

Jeffrey Pine JOURNAL

SPRING 2018 | VOLUME XVI, ISSUE I

Defending the Desert

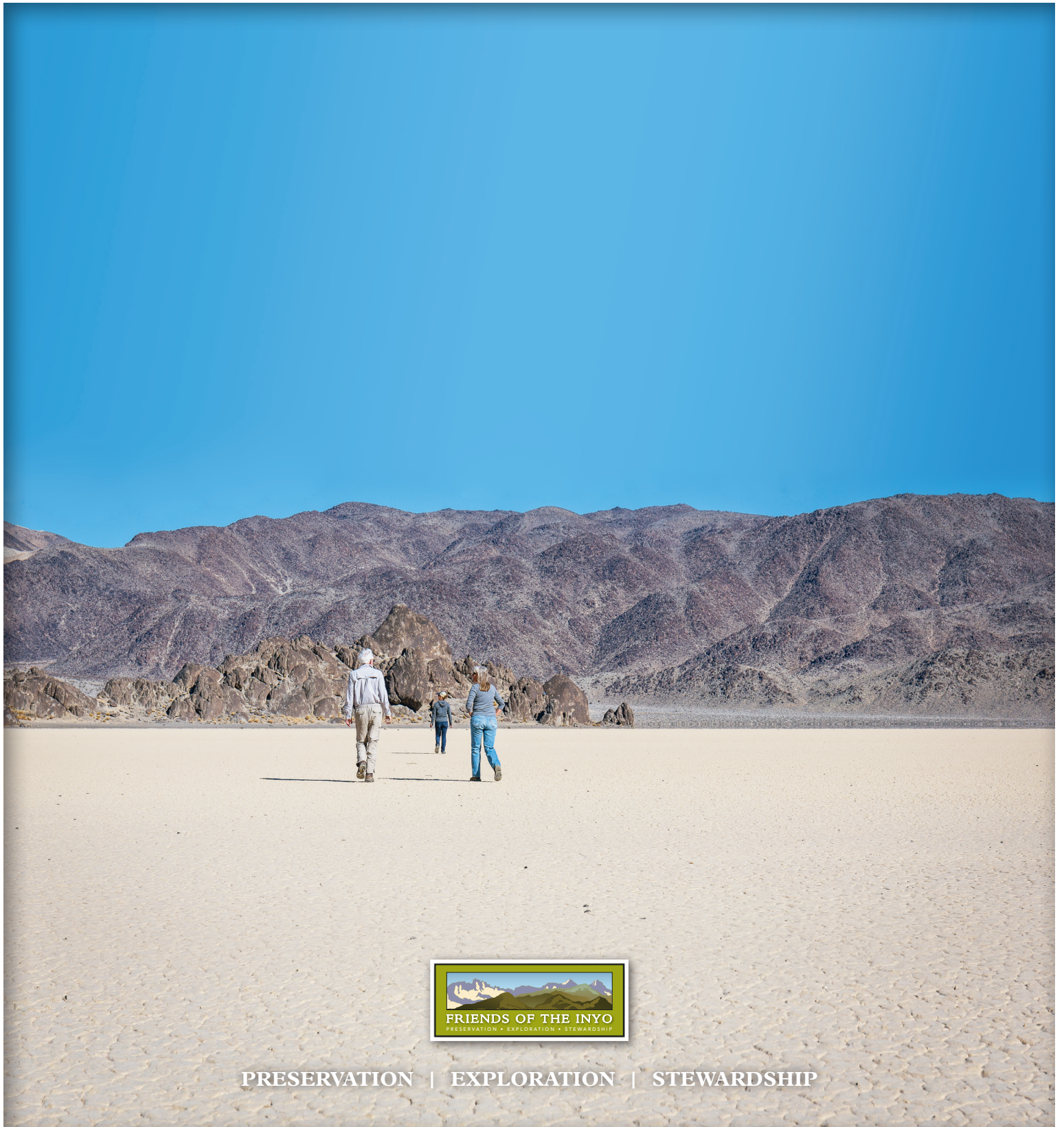
DRECP and Conglomerate Mesa Under Attack

Restoring the Racetrack

Stewardship Weekend in Death Valley

Remembering Genny Smith

Champion of the Eastern Sierra



PRESERVATION | EXPLORATION | STEWARDSHIP

THE JEFFREY PINE JOURNAL
VOLUME XVI, ISSUE I, SPRING 2018

NEWSLETTER OF Friends of the Inyo



Inyo is a Paiute word meaning "dwelling place of the Great Spirit." For us, this dwelling place extends from the bottom of Death Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, from Owens Lake to Topaz Lake, from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the roof of the Great Basin atop the White Mountains. *The Jeffrey Pine Journal*, named after the Eastern Sierra's most aromatic conifer, is distributed free to all members of Friends of the Inyo and wherever great spirits tend to dwell.

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Friends of the Inyo's mission is to
protect and care for the public lands
of the Eastern Sierra.



COVER PHOTO

Strolling
Death Valley's
Racetrack.

PHOTO:
Joanne Hihn

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Printed on Recycled Paper

This Issue Is Dedicated To Our Partners: We Couldn't Do It Without You

by Wendy Schneider

In these times when it seems that we are more divided than ever, at Friends of the Inyo we find our partnerships are stronger than ever, proving that there are many more things on which we agree, than on which we disagree. We are so thankful for our partners, and know that we would not be able to achieve the results we do without them.

In this issue, we profile Mike Johnston, President of the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club, a community of public lands users with whom Friends of the Inyo has had some tension over the years. Friends of the Inyo and the OHV community have worked together to improve our relationship. As demonstrated by Mike's Friends of the Inyo membership and the regular participation of many OHV community members in our stewardship events, these efforts have been successful. The strength of our non-traditional partnerships is also demonstrated in this issue's "Get Out," which features a mountain biking excursion provided by Eastern Sierra mountain biking expert Alan Jacoby. Historically, Friends of the Inyo's advocacy for wilderness designations (where mountain biking is prohibited) has sometimes placed us at odds with mountain bikers. Again, we have successfully worked together to strengthen our relationship. Friends of the Inyo and the Sierra Eastside Mountain Bike Association (SEMBA) partnered last summer on a stewardship event on Lower Rock Creek.

The number of visitors to our Eastern Sierra public lands has been skyrocketing. Pair that with the concurrent withdrawal of federal agency support for the management and maintenance of public lands, and it has never been more important to get all public lands users together to protect our shared resource. As demonstrated in this issue by David Page's excellent piece about David Brower (the story of a recreational public lands user turned environmental activist), passionate visitors—like those our Trail Ambassador program seeks to create—can become invaluable public lands advocates.

This issue also features more traditional Friends of the Inyo partnerships, with the citizens of the Eastern Sierra, local businesses, other non-profit organizations, and federal agencies. These relationships can be seen in our desert protection work—a big thanks to everyone who submitted comments or attended a meeting to protect Conglomerate Mesa, or defend the DRECP—our Trail Ambassador program, and participation in SnowSchool for which we partnered with Winter Wildlands Alliance, the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, The Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center, the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation, and Mammoth Mountain Ski Area.

I can say without a doubt that our strong relationships, with both our new and traditional partners, make Friends of the Inyo more effective in achieving our mission of protecting and caring for the Eastern Sierra's public lands. So, to all of our partners: a big thank you. We couldn't do it without you.



Eastern Sierra 4WD Club and Adventure Trails members Randy Short (l) and Randy Gillespie (r) work in the Tungstens. Photo: Glenn Clark

Walking the Sustainable Walk

by Sam Roberts, Board President

As the biggest storm of the season rolled into the Sierra, my thoughts turned to skiing deep powder and making plans with friends to get out into it. Recreating in the incredible beauty of the Eastern Sierra is a primary reason a lot of us are here and it brings to mind the delicate balance between recreating on the land and caring for the land.

The other day I was asked if I knew of an example where a recreation-based organization had done any conservation work on the land they recreate on. The implication was that while some organizations talk about sustainable recreation, few of them actually do any work to mitigate the impacts of their users. I pointed out examples where Friends of the Inyo has been a partner on several stewardship projects with groups such as the Access Fund (climbers), Winter Wildlands Alliance (backcountry skiers), and the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club (OHV users), but the question is a good one: As we advocate for sustainable recreation, are we following through on the "sustainable" part?

We rightly point out that outdoor recreation is a vital part of our local economy, and often tout the billions of dollars the outdoor industry generates annually, but too often we neglect to talk about the challenges that come with promoting this use. Illegal trails, switchback cuts, campfire rings and other negative impacts on our public lands are becoming commonplace.

Land management agencies (Forest Service, BLM and National Park Service) have had their budgets cut to the point that most of

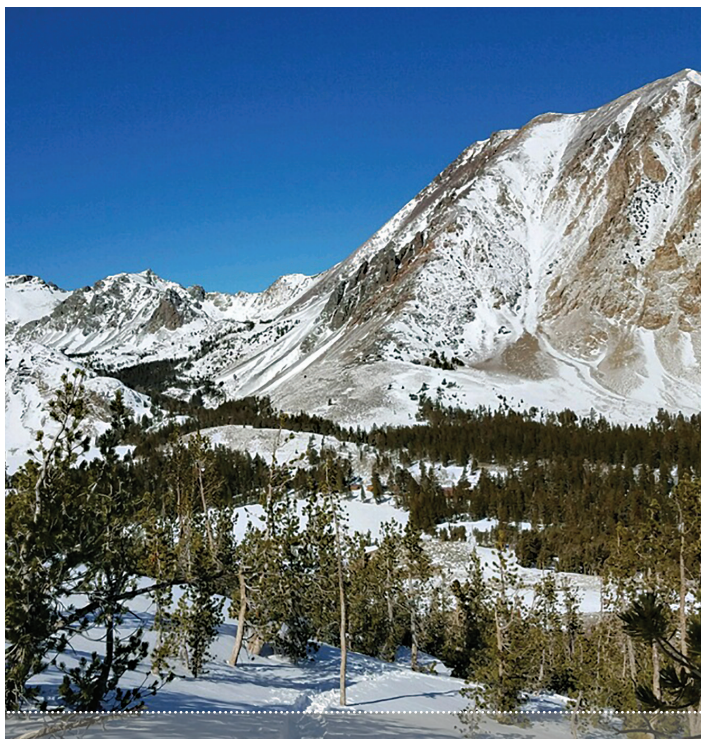
their funding goes towards fighting fires, not other management responsibilities. We can't leave it solely up to them to shoulder the load of managing the increased pressure from the additional use that we are encouraging. If we cannot, or will not, submit recommendations for recreational development that include suggested management and maintenance plans to the agencies, then "sustainable" recreation will quickly become "industrial" recreation—lots of new trails and infrastructure without a plan to educate and oversee the increase in visitors the new developments will bring.

Friends of the Inyo is a conservation organization that fully supports sustainable, and more importantly, responsible recreation in the Eastern Sierra. Our Trail Ambassadors help educate hikers about how they can lessen their impact on the land, and we have a robust stewardship program that does important trail work. At the same time we support the thoughtful construction of new trails and give insightful input to land managers as they make important decisions on appropriate uses of our public land.

One way you, the reader, can become involved in these processes is to sign up for The Juniper (our monthly e-newsletter), or better yet, come join us on one of our outings or projects. You'll experience firsthand how you can make a difference on the East Side.

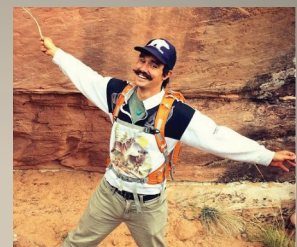
Hope you all get some great turns in!

Sam



Touring in the Sierra above the Mono Basin. Photo: Wendy Schneider

Transitions



Friends of the Inyo would like extend a large thank you to **Barbara Kelley** for her service and dedication to the organization over the past four years. Barbara was an invaluable board member, without whom the Owens Lake Bird Festival would not have been possible. We wish her nothing but the best in her future endeavors. Thanks Barbara! We also welcome **Alex Ertaud** as Communications & Outreach Manager. Learn more about Alex in his biography on our website.

POLICY

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Under Attack

by Jora Fogg

On the eve of 2016, after more than eight years of scientific research and extensive stakeholder engagement, the Obama Administration finalized the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, a landmark management plan for the California desert. The final Plan balanced conservation, recreation, and renewable energy development in one of the largest intact ecosystems in the United States.

After the Plan's finalization, Friends of the Inyo began working to implement the Plan at the local level in Inyo County through expanded opportunities for visitation and restoration on desert lands. However, on February 2ND the Trump Administration announced their intent to amend the DRECP, citing two executive orders to expand opportunities for development and increase broadband internet access in rural communities. In late February and early March the Bureau of Land Management

held public scoping meetings across the desert to identify areas of the Plan that allegedly needed amendment. The comment period closed after only 45 days on March 22ND.

It is wasteful and unnecessary to consider amendments to the DRECP at this time. The Plan was finalized only 18 months ago. There are no new facts or developments that justify re-visiting the compromise that resulted after eight years of stakeholder engagement. An overwhelming number of the public citizens who attended scoping meetings and submitted comments on the Plan are opposed to any amendments. The true intent of Department of Interior's decision to amend the DRECP is to roll back Obama's conservation legacy and open up public lands—your lands—to development. Such development benefits private corporations and reduces the ability for outdoor tourism on which our rural desert communities rely to thrive.

After the close of the comment period, the BLM will release a scoping report which will include their decisions and address comments. Because the BLM is now streamlining all of their National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews, we can expect there to be six to eight weeks between the scoping report release and the implementation of their decision. The decision will go in one of two directions:

- They will propose Plan amendments; or
- They will ask stakeholder working groups to address implementation issues without plan amendments.

Based on past land use planning under this administration we can expect movement on this issue in July 2018. Thank you to all who commented on the DRECP. Together with our coalition partners, we generated almost 43,000 comments in support of the DRECP.

Defending Conglomerate Mesa

In November, 2017, Friends of the Inyo submitted comments on the Perdito Gold Mining Exploration project and encouraged the public to do the same. The Ridgecrest Field office of the BLM is currently reviewing the 10,000 plus comments received and will likely make a decision this spring. Conglomerate Mesa is unique and important for many reasons, including that it is home to many sites and artifacts of cultural and historical importance to Native Americans and the history of mining in Inyo County, as well as an important population of high-elevation Joshua Trees.

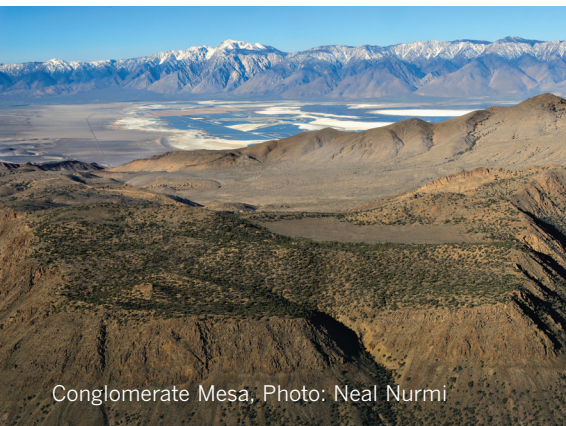


Photo: Tom Budlong

Thanks... to the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment and the Conservation Lands Foundation for their generous support of our DRECP defense work.



**Conservation
Lands
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Protecting America's Heritage



Conglomerate Mesa, Photo: Neal Nurmi



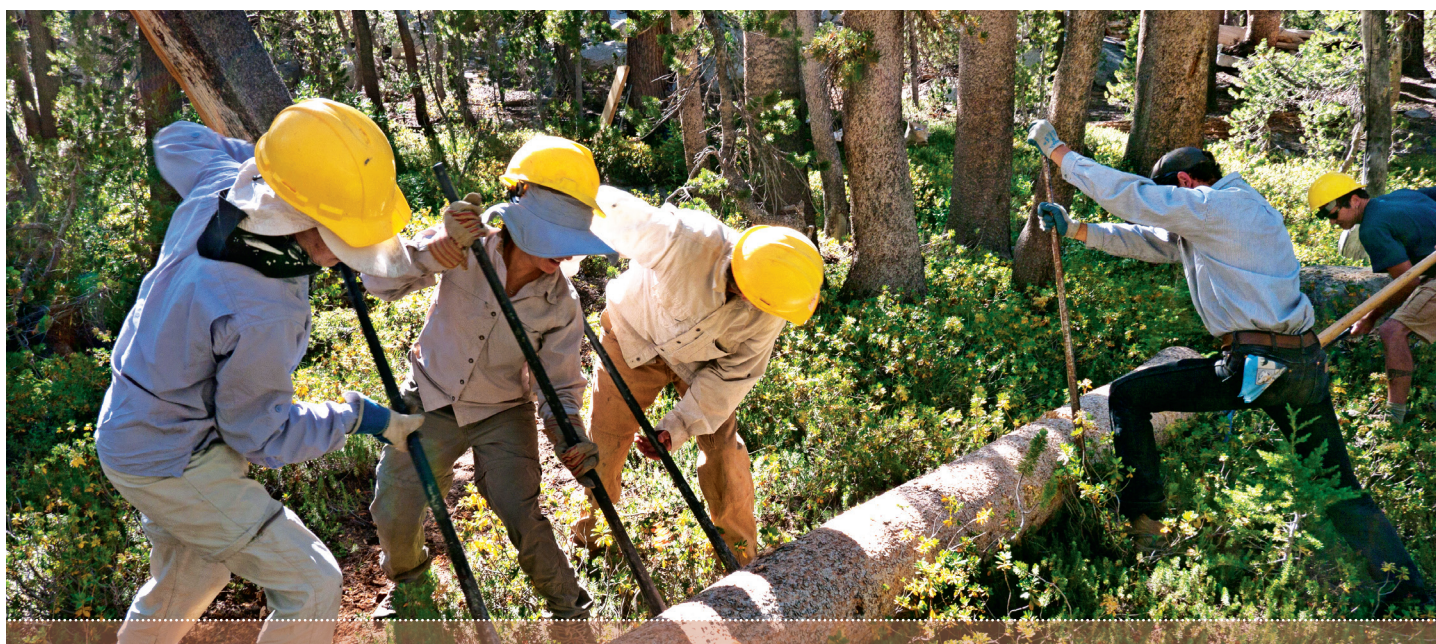
Panamint Valley, Photo: John Dittli



Trona Pinnacles, Photo: John Dittli

UPCOMING EVENTS

9 JUNE	Breakfast with a Botanist
14 JUNE	Mono Basin Trails Day
21 JUNE	Trail Work Thursday - Bishop
23 JUNE	June Lake Trails Day
30 JUNE	Bridgeport Trails Day
19 JULY	Trail Work Thursday - Lone Pine
21-22 JULY	Owens River Water Trail Project
25-29 JULY	Ansel Adams Wilderness Project (Approx. dates, subject to change)
4-5 AUG	Owens River Water Trail Project
8-12 AUG	John Muir Wilderness Project (Approx. dates, subject to change)
16 AUG	Trail Work Thursday - Mammoth
25 AUG	Bodie Hills Exploration
25-26 AUG	Owens River Water Trail Project
29 SEPT	National Public Lands Day Celebration at SNARL - Bodie Hills Stewardship Day



Strong Stewardship takes many hands. Join us!

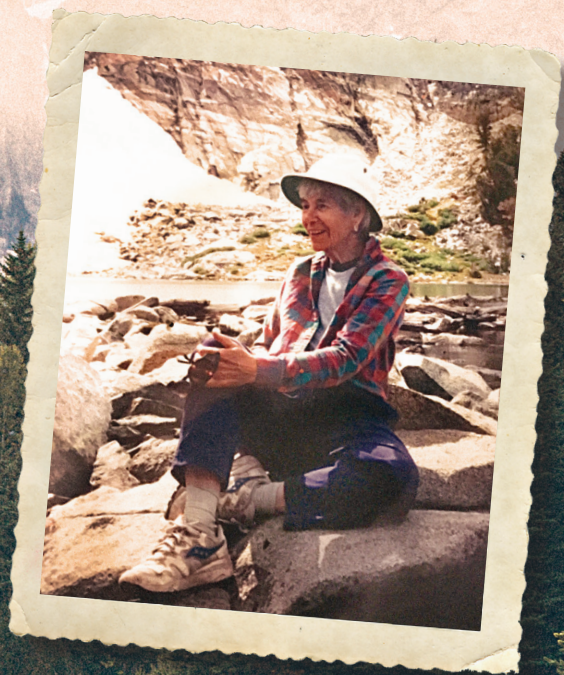
- Triumph of Sharing -

Genny Smith's Gifts by Paul McFarland

Reading through *Deepest Valley*, Genny Smith's love letter to the Owens Valley disguised as a field guide, one can't help but get restless. "Just reading names from our map may rouse your curiosity and whet your appetite to go exploring," she writes in the chapter "Roadsides." Genny's books created the windows through which generations, myself included, experienced, dreamed of, and explored the Eastern Sierra. Her gentle descriptions and kindly, forceful prose at once beguiled and instructed. Describing the longest contiguous stretch of wild land remaining in a rapidly industrializing post-war Sierra Nevada, Genny proclaims "this is the High Sierra wilderness—a wilderness not because engineers couldn't build roads there, nor loggers cut trees, but a wilderness by intention." By intention. We owe every moment we spend in wild places to someone, someone with intention, someone like Genny Smith. Grab your friends and family, hold them tight for life is fleeting, take them outside, spread a love of wild places, and grow someone's intention.

"No matter what agency manages them nor how they are classified, wild lands will remain wild only as long as enough people want them so and make their wishes known."

- Genny Smith, *Deepest Valley*, 1962



Photos courtesy of
Sydney Quinn

Trail Ambassadors and the Inyo National Forest NEED YOUR HELP!

by Alex Ertaud and Julia Runcie

Stretching from Kennedy Meadows to the Mono Basin, the Inyo National Forest is truly vast. It spans two million acres, featuring 1,200 miles of hiking trails, 3,600 miles of motorized recreation routes, 701 campgrounds, and 800,000 acres of designated Wilderness. And perhaps most telling is the fact that it welcomes a whopping four million visitors a year.

While two people per acre may seem like a lot of space, these crowds are not uniformly distributed across the landscape. People often congregate at the same trailheads, frequenting the same paths that take us to Second Lake, Little Lakes Valley, or Crystal Crag. Because of this, our presence on the land is increasingly being felt.

The Inyo National Forest provides us with so much. A respite from the stresses of modern society. Immeasurably beautiful sunrises and sets that will forever be imprinted upon the sensory negatives of our minds. It allows us to experience the world through our first-person lens, to create the memories we will never forget. Friends of the Inyo feels that it is our collective responsibility to care for the land, and put into it as much as we get out.

Last year, our two Trail Ambassadors dedicated their summer to caring for the Inyo National Forest. In under three months of traveling the trails between Big Pine Creek and Parker Lake, Astra Lincoln and Alex Ertaud were able to accomplish some staggering work. They served as a point of contact and

information for 968 visitors, surveyed 217 miles of trail, crosscut 72 logs, and removed 238 pounds of trash. Astra and Alex worked with visiting youth groups to rehabilitate trails for minimum impact on the land and optimal visitor enjoyment, while also sharing the Inyo with the next generation of responsible outdoor enthusiasts. They led weekly interpretive walks to tell the tales of our region's natural and cultural history. They engaged 84 volunteers through public stewardship projects, such as engineering the multi-day effort to clear hundreds of pounds of flood debris from the boardwalk on the southwest end of Convict Lake.

This past summer's work made one thing clear: the Inyo National Forest needs a powerful cadre of skilled and dedicated stewards for its vast landscape. With that in mind, this summer of 2018 we will be setting our sights high. Friends of the Inyo plans to double the Trail Ambassador Program, expanding our reach with four staff working from Horseshoe Meadows to Lundy Canyon, leading interpretive hikes, coordinating volunteer projects for visiting youth, and completing critical trail work all summer long.

To meet this goal, we need your help to raise \$100,000. Consider making a donation today to ensure that the Inyo National Forest's trails are well staffed with knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and skilled Trail Ambassadors. As Astra so eloquently put it:

"The least we can give these mountains is everything we've got."

The Following Individuals and Businesses

have generously committed to support a fully-staffed Trail Ambassador program:



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Individuals:

Carol Broberg, Mark and Laura Deem, Gayle Frickle, Sally Gaines and Rick Kattelman, and Ron Guelden

We hope you'll join them. Visit friendsoftheinyo.org/trailambassadors to give today!

Effacement on the Racetrack calls for all hands on deck. Photo: Joanne Hihn



Rocks leaving acceptable marks. Photo: Joanne Hihn



STEWARDSHIP

Restoring the Racetrack by Julia Runcie

My first sight of Death Valley's Racetrack Playa was like a glimpse of another planet. After nearly two hours of jolting and jouncing along the washboard entrance road, we stepped onto the playa like sailors at the end of a long voyage, venturing timidly onto an unfamiliar shore. The ancient lakebed was the color of tahini, spread out smooth and flat between jagged desert peaks. At one end, the startling black rock pillars known as the Grandstand caught the eye like a pin on a map. At the other, the famous "racing rocks" lay scattered, each sitting in the furrow it had etched as a mysterious coincidence of ice and wind pushed it across the playa.

For a few moments I relished a sense of discovery, as though I were the first to stumble upon this bizarre landform hidden deep inside the Lower 48's largest national park. But that feeling didn't last long. Even in the flat noon light, the evidence of previous visitors stood out starkly on the playa's surface: vehicle tracks looping in careless doughnuts, long straightaways carved by dirt bikes, constellations of footprints, and even, in one spot, giant numerals spelling out "2015." Other explorers had been here before, some carrying with them the insatiable human urge to leave their mark on the natural world.

Despite its name, the Racetrack is officially closed to vehicles to preserve its otherworldly scenery and opportunities for quiet recreation. In muddy conditions, people are encouraged to keep off the playa too, since tracks made in the mud create deep impressions that harden as the sediment dries out and can remain clearly visible for months. Yet either through ignorance or willful disrespect, trespasses occur. Death Valley National Park staff estimate that the playa is scarred by miles of vehicle tracks made by trucks, ATVs, motorcycles, and even, recently, a small airplane.

In 2017, Death Valley received a three-

year grant from the State OHV Fund to document and restore off-road vehicle trespass throughout the park. Yet in a place like the Racetrack, restoration is easier said than done. There's even a different word for it: "effacement," defined as eliminating or erasing marks from a surface, wearing away, making inconspicuous, causing to vanish. During Presidents' Day Weekend this February, volunteers from Friends of the Inyo and the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club joined park staff in the first ever large-scale effacement project, piloting an ingenious new method to wipe away the marks of trespass on the playa.

The first step in the process was to elevate the compressed sediment within the tracks so it was flush with the undisturbed surface of the playa. We accomplished this using rakes and cultivating tools called garden weasels. It was difficult to break through the sturdy crust, but the softer mud beneath crumbled readily. Soon, the tracks were transformed from compacted troughs to a level surface of pulverized sediment. The next step was to smooth out lumps or irregularities with concrete floats—large, flat panels attached to long handles, like massive irons pressing out any remaining wrinkles. Finally, we saturated the working area with a fine mist of water, mimicking the seasonal storms that flood and reform the playa's crust. Within moments, we could see the characteristic polygonal cracks appearing like magic in the wet mud.

Restoration is typically a long-drawn-out process, requiring years or even decades before the disturbed area recovers. Planting new vegetation amid the scars of a wildfire or reshaping eroded stream channels can feel almost painfully slow and inefficient. Yet effacement on the Racetrack happened almost before our eyes. It was thrilling to watch the playa reabsorb the tracks into its vast mosaic of interlocking polygons, like a fractal propagating at our feet.

Still, we were sobered by the project's time- and labor-intensiveness. With 18 people working for four hours, we succeeded in effacing 512 linear feet of trespass—a tiny fraction of the tracks that remain. We used 750 gallons of water, a scarce commodity in this arid landscape. It's clear that a great deal of work lies ahead.

To that end, Friends of the Inyo is building a partnership with Death Valley to provide volunteer and professional labor for future effacement projects. As a starting point, we expect to work with the park for up to four weeks in the fall of 2018. The time and supplies we put into these projects will help the park estimate the total cost of effacement per foot of track. This estimate can then be used to charge an appropriate fine for future trespasses.

Of course, hard labor and law enforcement aren't the only methods of combating vehicle traffic on the park's fragile playas. Better signage, education, and outreach will also play major roles in reducing the incidence of trespass. One of my favorite moments during the Racetrack Project came when I glanced up to realize I didn't recognize the person across the track from me. I introduced myself and asked if he worked for the park. "Oh, I'm just a tourist," he said. "I saw you out here working and figured I'd grab a rake and help." As so often happens during Friends of the Inyo's volunteer stewardship events, I was reminded that for every person who can't resist the urge to carve their initials into the natural world, there is someone else who will drop everything and work for hours, for free, fervently and selflessly, to protect it.

Many thanks to the volunteers who donated their time to the Racetrack Project, and to Death Valley National Park for coordinating our efforts. Stay tuned for information about how you can be involved in the next effacement project!

EXPLORATION

The Skintrack To Environmental Activism:

The David Brower Story

by David Page

On Leap Day 1936, as Spain descended into civil war and Hitler prepared to march troops into the Rhineland, a group of Californians set off from Yosemite Valley for the High Sierra Nevada. They carried heavy wooden skis and 50-pound packs, aiming to make the first winter ascent and descent of 13,114-foot Mt. Lyell, Yosemite National Park's highest peak.

Among them was 23-year-old David Brower, who would eventually become one of the 20th century's most influential environmental activists. He'd spent the summers of '33 and '34 backpacking the range, drinking from streams, honing his technical skills on dozens of impressive first ascents and leaving his signature atop more than 70 peaks.

"I would never again be so self-reliant in the wild for so long," he wrote decades later, "or see so few people there, or be so totally absorbed in exploring and enjoying and so unconcerned with protecting the wildness that had made the experience possible."

As a 77-year-old looking back over six decades of bitterly contentious environmental battles, Brower would see that, already in the 1930s, there'd been only a handful of places left where a person could get more than 10 miles from a road. "I had not yet understood what wilderness means or what the threats were to the last vestige of it," he wrote. "I was low and slow on the learning curve."

Ski mountaineering—for pleasure, rather than for sheer expedience—was a relatively new activity in the 1930s. For young Brower, it provided an incomparable means to experience that wildness he'd come to think of as his true home. After an epic march, a hurricane-force wind event and a roped, five-man



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-David Brower

simul-scramble up a "final sixty-five-degree pitch of snow and rock," the 1936 crew made the summit of Lyell. They soaked up a seemingly endless view of snow and vertical granite, then schussed 7,000 feet down to camp.

Brower started full-time work for the Sierra Club in 1939 at part-time wages of \$75 per month. He dove headlong into the campaign to designate Kings Canyon a national park. During the war, he served as an officer and instructor for the 10th Mountain Division, influencing thousands of young Americans in their attitudes toward the mountains. He was there in the Apennines to help drive the Germans from Italy and afterward went north to the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc.

What he found there appalled him. There were cow trails, roads and buildings everywhere; power plants and mines dug into the range's deepest recesses. He sent home a piece for the Sierra Club Bulletin in 1945 entitled *How to Kill a Wilderness*. "The Alps had been explored and enjoyed to death," he later wrote, "and I moved from the battle against Hitler to the battle against despoilers of wild places."

Two years ago, my father gave me his old copy of *Manual of Ski Mountaineering*, a compact 1947 edition with a waterproof cover. I was surprised to see David Brower's name on the frontispiece as editor, opposite a photograph from 1941 of a pair of graceful arcing ski turns at the base of Bear Creek Spire.

I'd just signed on part time with a small organization dedicated to protecting the few remaining wild places in North America on behalf of a growing contingent of backcountry skiers and other winter mountaineers. It was the last year of Obama's presidency. There'd been

a resurgence of anti-federal, anti-environmental Sagebrush Rebellion activity, manifest most notably in the armed takeover of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. In county and state governments across the West, and in the U.S. House of Representatives, men (and some women) were dedicated to selling off or otherwise wringing short-term profit from public lands.

On the other hand, there'd begun to develop an encouraging coalition of outdoor companies and human-powered recreationists whose primary order of business, at the time, was to give Obama's administration ample cover to use the Antiquities Act to protect a swath of federal landscape in southeastern Utah under the working title of Bears Ears National Monument.

I'd been aware of Brower as an environmentalist, as the man who'd transformed the Sierra Club from a local outing club into a powerful national force for environmental defense. I knew of the battles to save Dinosaur National Monument, the Grand Canyon, the Redwoods, Mineral King and the North Cascades, and of the heroic work leading to the 1964 passage of the Wilderness Act. I also knew of his failure to oppose the re-routing of the Tioga Road and the heartbreaking loss of

Glen Canyon, failures he never forgot. Somehow, I'd not quite registered that Brower had first been an accomplished rock climber and skier.

But now, in the midst of our current government's crusade to dismantle more than a century of hard-fought protections for our ever-diminishing wild places, and with a clearer understanding of the high stakes and daunting challenges, I find myself coming back to Brower.

He never forgot the wildness he'd first experienced in the 1930s in the High Sierra. And as he grew older, to the chagrin of some of his more moderate friends and colleagues, he grew more radical and uncompromising in his allegiance to those places. Is it not now incumbent on us to do the same? As backcountry skiers and riders, we know precisely what's left of the wild in this country. Will we be the ones to save it? Or will we let it go?

An award-winning freelance writer, David Page is Advocacy Director for Winter Wildlands Alliance. This piece originally appeared in Issue 120 of Backcountry Magazine. A sincere thanks to the editors at Backcountry Magazine and David Page for letting us share David Brower's story.



This undated photo is said to be of David Brower on a "snow bridge across Illilouette Creek, Mt. Starr King trip." It was published in the "Manual of Ski Mountaineering" in 1942. Both photos courtesy of Colby Memorial Library, Sierra Club.

EXPLORATION

Get Out

Mountain Biking to the Top of White Mountain via Silver Canyon

by Alan Jacoby

This was one of those “once in a lifetime” rides. Doing it once was plenty for me. I don’t ever want to see Silver Canyon again. EVER. Although I wouldn’t mind hiking White Mountain with the family and taking them to Patriarch Grove to share the beauty of the ancient bristlecone pines, it will definitely be accessed via car, and not by riding my bike up 12,000’ into the sky. That being said, I’m reveling in the rare satisfaction that is only achieved through immense mental and physical suffering leading to successfully completing a lofty goal...and then whining about it after.

The amazing landscape and scenery are second to none. The ancient bristlecones and moonscapes up high are unreal. The first time White Mountain comes into view after climbing past Patriarch Grove is magical. I’m gonna ride to the top of that? SWEET!!!

Looking down off the top of White Mountain in all directions is spiritual. With all the adrenaline, oxygen deprivation, and overall cracked-out mental state I was in, it was quite emotional. Something everybody needs to do.

When I arrived at the summit, there were six people there clapping and cheering, hooting and hollering at me. Turns out, they were the same group that drove past as I was sitting on a stump eating my chicken caesar wrap at Patriarch Grove hours before, and remembered me. They were all mountain bikers (who were just hiking for fun) and understood the feat of climbing up Silver Canyon. Sharing that moment with them was great. I should have had a beer with them, but I needed to keep my remaining wits intact for the descent.

Riding down Old Silver Canyon. That wagon road was so much fun and offered up unique views compared to the traditional route. Seeing the old cabin, and imagining this area in the mining heyday, is always fun for a history buff like me.

In closing, if ultra-endurance adventure riding is your thing, this ride is for you. Otherwise, drive your car up to the locked gate, and hike or bike to the top of White Mountain Peak. It’s worth every penny of flesh and blood and sweat left on the trail—no matter how you get there.

Getting there: The version I did starts at Laws Railroad Museum, approximately four miles north on Highway 6 from the Highway 395/Highway 6 intersection in Bishop. Climb up Silver Canyon to White Mountain Road (6,400’ climb over 11 miles). You then continue up White Mountain Road past the Patriarch Grove turnoff, through the locked gate, up to the Barcroft Laboratory, and eventually to the summit of White Mountain Peak at 14,252’—the highest peak you can ride your bike to in the contiguous United States. Then comes the down. For a more enjoyable descent, make a right on Old Silver Canyon—a mining-era wagon road that goes down the north side of the canyon and reconnects with Silver Canyon about five miles from the end. The whole ride is 65 miles long, with around 12,200’ of elevation gain. Not for the faint of heart. Enjoy!

Alan Jacoby is a founding member of the Sierra Eastside Mountain Bike Association, an avid mountain biker, owns the Maven Bike Shop, and is a long time Mammoth resident.



Photos: Alan Jacoby



PINE DROPS

NOTES ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE EASTERN SIERRA'S PUBLIC LANDS

by Jora Fogg

DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT UPDATING FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The previous plan from 2005 does not allow for prescribed fire or fuels treatment within the wilderness area of the Monument or for the management of natural ignitions. A public scoping period took place last winter and our comments emphasized that fire use and natural ignitions will need to be a central message and management objective in the new plan. The primary goal of the plan should be to work with fire to build fire resilience in the Monument. We also asked the Park Service to consider wildlife and wildlife habitat such as the protection of large woody debris and standing large snags in their fire management strategies. DEPO will release a draft environmental assessment this spring for public review.

COMMENT PERIOD OPEN ON THE PROPOSED WEST MOJAVE ROUTE NETWORK

After years of litigation and under court order the BLM released a supplemental environmental impact statement and draft plan for

the West Mojave Route Network on March 16TH, 2018. The plan evaluates motorized and non-motorized routes and proposes a comprehensive route network that attempts to balance access with the protection of sensitive resources. Unfortunately, the new draft proposes a spaghetti network of 6,300 miles of OHV routes across the West Mojave, and only 179 miles of non-motorized trails, requiring hikers and equestrians to navigate open terrain or share trails with motorized vehicles. Comments are due June 14TH, 2018 and can be submitted to: blm_ca_wemo_project@blm.gov.

WELCOME TAMMY TO THE INYO NATIONAL FOREST

The Inyo National Forest's new Forest Supervisor, Tammy Randall-Parker, will start April 30TH. She comes to Bishop from the Colorado's Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests. Her interests include fire, science, collaboration, and forest restoration. We welcome Tammy and look forward to working with her. The Inyo's Final Forest Plan is under review at the Washington Office and is scheduled to be released this summer.



Photo: Wendy Schneider



Photo: Alex Ertaud

Second Year of SnowSchool a Rousing Success!

On February 13TH and 14TH, Friends of the Inyo partnered with the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, Winter Wildlands Alliance, the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center, and the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation to bring the SnowSchool curriculum to 93 Mammoth Elementary School fifth graders.

Visit friendsoftheinyo.org/blog for more words and pictures on the experience.

Bridging the Divide Through Stewardship: a Talk with Mike Johnston

Friends of the Inyo Executive Director Wendy Schneider sat down to talk with Eastern Sierra 4WD Club President Mike Johnston to learn more about his thoughts on the relationship between the OHV and conservation communities and the best way to move forward with helping each other to protect and care for our Eastern Sierra public lands. This conversation has been edited and condensed.

So, how did you get to the Eastern Sierra?

Like a lot of the people here, I'm a transplant. I grew up in Palmdale. At that time it had one traffic light. I decided to leave the corporate world in 1990. People were shooting each other on the freeway, it was time to get out of the big city. We owned a home in Bishop, loved being in the Eastern Sierra, and decided to relocate here permanently. We had two kids, in fifth and sixth grades, when we moved. Once we set up shop in Bishop, I started my own business as a general contractor, it was called J & J Construction. I ran that for about seven years and then did real estate until I retired six years ago.

How did you get involved with the Eastern Sierra 4WD Club?

I joined the Eastern Sierra 4WD club in about 2000, it used to be called Mammoth Lakes Eastern Sierra 4WD Club. We used to meet at the Water Department in Mammoth. The club has since shortened the name to just the Eastern Sierra 4WD club. Meetings are monthly in Bishop and membership in the club is about 65 people. We travel throughout the Eastern Sierra with an outing every month. We choose the location based on the weather, and try to avoid the snow. They made me president in 2010. I think I might be the fourth president. It's supposed to be a one-year term but mine keeps getting renewed.

How did you get connected with Friends of the Inyo?

Well, it was not too long after I joined the 4WD Club. At that time the Friends of the Inyo office was next to what is now the Great Basin Bakery. One day I saw your logo and realized that I really connected with it: Preservation, Exploration, Stewardship. I thought "Hey, that's me! I agree with those principles!" So I walked in and introduced myself to Paul McFarland [FOI's Executive Director at the time]. I wanted to learn more about you guys. And it was great to meet Paul, I have always enjoyed talking to Paul.

In truth, another reason I walked in that day was because I thought you might need some help hearing what the 4WD community has to say. I wanted to contribute to the ongoing travel management debate from the off-road side, but also hear what you have to say.

Tell me about your participation in the travel management process that was happening at that time.

Since I've been in the Eastern Sierra, I have participated in 80 to 90% of Forest Service meetings about OHV activities, but I was not part of the Collaborative Alternative Team [CAT]. I supported the compromise produced by the CAT, in fact I thought it was amazing that Jim Upchurch [Inyo National Forest Supervisor in

2009] pulled it off, got the groups together, got a collaborative decision. There was no appeal of the decision, there were no lawsuits. Many people were unhappy, but it was a compromise, it was really amazing that the agreement got done. Of the approximately 1,400 miles of roads the Forest Service claimed were previously unidentified, the team agreed to close about 600 miles, and to keep open, and make official, about 800 miles of roads. It was an effective compromise and I have supported the agreement reached. It is done and we need to move forward.

The relationship between Friends of the Inyo and the 4WD community became very strained after the compromise was reached. Why do you think that happened?

When it came time to implement the CAT agreement, Friends of the Inyo got a OHMVR [Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation] grant and entered into a contract with the Forest Service to go out and do the work on the ground to close the roads. Friends of the Inyo were the ones carrying out the closing process. Many in the OHV community were not aware of the CAT process, had not participated, all they saw was Friends of the Inyo out there closing roads. I remember that the 4WD Club went out with Friends of the Inyo once, to Coyote. We jointly put up various different signs, and Friends of the Inyo supplied lunch. If we had done more of that, more outreach, more communication, more working together, things might have gone much more smoothly.



Photo: Julia Runcie

As evidenced by significant 4WD Club member participation at joint stewardship events with Friends of the Inyo over the last few years, we believe our efforts to improve the relationship between our groups are working. How can we best move forward to continue to improve our relationship with the OHV community?

I think we need to educate both sides more. The OHV community would like to make environmental groups aware that we consider ourselves environmentalists, that is, a good quality environment is important to us. I don't think the environmental groups know how much stewardship the OHV community does. We go out and plant bitterbrush and engage in other activities to repair damaged areas. Also, we want people to understand that the OHV community puts a lot of monetary resources into the protection and maintenance of public lands. All of the non-street-legal OHVs [ATVs, dirt bikes] pay green sticker fees to operate their vehicles. The money collected from these fees goes in large part to fund maintenance, law enforcement and restoration work on public lands. In fact, there was approximately \$1.6 million of this money [OHMVR grants] that was allocated between Inyo and Mono Counties in 2017.

To read the full conversation, visit our blog at: friendsoftheinyo.org/blog

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Friends of the Inyo succeeds thanks to the generous support of members and donors who help us care for public lands in the Eastern Sierra. We are pleased to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who made contributions between September 16th, 2017, and March 15th, 2018:

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