antiquities Act, that protect objects on public land. Outdoor enthusiasts should be alert to any possible violations of these laws and report such activity to authorities.

## **Hope Valley in the National News:**

On November 2, 2012 there was an article with a byline: Hope Valley, California, entitled "Artifact Prices Draw Looters: Despite Crackdown, The thefts of Indian Antiquities Continue West of the Rockies." The article, written by Justin Scheck, covers 2/3 of page A3, with two colored pictures of Darrel Cruz, cultural resources director for the Washoe Tribe.

## **Indian Valley**

Debbi Waldear

Indian Valley lies south of Faith Valley at the end of Blue Lakes Road in Alpine County. This 500-acre meadow is the headwaters of the Mokelumne River, a water source for agriculture, hydropower, recreation, and drinking water. The river's watershed accounts for almost all of the water of the East Bay Municipal Utility District, the water source of much of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.

Indian Valley is a sensitive, high-elevation meadow in degraded condition. This state of the meadow is a result of past human activities and natural processes. Its degraded condition includes: stream channel erosion with gulying and head cutting, lowering of the ground water table in the meadow, drying of meadow vegetation, loss of willows, sagebrush encroachment, and stream channel sedimentation.

This past summer Indian Valley was the site of a restoration project lead by the US Forest Service and American Rivers. The project goal was to restore 3/4 mile of a low gradient tributary of Indian Creek, with the resultant enhancement of the habitat for the Sierra Nevada mountain yellow-legged frog, Yosemite toad, willow flycatcher and other riparian species.

In October restoration was completed using a "plug and pond" treatment. The stream can now access its floodplain, spreading out and reducing the energy of its water flow, and re-watering the nearby meadow. The seasonal water table is expected to remain higher for longer periods of time into the dry season, encouraging the growth of riparian vegetation, and providing cooler water for fish and wildlife.

The plug and pond method consists of a series of dams down from the eroding stream, saving the stream from further damage and raising the water table in the meadow, enabling the growth of grasses, willows and other plants. A healthy watershed slows erosion, improves habitat for fish and other critters, and delivers water to downstream users in a more gradual way.

## **Old Guard Station Restoration Project**

Sarah Green

The Alpine Watershed Group (AWG) has been working with Alpine County, the Friends of Hope Valley and various other community partners since 2005 to plan a stream restoration project at the site of the former U.S. Forest Service Guard Station along Markleeville Creek. This site has been subjected to significant and repeated flooding over the years. The flood wall which was constructed in the 1930's to prevent flooding has only resulted in accelerated water flows causing erosion, stream incision and stream bank failures downstream.

The Markleeville Creek Restoration Project will reestablish the natural state of the stream and prevent further property damage as a result of flooding. The project will improve streamside habitat by removing the floodwall and revegetating the area. This restoration effort will provide various community benefits including utility improvements and public access for recreation such as walking paths, interpretive signage, picnicking and possibly parking. Partners involved in this project include Alpine County, Carson Water Subconservancy District, Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Hope Valley, Markleeville Public Utility District and the Washoe Tribe.

The project is currently in the design phase of the planning process. Funding for this project has been provided by the California Department of Conservation, the Carson Water Subconservancy District and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. AWG and the County have also collaborated on a grant application which would allow the County to acquire the land for restoration purposes.

For more information about this project or the Alpine Watershed Group, please contact Senior Watershed Coordinator, Sarah Green, at 694-2327 or [watershed@alpinecountyca.gov](mailto:watershed@alpinecountyca.gov).

## Restoration of Hope Valley

Debbie Waldear

A diverse group of volunteers has been actively involved as Stewards working on the Hope Valley Meadow Restoration Project, a project funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and the Bella Vista Foundation. Its goal is to draft a permit-ready plan to restore this highly visible and well-known meadow. The group is helping with streamflow monitoring, data entry, and photo monitoring.

The Hope Valley meadow is threatened by hydrologic alteration, and the West Fork Carson River has serious erosion along its banks. The overall goal of this restoration project is to restore the full range of services that this ecosystem provides: natural water storage, flood attenuation, cooling and filtering of water, aquatic and riparian habitat, and recreational activities.

Initially, there is a targeted assessment of the meadow's attributes to determine its hydrologic and ecological function; this information is used to complete possible designs for a meadow restoration plan. Or, this information could suggest that there is no restoration project that its benefits are worth its cost.

The goal of baseline monitoring is to capture changes in Hope Valley's meadow condition over time and to have a record of information used for the design of a restoration project. Baseline monitoring includes parameters that characterize the meadow surface water hydrology, the condition of vegetation communities, and the use of the meadow by wildlife for habitat.

To date the Stewards' work has consisted mostly of the evaluation of the meadow's surface water hydrology, including the compilation of a record of stream flow over time. This can be determined by measuring the area of water at a given location and multiplying that by the velocity, or how fast the water is moving – giving a measured discharge. Measuring the discharge of water and correlating it with the height of water at several locations develops a relationship of the two and the stream's flow.

The monitoring also consists of data loggers that can measure the change in water height (pressure) at regular intervals (every 15 min), recording this data to be downloaded periodically. Data loggers also collect water temperature and specific conductivity readings. There are currently three data loggers along the West Fork Carson River in Hope Valley.

Monitoring work will resume again next spring. Contact FOHV via our web site if you are interested in joining this Stewardship group.

## Snapshot Day

Snapshot day is a one-day, volunteer-based event, designed to collect watershed information during one moment in time. All along the Carson River hundreds of volunteers in various key spots participated. Leaders are trained, and these leaders accompany teams of volunteers to various pre-determined sites to collect information relating to the health of this watershed. The purpose of this effort is to promote environmental education and stewardship and to collect valuable water quality information.

On October 19<sup>th</sup> 27 students from Carson Valley Middle School arrived in Hope Valley to spend the morning on the West Fork Carson River. Friends of Hope Valley members participated as leaders and mentors as the students completed various tasks to measure the river's water quality. All of the participants left wet, happy and with a better appreciation and understanding of water quality, watershed issues, and riparian buffers.

