



JEFFREY PINE journal

CARING FOR THE PUBLIC LANDS OF THE EASTERN SIERRA

FALL/19

IN THIS
ISSUE

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Friends of the Inyo Trail Ambassador, Robin Hirsch, shares his knowledge of local flora to a group on a Botany Hike in Rock Creek Valley.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At Friends of the Inyo, we work to protect and care for lands that have been, for over ten thousand years, and still very much are, inhabited by the Paiute (Nuumu), Shoshone (Newe), and Timbisha peoples. They are the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. Many of these lands are now known by names recognizing people who never set foot here. These lands are called Payahunaduu or Panawe by the Nuumu and Newe peoples, respectively. This land acknowledgment is a recognition of the original inhabitants of the Eastern Sierra, and is intended as a show of respect for Native peoples and to surface the often-suppressed colonial history of our country.



PHOTO: Joshua Gresham on Unsplash

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OF THE INYO** SINCE 1986

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Friends of the Inyo is dedicated to the preservation, exploration, and stewardship of the Eastern Sierra's public lands.

COVER PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



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Climbing Ranger

As climbing continues to grow in popularity, our landscapes are being impacted by more users than ever before. Fortunately, Friends of the Inyo, the Bishop Area Climbers Coalition, and the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association are working to fund two climbing rangers to help support our land management agencies in caring for our public lands.

Through education, community building, and hands-on restoration, the Rangers will make sure that the climbing community remains one that recreates responsibly. Look out for Climbing Rangers in the Bishop area this climbing season.

To learn more about the Climbing Ranger Program, visit Friendsoftheinyo.org.



PHOTO: Kyle Hamada

Celebrating the 25TH Anniversary of The California Desert Protection Act

Friends of the Inyo is celebrating the 25th Anniversary of The California Desert Protection Act, which established Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and 69 wilderness areas! To commemorate this historic act and future desert conservation measures, Friends of the Inyo is coordinating a number of events from Death Valley to Bishop to highlight and show support for protected lands.

This anniversary is an important occasion to appreciate the public lands we enjoy in the California desert and recognize that without the last 25 years of desert conservation we might not be able to experience these areas as we do today. Local residents, businesses, conservationists, recreationists, and government agencies all know the importance of preserving desert lands. The California desert provides recreational, educational and business opportunities, and the region's visitors help drive the local economy and job creation in the outdoor and recreational industry.

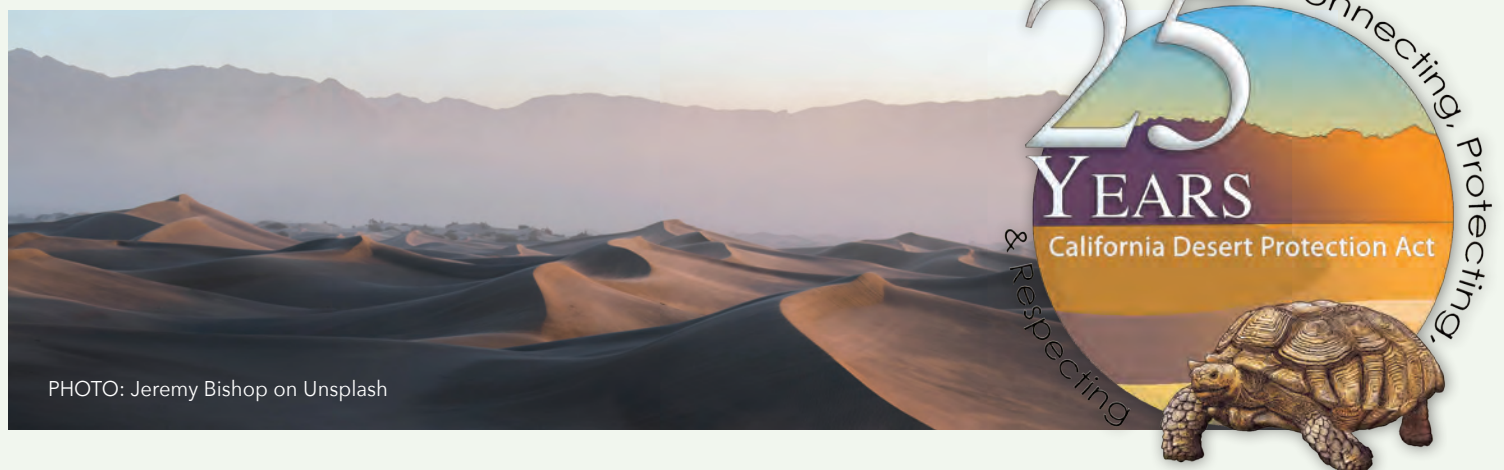


PHOTO: Jeremy Bishop on Unsplash

The Crosscut Saw:

Handy Tool and Resounding Symbol

BY THOMAS ZENTMYER

This Summer, Thomas spent five days in the backcountry working on the Sierra National Forest Wilderness Project. He and the crew worked to restore campsites and log out fallen trees.

I held in my gloved hands a long, slender piece of metal that stretched out almost two feet on either side of my body. Beneath the plastic guard laid one long row of alternating razor-sharp teeth. I stared down at this saw entrusted to me, watching as it wobbled in my grip. The clean and burnished metal hid the tool's true age of a century or more. I was in the middle of my third volunteer stewardship trip in the National Forest, and this time I had been offered the honor of carrying the crosscut saw. The Forest Service ranger with our party, Mickey, had told us that these saws were ancient. She explained that over the years some of them had developed personalities, and even earned names such as "Houston." That fact failed to hold any significance with me until the saw was in my grip, and I noticed an engraving on one of the two handles. Burned into the worn wood were the letters "CCC", which I figured stood for the Civilian Conservation Corps of the early 20th century. Created as a New Deal measure to combat the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps employed a massive number of young workers to plant trees, create trails, and develop other infrastructure across the country. It was then that I understood the implications of this saw's history. Our group of amateur

volunteers was performing the very same work that had been going on for generations. Even the techniques we utilized were age-old, mainly because their elegant simplicity left no need for change. Whether it was finding potential binding locations in a prospective cut job or using thick branches to roll heavy logs down the trail, we were mirroring the work of countless before us. The ancient saw symbolized all this work, and the spirit of it, through its age alone. When I glanced down at the metal again, I realized that my hands held the saw where so many others had over the past century. The last two times I volunteered for Friends of the Inyo on backcountry stewardship projects, I unearthed a strong sense of purpose and a deep connection with nature. This time, however, I felt myself making a connection with a rich past. The Forest Service is required to use crosscut saws due to environmental concerns that arise from working in a designated wilderness environment. However, as Ranger Mickey explained, production of high-quality crosscut saws practically ceased once the world moved on to the chainsaw. Usually I would mourn for

a lost art or technology, but in this case I felt thankful. This saw that I held was nameless-Mickey didn't recognize it as from her division of the Forest Service- but it lent me a perspective on my efforts; I was not the first to do this work and enjoy it, and I will be far from the last. At the end of the day, I understood how these saws gain a personality over time. The one I worked with seemed quite stubborn at times and would sometimes stop moving entirely. However, when I recognized its age and what it represented, I was honored to hold it in my hands. It almost radiated the very spirit of stewardship that it was born into a century ago. I held in my gloved hands not just a long, slender piece of metal with razor-sharp teeth, but a symbol of conservation passed down for generations. I only hope that it will continue its journey from generation to generation, person to person, hand to hand.



The crew of the 2019 Sierra National Forest Wilderness Project. PHOTO: Ken Miller



Thomas, with the help of Felix, the Friends of the Inyo sponsored intern with the US Forest Service, cuts through a large log. PHOTO: Ken Miller



A well-kept crosscut saw cuts efficiently with every push and pull. PHOTO: Ken Miller



Thomas holds the crosscut saw in his hands. PHOTO: Ken Miller



Looking down toward Owens Valley from Coyote Flat during a warm summer sunset. PHOTO: Luke Kinney

HULK, COYOTE, AND THE WILDERNESS MAN

BY LUKE KINNEY

From high to low, the OHV crew will go. The ramblings of a grateful East Side dweller and his attempt to make the Inyo a better place for everyone.

"This summer I want to be outside," I told myself as I poured a frothy beer for one of our local patrons at the Mountain Rambler Brewery. I've spent three years in the Eastern Sierra working at the brewery and recreating—mostly climbing. Later that night I scrolled through webpages researching for work outdoors, discovering a job post for a stewardship position with Friends of the Inyo. I envisioned myself planting baby pine trees and rescuing a small bear from a trap, some sort of wilderness super hero, a fantasy far from the reality of daily stewardship. I promptly applied for the job and ironed by silk "wilderness man" cape excitedly in preparation for the possibilities that lie ahead.

After my interview I was hired as "OHV Crew Leader"; not exactly what I was expecting, but hey it was good work. I was outdoors, learning something new, and I was caring for the Eastern Sierra. Our main function was to monitor illegal roads as well as close off trespass roads in hopes that they would restore back to their original states. I was warned that we might be unpopular amongst the locals, and to be

prepared to encounter frustrated four wheel drivers. On the contrary, most of our encounters were pleasant, people even seemed grateful for the work we were doing. Bishop's own "4x4" club met with us and the Forest Service, showing a willingness to leave past grudges behind and create a community where all voices and opinions could be heard. One of my favorite days of the season was riding in the passenger seat with a man named Pat in his yellow jeep listening to his stories about protecting archeological sites and his time spent in the backcountry. It's easy to categorize a certain group of folks based on what they do, but generally those who call the Inyo their home all share the same common goal, to protect the places and activities we love.

Our OHV Crew (small yet strong) included one off-season ski patroller and recent geology graduate, Mr. Sam Worman. While working, I would point at a section of rocks and make Sam explain why they were formed that way. He put up with my shenanigans and even taught me how to fly fish. Or rather, I watched him while he fished and tried to imitate. The other person on our crew, my amazing wife Laura, never left a job

unfinished and enjoyed her first full summer as a recent legal American. After she received her green card they even sent her a brochure titled “How to be an American;” I’d say she’s doing quite well.

Very often we go on “hitches”—three to four day stints where we have a specific project to accomplish. Our projects usually involve disguising a road by raking, planting dead trees (vertical mulching), burying large rocks (icebergs), and using natural materials around the site to blend the road back in to its surroundings. We were assigned one of the restoration projects up at a beautiful and somewhat hidden area called Coyote Flats. Coyote is a great meadow that rests above Bishop and is primarily a four wheel drive destination seven to nine miles of rock crawling, river crossings, and high elevation solitude. We pushed up that hill with eyes wide open in our early 90’s Chevy Silverado which we dubbed “The Hulk.” This road was by far the most extreme pass any of us had ever driven, not to mention the Hulk was weighted with tools and equipment to get our project completed. After three hours of driving on a bumpy dirt road we were all happy to reach our destination, including my dog Leia, our unofficial fourth crew member. As the Hulk sputtered clear liquid from under the axle, we shrugged and thought to ourselves, “We made it this far, we can worry about it when we leave.” Luckily it turned out to be an overheated air conditioner, classic rookie mistake to leave it on.

Our job was to close an illegal campsite that leads to a pristine meadow near Coyote Creek. The Forest Service had made previous attempts at the project, but some enterprising four-wheel-drivers attached the closure post to their cars and ripped the site apart. Sometimes our work feels as though we are fighting an unwinnable battle, hoping our closures will remain. Long hours of digging in the earth and moving heavy rocks only to have the site trespassed again. At the root of restoration it’s not about winning, but about giving the chance for nature to once again thrive. Restoration is a long distance marathon, not a sprint. Progress is hard to measure in a short period but when viewed over time, one can see the effects of stewardship and caring for the earth.

Laura, Sam, and I spent the next two days reestablishing the torn out gate, planting large rocks in the road, and moving downed trees across fire tracks. By the end of our hitch we had disguised the road well enough that you could drive right past it without noticing it was even there. The beautiful meadow was given yet another chance to recover from being trampled, and a small but special part of the Inyo was on its way to returning to what it once was. We made our way back home and although no baby bears were rescued, I felt as though my inner “wilderness man” was hanging up his cape after a long day caring for this amazing and magical place we call home.



Luke's dog, Leila, also enjoys the scenery around Baker Meadow. PHOTO: Luke Kinney



Looking toward the Sierra from Coyote Flat. PHOTO: Luke Kinney

A GREAT PERMISSION:

Reflections of a Trail Ambassador

BY JULIA TAWNEY

Julia Tawney spent her summer as a North Zone Trail Ambassador. Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Julia cherishes the high desert sunshine, endless ridgelines, and stunning vistas of the Eastern Sierra. She is an avid skier, backpacker, cold lake jumper, and bagel maker.

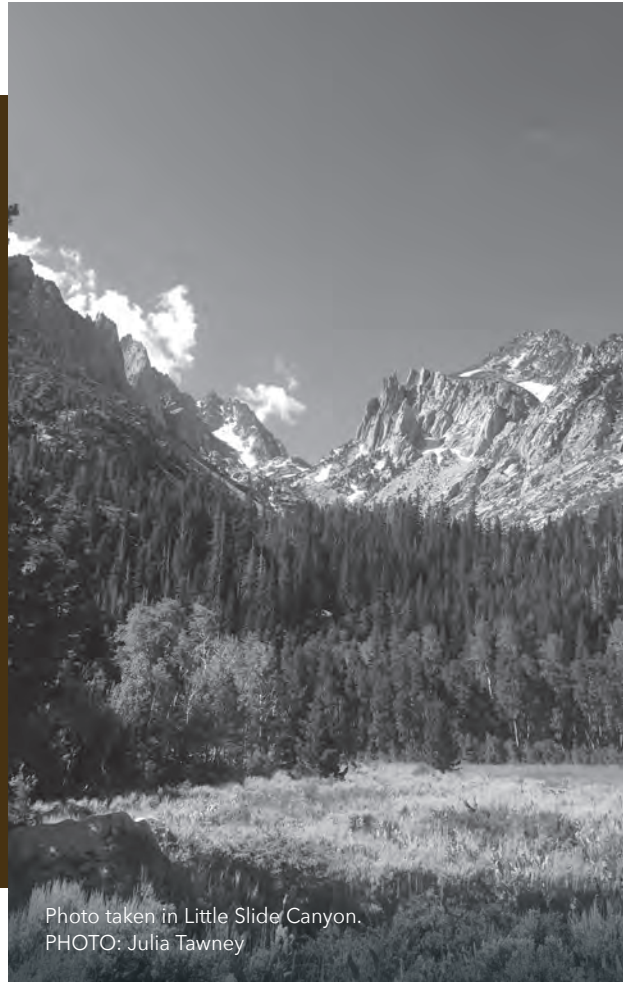


Photo taken in Little Slide Canyon.
PHOTO: Julia Tawney

I sit quietly in a sea of sagebrush, speckled with glacial erratics and juniper trees. I gaze at the granite cathedral of Little Slide Canyon. The ground holds, supports me in my seated position. Wind flutters the lupine, mule's ears, and glistening aspens. Birds and bugs zip from plant to plant, buzzing with life. I take a sip of my lukewarm coffee and nibble on a partially melted maple bar from the High Sierra Bakery.

My brain races to things in Mammoth and the long day of brushing ahead on the Robinson Creek Trail. *"Why didn't I get a better night of sleep? Why isn't this coffee 'working'? Etc..." I feel heavy, tired, anxious for the day ahead.*

I flip to a page in my field notebook. The words shine in the bright sunlight hitting the white paper.

Let Life Live Through You.

To allow the lively flavors of the Eastern Sierra to season me—it is a great permission. And one I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to practice this summer as a Trail Ambassador. It is in these pauses that I find clarity, motivation, and power in my work.

Every other week, I head to Bridgeport and patrol this section of the Robinson Creek Trail. This trail provides access to incredible alpine lakes, spectacular climbing, quiet meadows, and is a gateway to the Yosemite backcountry. It also proves a test of endurance and patience with a section of overgrown switchbacks that feels endless no matter how long you brush.

For many years, trails have served as somewhat of a complex subway system, transporting me from point A to B. After a long day stumbling off trail over talus fields, finding a trail feels like coming home. On trail, I slip into a familiar rhythm of speed and efficiency.

It took time for me to quiet my inner highway-speed trail voice. With slowness came the development of a keen eye, and attentiveness in evaluating trail. With it came an awareness in the pace of my feet hitting the tread, and the intricacy of the natural world around me. I find more times sitting on the side of a trail, collecting myself and soaking in the majesty that is the Eastern Sierra. I welcome the wonder.

Senses awaken with a deep breath of the high desert air, infused with pennyroyal, sagebrush, and a butter-scotchy whiff of a nearby Jeffrey Pine. I stare at the words on the page once again in my sit spot beneath Little Slide Canyon.

Let Life Live Through You.

BY ALEX ERTAUD,
Stewardship Director

This summer, I discovered that picking up fishing line might be my favorite thing ever. It's nuanced. I lose and regain faith in humanity, roll my eyes at and get excited with each strand I find in the sand, in the trees, in the brush, and in the rocks. It's cathartic, as I curse and beam from one moment to another. A roller coaster of emotions as I sit and search, scanning the landscape for any flicker of light as the sun's rays illuminate a thin strand of translucent line as it flutters in the breeze. Designed to be imperceptible to fish, I'm thankful to have good enough vision to hunt the strands of plastic monofilament.

All this to say that at a number of our “clean up” events, I found that as I hunted for line, I dove deep into my psyche. I was given a fantastic opportunity to explore my thoughts, be around like-minded people, and act in service to the land, and the fellow critters and flora that call it home. I hope that if you came to one of our events, you had an enriching experience of your own. Thanks to all who joined us one of our events, and hope to see you all at a stewardship event soon!

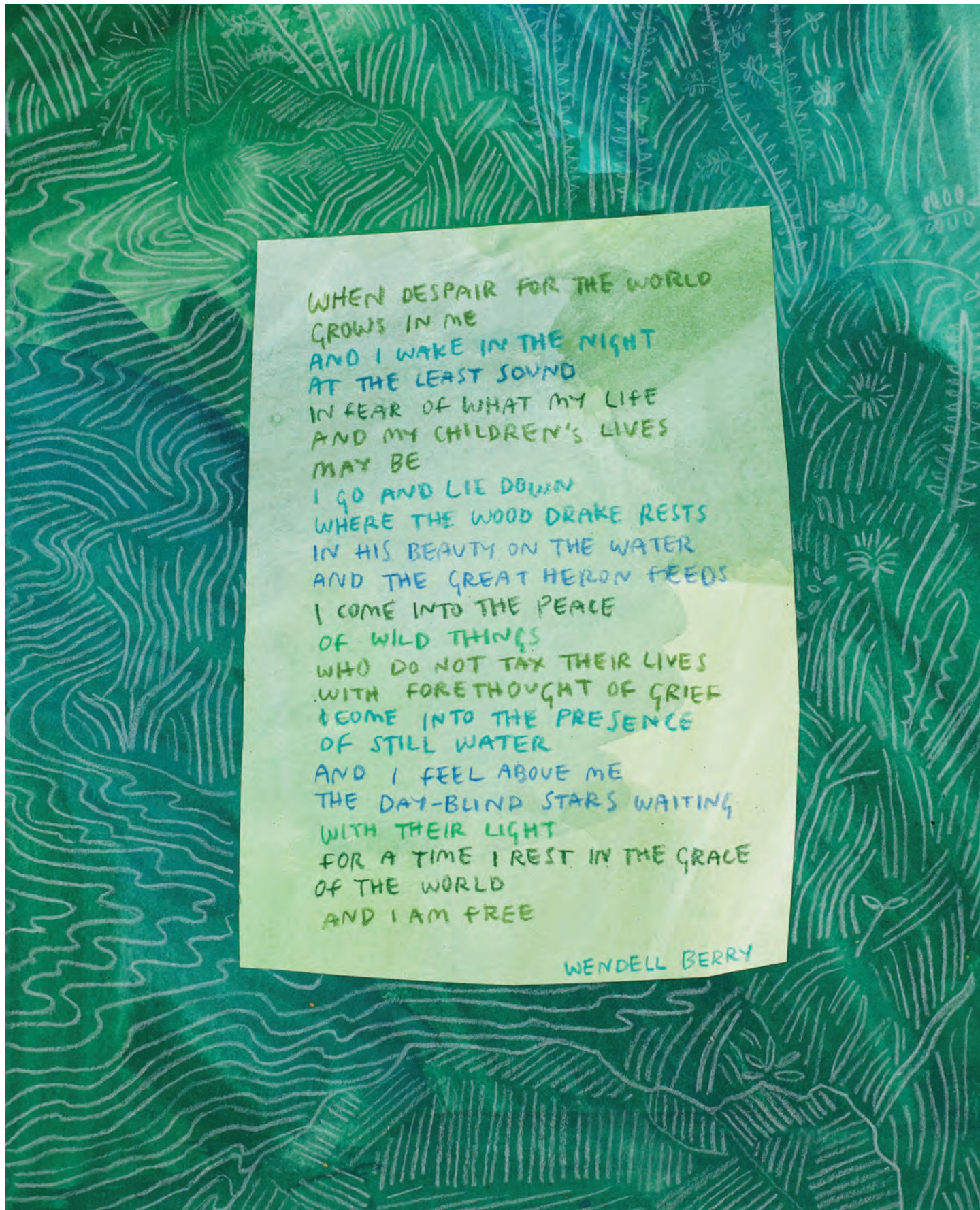
Finally, I'd be remiss to not thank Janet "JB" Barth for introducing me to my new favorite activity, and for being the Eastern Sierra's champion for fishing line pickup.

Featured Artist:
Lauren Newey

Lauren Newey is an artist and teacher living in Bishop, CA and she has spent the past two summer seasons working as a Trail Ambassador for Friends of the Inyo. Making things is her passion, especially when it involves paint, clay, or colored pencils. Lauren's goal is to use art as a vehicle to connect people with nature and she finds this work most rewarding when she's able to spark a connection to nature in children and young adults. You might also find Lauren in the mountains doing trail work, backcountry skiing, and wandering on foot.



This piece was made out of wonderment at California's interconnected water web. Growing up in New England, I am constantly blown away by how strongly connected California city slickers are to the Sierra Nevada, even when they don't realize it. Art by Lauren Newey.

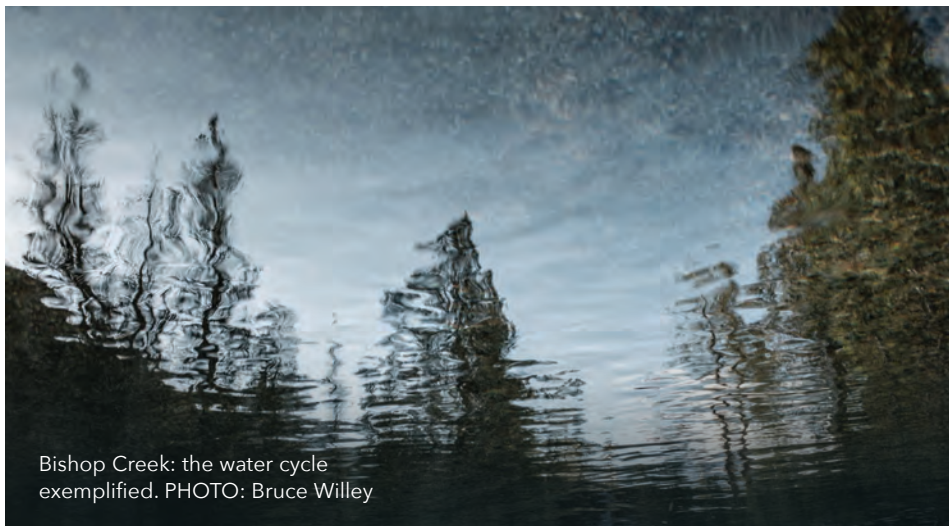


Peace of Wild Things, Poem by Wendell Berry, Illustration by Lauren Newey

This poem perfectly depicts the consolation I find when I am able to step out of my human brain and tune in more acutely with nature. The drawing is of my favorite spot in the universe, along the middle fork of Bishop Creek.



A citizen collector of fishing line pollution on Bishop Creek can find dozens of feet of the stuff, including several barbed fish hooks, in just a few minutes. PHOTO: Bruce Willey



Bishop Creek: the water cycle exemplified. PHOTO: Bruce Willey



Our Global Plastic Pollution Problem Begins Upstream

BY ELIZABETH GLAZNER

Our Eastern Sierra waterways are portals of plastic pollution that ends up in the ocean. Freshwater streams are an emerging frontier of microplastics research. PHOTO: Bruce Willey



The plastic wrapper that falls out of your pocket and gets blown into this water will likely be conveyed all the way downstream to a beach, where ocean currents could pick it up and carry it around the world as sunlight and wave action fragment and disperse it through the aquatic biosphere. PHOTO: Bruce Willey



Fishing line can tangle up wildlife, children, and dogs for as much as 600 years before it finally breaks down, but it never completely goes away. Tiny plastic fragments remain a toxic hazard. PHOTO: Bruce Willey

Before I moved to the Eastern Sierra, I lived all over the L.A. metro area, sometimes close enough to a beach that I didn't have to sweat a parking space. And though I surfed for many years, I never got any good at it because I could not get past the debris line left on the sand at high tide. I remember struggling to pull on a wetsuit in the foggy early mornings at Bolsa Chica State Beach, trying not to step among the tangled fishing line and seaweed and plastic tampon applicators and plastic bags that left a stripe of litter on the sand because I might crush a snowy plover's nest. If I paddled out within a few days of rain, I would scoop up armfuls of plastic bags with practically every stroke. Surfers called these ghostly, floating objects *jellyfish*.

So I didn't put my time in the water. I still remembered real jellyfish, and sand dollars, and a medley of shells tossed up by the tide you could trade later for Matchbox cars and jump rope. And when I had the chance, I sold my board and moved upstream, to the opposite end of the water cycle. As a surfer, I never went for the peak anyway; I was happy to sit on the shoulder, wait for my wave, and just enjoy being wet.

In my mind, gravity carries people to the coast the way it does rainwater, but I can push up in the opposite direction, find elbow room and endless views, and escape being caught at the bottom of the system, which to me is the chaos of a crowded beach on a summer day. By the time the sun has heated ocean water, vaporized and condensed it into clouds with payloads of snow and rain, I am usually safely off U.S. Highway 395 and often up a trailhead as close to where that water will fall as I can get.

With any luck, plenty of it will stay up there in the form of ice caps and glaciers, and trickle down or flow in abundance, as needed. What's not needed will run cleanly and unimpeded downhill into the ocean again, to be used over and over. In my mind, it's clean and perfect and never-ending, if a bit oversimplified.

And it's easy to believe in this perfect, clean system, just by going out and viewing it at altitude. From the Sierra or the Whites, I can see freshwater lakes, rivers and streams that appear pristine, except for maybe a little cow piss. When I first moved to Bishop 10 years ago, someone told me to always imagine a cow pissed in the water before I thought about drinking it, and that has stuck. A cow is eventually going to succumb to gravity and go lower, too, leaving plenty of water in the system above him that I can drink right off the mountain without a filter, which I probably forgot to bring on my hike.

The water that does not accumulate in lakes or flow into streams or canals will of course seep into the unpaved ground, replenishing wells,

aquifers and springs, and will bring forth, among many wonders, the stunning fields of wild iris I look forward to seeing pop every year on the valley floor northwest of town. I wander with my dog among them, along footpaths cut by kids on their way to and from school, and I have to take note of the unnatural part of the water cycle that is invisible from a distance – the errant candy wrappers, plastic straws and cups that blow up against the chain link fence edging the schoolyard, before they end up in the canal. I imagine there is a wicked outflow of polystyrene to-go containers that gravity set sail from a parking lot on Main Street all the way to the Santa Monica Pier.

I'm not blaming kids for this problem, or really anyone whose stuff blows into canals, rivers and streams and ends up on the beach or in the ocean. To say the global plastic pollution crisis is the result of anyone's singular behavior is to give a pass to the handful of multinational corporations responsible for creating and continuing to put into the waste stream a bunch of packaging that the Earth simply cannot digest.

We are increasingly aware as a society, thanks mostly to vivid photos of ocean trash posted on social media, that plastic – particularly single-use plastic – is collecting on even the most remote beaches around the globe, as well as the deepest ocean floors. But this Owens Valley landscape that I am so in love with is loaded with plastic too, and, just like the ocean, most of it is infinitesimally small. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch the size of Texas that you may have heard is swirling around out there is more accurately described as a "plastic smog" of pieces small enough to be ingested by plankton, the smallest links in our food chain.

Plastic in our valley is just as holographic as the smog at sea. Our inland freshwater waterways like Bishop Creek, the Owens River, and hundreds of miles of canals, harbor microplastics, microfibers, *polyethylene microspheres*, that come from cheap synthetic clothing and expensive fleece pullovers, personal care and household cleaning items, so much tangled fishing line, and especially, all that packaging that comes with everything we buy. It's not just the unrecyclable vessel of almond milk from the chain grocery store that breaks down in the environment but never goes away – it's the plastic wrapping on locally-grown, organic figs at the independent market. Practically everything sold at dollar stores that are becoming common to every Main Street in rural America is made of or packaged in plastic. Much of it will end up blowing into the river or the canal and breaking down into teeny tiny toxicants.

Once in our waterways, tiny plastics attract and bind to other contaminants, like PCBs, DDT, and PBDE. Good scientific research led to those

substances being banned decades ago, yet they continue to pollute our world when fish eat them or the tiny microorganisms that eat them, and we eat the fish. New research is needed, but freshwater studies of interior watershed are few and far between, as it's hard to garner attention and funding for a threat you cannot see. Pictures of dead whales on the beach with 13 pounds of plastic bags in their stomachs get all the retweets.

Prof. Rebecca Lyons and a group of students at the University of Redlands have been collecting samples at Norman Clyde Glacier for a study on a chemical used in pesticides that travels from the San Joaquin Valley and is deposited on the glacier and its watershed. The multi-year project aims to determine how such pollutants are being transported through the air. Meanwhile, a recently-published paper about the discovery of microplastics in Lake Tahoe by Dr. Monica Arienzo of Reno's Desert Research Institute has spurred interest in studying how, like the chemical found in the Palisades glacial area, microplastics might be getting dispersed through the air in the Sierra Nevada region.

The ultimate goal of such fact-finding is, of course, setting or changing policy to improve our lives. After all, flame retardants and even some pesticides were banned after their negative health impacts came to light via science. If we find out what kind of plastic is finding its way up to a glacial zone, where it came from, how it got deposited, and in what quantities, we have a chance of keeping the snowmelt that fills our lakes and streams and reservoirs and aqueducts as pristine as possible.

Maybe we will ban all single-use plastics someday, or far better still, come up with better packaging that doesn't end up in the landscape for hundreds of years. Maybe my local market will stop wrapping organic produce in plastic. Until then, I will stay upstream, close to the top of the water cycle, where a few weeks ago, a friend showed up at my door with a bottle of pure mountain snow melt she captured near Pine Lake, and I drank it straight down.

Elizabeth Glazner was a newspaper and magazine journalist before moving to the Eastern Sierra, and served as editorial director for Plastic Pollution Coalition. She spends some part of the day hiking with her spotted dog Kirby in the Tungsten Hills.

Bruce Willey is a recovering newspaper and magazine journalist. During the day and night, he is a wedding and portrait photographer and when he doesn't have bookings, is the CEO of the Owens Valley Arts and Leisure Council.

Pumped Storage in the Eastern Sierra: Weighing the Pros and Cons

BY JORA FOGG, *Policy Director*, WENDY SCHNEIDER, *Executive Director*, JEFF DOZIER, *FOI Board Member*
 Jeff Dozier is also a Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UC Santa Barbara

Adapted and republished from *Pumped Storage Proposals in the Eastern Sierra: Haste Makes Waste* by Jora Fogg, published in the Desert Report. Visit desertreport.org to learn more.

It's a Balancing Act

It is clear that the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is more critical than ever before. The question we as an organization face is this: How do we best balance our mission to protect the Eastern Sierra with allowing for renewable energy development? We must move to quickly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels for electricity generation. But a big advantage of those fossil fuels lies in their producing electricity elsewhere while we are left to worry only about the power lines. With fossil fuels, the “storage” is intrinsic to the fuel itself, and we strategically burn the fuel whenever power is needed. But with renewable energy, not only do we face production of electricity in our own backyard, but we also face the requirement to be able to store that energy. Sources of renewable energy are not constant or always available. Sunshine is variant, winds change speeds and directions, and small-scale hydropower depends on fluctuating streamflows. Increasing the renewable fraction will drive a need for more storage but all technologies have their advantages and disadvantages.

Recent Proposals in the Eastern Sierra

The rush to meet California’s renewable energy mandate has spurred recent proposals for pumped storage in the Eastern Sierra. The development of renewable energy sources requires concurrent development of storage techniques, like pumped storage, to maintain consistent power across the grid. Pumped storage involves pumping water uphill between two or more reservoirs during times of low energy demand and then releasing it downhill to power turbines to generate electricity at times of peak energy use. Pumped storage does not produce electrical energy; it stores it to be used at a convenient time. This is of obvious value as renewable energy sources cannot be relied upon twenty-four hours a day.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regulates pumped storage and must approve preliminary applications before they can move forward for feasibility studies and analysis. Premium Energy (PE), a Bay Area based company founded by previous employees of LADWP, recently submitted proposals for two different pumped storage projects in the Eastern Sierra. One, the Owens Valley Project, would have been located near the border of Mono and Inyo Counties but PE has since withdrawn its proposal. And the other, the Haiwee Pumped Storage Proposal, would be south of Olancha in southern Inyo County. As of press time, FERC has issued a preliminary permit allowing PE to conduct a feasibility study.

Owens Valley Pumped Storage

First put forward in April of 2018, the Owens Valley Project first proposed creating high elevation reservoirs within the John Muir Wilderness and reservoirs at lower elevations with associated power plants and infrastructure in the Owens River Gorge and Lower Rock Creek. When the preliminary application first appeared, local residents quickly organized a coalition to fight the proposal, citing safety concerns, violations of the Wilderness Act and detrimental effects to mule deer and Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep. In response to the strong public

opposition they received, over the next months, Premium Energy made several amendments to its proposal.

All of the amended proposals suffered from significant and obvious defects, including not only environmental concerns but feasibility issues and FERC ultimately rejected PE’s application. The company then responded with a proposal to utilize Crowley Lake and the Crowley dam. Crowley Dam already supplies a modest amount of renewable energy to the DWP grid, and it is widely believed a pumped storage facility would decrease the efficiency of this power generation. FERC issued a second rejection notice to the company, and following this, PE indicated that it would not file further proposals in the area. Throughout the months-long process, many asserted that it seemed PE had failed to perform basic research regarding the areas it proposed to develop and the requirements for a successful proposal.

Haiwee Pumped Storage

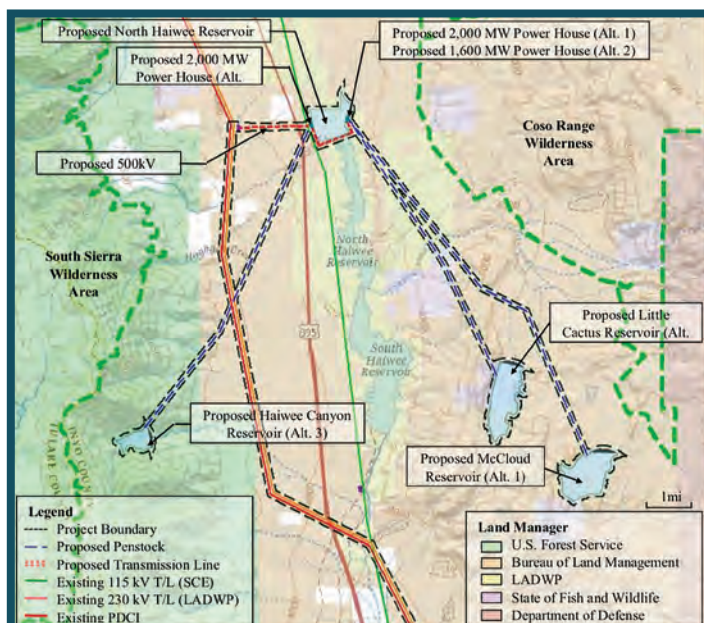
Premium Energy also filed an application in southern Inyo County near Haiwee Reservoir. Their proposal included a lower reservoir between LADWP’s North Haiwee Reservoir and the Butterworth Ranch. Concerns cited by local opposition included that excavation would likely damage some of the richest prehistoric cultural sites in Inyo County, and that there would be significant negative impacts to the Coso Range Wilderness. FERC found this project application insufficient because of its overlap with designated and recommended wilderness. In response, PE submitted a revised proposal with adjustments to locations of the upper reservoirs. The drama will undoubtedly continue, but the one certain conclusion is that decisions concerning land use and energy facilities are complicated and deserve careful attention before projects are formally proposed.

Weighing the Pros and Cons

While the development of renewable energy, and storage techniques necessary to support it, are critical to reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, it is also important to make sure that renewable energy development does not destroy the very resources we are ultimately trying to protect. Friends of the Inyo’s engagement in the development process for renewable energy projects always seeks to weigh the pros and cons of the specific project proposed. In the right location and under the right circumstances, pumped storage can be an effective storage tool; for instance, when the storage occurs close the location the power will be used and when it can utilize existing infrastructure. As a tool for storage, however, pumped storage has widely recognized significant drawbacks: the cost of development is very high and projects take many years to become operable, projects often require significant environmental impacts, such as flooding valleys, projects permanently tie up a significant amount of fresh water, and some of the stored energy is lost in the process. Friends of the Inyo will continue to engage with FERC regarding pumped storage and other renewable energy development proposals and will continue to ensure that the effects on our area’s environment, economy and culture are considered.



Owens River Gorge, one of the proposed sites for the lower reservoir of Owens Valley Project. PHOTO: Ecofight, 2019



The most recent proposal for the Haiwee Pumped Storage Project. Map from PE proposal documentation.



Little Cactus Flat is, one of the proposed sites for the upper reservoirs of Haiwee Pumped Storage Project. PHOTO: Kyle Hamada

GUIDING PRINCIPLES For Renewable Energy Development

*In this feature, the **Hydropower Reform Coalition** offers their guiding principles for renewable energy development. The Coalition is a group of more than 160 national, regional, and local organizations which works to restore rivers that are impacted by hydropower dams.*

[A]ll energy development has environmental and social impacts. A lack of greenhouse gas emissions is not enough; new sources of renewable energy must also be sited and developed in a manner that protects the local environment. We believe that the following general principles must guide our transition toward renewable energy.

1. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are driving climate change, which in turn harms the environment and the rivers that our organizations are committed to protecting. We therefore must act quickly to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.
2. We should not, in the name of renewable energy development, destroy the very resources we are trying to protect from the effects of climate change.
3. Our country's first priority should be conservation and efficiency. Cutting consumption is the cheapest and most effective way to cut the use of fossil fuels.
4. Our second priority should be to require that fossil fuel generation either be restricted or forced to pay the full costs associated with their use (i.e. a carbon cap or a carbon tax)
5. Our third priority should be to encourage the use of new renewable energy technologies.
6. We must understand that renewable energy technologies are not a panacea. All energy generation technologies consume resources. The siting of energy projects can cause significant environmental damage.
7. Renewable energy policies should encourage energy development that minimizes harm to local ecosystems and promotes energy conservation.
8. We must recognize that climate change is also exacerbated by other anthropogenic activities, such as deforestation, that destroy carbon sinks.

To learn more about the Hydropower Reform Coalition, go to hydroreform.org.

Shelma first started climbing outside in 2011. Here she is photographed in Red Rock National Conservation Area, Nevada. PHOTO: Vikki Glinkskii



Partner Profile SHELMA JUN

In mid-August, Stewardship Director Alex Ertaud sat down with Shelma Jun, founder and event director of the Flash Foxy Women's Climbing Festival. She also sits on the board of the Access Fund, co-founded the Never Not Collective, an all-female storytelling vehicle, and travels the world climbing and telling stories. Shelma was generous with her time, and joined me via a video chat from Boulder, Colorado. We touched on how Flash Foxy got started, what the Eastern Sierra means to her, and how stewardship fits into all of that.

ALEX ERTAUD, Friends of the Inyo: When was the first time you came to the Eastern Sierra? Would you tell me about that?

SHELMA JUN, Flash Foxy: The first time I came to the Eastern Sierra? Gosh, I don't remember the exact first time, but it was probably my senior year in high school, I had just started to learn to snowboard and I was getting really excited. Some friends and I came up to ride up in June, at June Mountain. And then in college I used to come up all the time to ride at June. And June Mountain, I don't know if you remember, they used to have this college pass, that was like \$99 if you were a student, for a season pass to June. Which, if you're a poor college student, is basically like the best deal ever. I got really psyched on snowboarding so I had made my classes so they were only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so I could come up for long weekends almost every weekend with this crew of friends. And that's kind of how I met my first mentor Jamie who owned the June Lake Villager, which kind of is how I ended up moving out there at the end of 2004.

AE: Ok. So did you climb at all initially?

SJ: No! So that's the interesting thing, I didn't really start climbing outside until 2011 when I was already living in New York City. What's been really cool is—you know I've been coming to the Sierra since probably 2000 or 2001, like 20 years almost, and I lived there for a few

years, and it's somewhere I've been coming back really regularly for the last fifteen years, so somewhere I kind of consider home in a lot of ways. But I'd never climbed there, and didn't really even know about the climbing. I'd drive through Bishop and be like, "I wonder why are there so many people here. It's winter, it's not even fishing season." Having no idea that it was like a world-class bouldering area. So what's been really cool, is to go somewhere that I'm really familiar with, that I have a really strong connection with, and discover it in a whole new way, through this whole new medium of rock climbing, something else that I really love, and being able to do it in that way is such a treat.

AE: Awesome. So, tell me about the Flash Foxy Climbing Festivals, and how those—the origin story of those.

SJ: Flash Foxy just started out as this Instagram [account] where we were posting lots of photos. And then I started getting all these e-mails from women who were looking for ways to find each other, to come together, to meet folks, to learn from other women, and I think—you know, now a days there are so many women's events in the outdoors, which is really cool and awesome, but there just weren't that many back then, there really wasn't anything for climbing. And so the idea to do the women's climbing festival came from that. And then I was trying to think about, "OK, where would be a good place to do it?" The first thing was that I wanted it to be somewhere you could do all the different types of disciplines of climbing, because I didn't want it to be exclusive if you only bouldered, or if you only trad-climbed, or something like that. So that kind of already really limited where we could do the festival. And some places where it would be easier to accommodate a larger group of people—like I learned to climb in the Gunks, and there's no sport climbing there, so that makes it really hard. And it's a private preserve; it would be really challenging to do a big event there. At that point I had been coming to the Eastside for two years to climb, so it kind

PARTNER PROFILE

of seemed like the perfect spot to do it. So I came out, and I met with the Tri-County Fairgrounds, and I met with the Hostel, and I met with Joe at the Mountain Rambler, and with the folks at the Black Sheep. I just went around and asked folks, “Hey, I’m thinking of putting on this festival, I’m thinking of doing it here, would you be excited to partner with me on it?” Because I’m not from Bishop, I’m not a local there. And they all seemed psyched to do it. But everyone was also like, “What does it mean? How does it work?” And I’m like, “I’m not really sure yet! I’m still trying to figure it out because I’ve never been to a climbing festival before.” But people were really psyched, and then we did the first festival in 2016. Actually at that festival, we were trying to find a local stewardship partner, but at that point—it was just after the BACC [Bishop Area Climbers Coalition] had become defunct. So I went out and I saw Tai [Devore, president of the current iteration of the BACC] at Eastside Sports, and he was like, “Yeah, there’s not really a climbing coalition here right now.” So we ended up raising money for the Access Fund, but we didn’t do a stewardship project. Then I remember the Sunday of the festival, meeting Ben Ditto [current Secretary of the BACC] and him being like, “Hey I think it’d be really great if there was a stewardship component to the festival, because you’re bringing all these people here, and a lot of them are new climbers, so there’s an impact, but also an opportunity.” Then I think—I can’t even remember how I got connected with Friends of the Inyo, but I did, and we started doing our stewardship projects with y’all our second year, and that’s the most important parts of the festival now. It’s really cool.

[...]

AE: Yeah, absolutely, that’s awesome. So, you do one [Flash Foxy Women’s Climbing Festival] in Chattanooga now as well?

SJ: [Nods and affirms.]

AE: Did the Bishop one come first, or the Chattanooga one?

SJ: The Bishop one came first. We did the Bishop one in 2016, and then when we did the tickets for 2017, it sold out in a minute, and there were 800 women on the waitlist. So that was kind of this indicator to us that, “Woah, there is this huge demand, and we obviously can’t fill it with Bishop.” Then there were all these talks where people were like, “Would you do two weekends? Would you let more people in?” And I was like, “I don’t really think so, I think 300 is kind of the max number to responsibly bring to a climbing area of this size.” I think it wouldn’t really be fair to go to a really popular climbing destination that already has a lot of people just there anyways, and bring more than the number of people that we’re already bringing. That feels like the max to me. Then the idea of doing it over two weekends felt like it would be too much of an impact in an already really popular area. So then we decided to do the second one in Chattanooga the second year. So in 2019, it was our fourth festival in Bishop, and it’ll be our third festival in Chattanooga. I’m really excited, because next year is our fifth year anniversary! Which is already coming up.

AE: Yeah, which is nuts! To think that from 2016 to now, that’s it’s grown. As someone who also puts on events for work, I appreciate that—you know those initial years are always the hardest, and to get people to be on board. So the second year, that you already had 800 women on a waiting list is wild. And also just a testament to how good of a job y’all do with the event.

SJ: I think it’s partially—I work my ass off, so I think it’s partially us—but I think women were looking for ways to come together. There just weren’t—or maybe aren’t—as many opportunities for that. So the fact that there was one, was really exciting to folks. I mean, one of the most meaningful parts for me has been to work more and more with local folks every year in different ways. We weren’t working with you

guys [FOI] that first year, but we were working with Alex Printing, and Sierra Mountain Guides, and the Fairgrounds. And the second year, we’re working with the Chamber of Commerce, with Tawni [Thomson, Executive Director of the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau] and her crew, and they’re amazing. And then working with you guys, and then adding other people, and working with the Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps, starting last year. And this year, being able to work with the Tribal Council of the [Bishop Paiute] Tribe, and having BACC now around. To be able to really, hopefully have it be something that has a positive impact for Bishop, as well as for the women who come, from the very beginning that’s always been a really important goal for me.

AE: I think that definitely comes through, and is a huge testament to that work that you do. Frankly, I didn’t know that you didn’t live here until a couple of times after we had met [laughing].

SJ: [Laughing]

AE: Because you’re around town, you’re doing all this great work, I guess I just assumed that you were living in town here. Y’all definitely do your due diligence, and I think that’s really cool.

Is there a particular moment from these festivals that you put on that really crystallizes for you why you do it?

SJ: [Sigh] I don’t know if there’s a moment per se. For me, it’s kind of like, the whole weekend. We spend all year planning it, and really intensely those last three or four months beforehand. You know, you’re really stressed, and you’re tired, and you’re trying to remember why you’re doing this. Then, when all the women start getting there—I guess those are the moments. Right in the beginning, when everyone starts getting there, the reminder that I’m so excited to see everybody and for everyone to get here. One of the most special parts about the festival is just the energy that the women bring to the festival. They’re so excited, they’re so open to learning, and sharing, and being here together, and that part’s really special. There’s so many things about the festival that I’m really, really proud of. The fact that we’re able to pay all the women, the fact that we’re able to work so well with our land managers. You know people are always like, “Oh, the land managers, this and that.” And I’m like, “I honestly love all the land managers.” I never have had a problem with them, they’re always really great to work with, and they’ve always gone above and beyond to make sure that I have everything I need. And that’s not their job, their job is to do the things I ask them to do—like to process this permit—but rather than just do that, they’re checking with me, making sure I have what I need. Having those kinds of relationships, those relationships that we’ve been able to build in Bishop are so special. Bishop is a really special town, and I think that a lot of climbers often miss all the parts, all the people of Bishop who necessarily directly connected to climbing unless they’re long-time locals. I kind of feel like I’ve somehow snuck in, because I get to know all these super cool locals who are not climbers but are doing such rad stuff in town. Like all the people at BLM, like Dione [Perkins] and those guys, and Tawni [Thomson] at the Chamber of Commerce. You know I get to know all these cool people in town. Like Alex [Yerkes] at the print shop. The fact that I get to know all these people, it kind of feels like I’ve somehow snuck in. Or Karen [Schwartz, owner of Sage to Summit and Bishop City Councilmember], a lot of people do know Karen, but to know all these people on the [Bishop] City Council. And have them be so psyched to have us there, and want us to be there, and support that, I feel really lucky to have that kind of support. I don’t think every town would be like that, and I’m kind of spoiled because I started in Bishop, and it’s always been so amazing.

[...]AE: Ok, last one. You know, our tagline is, “Caring for the Public Lands of the Eastern Sierra.” So I just wanted to finish with, “What

does that mean to you?" Obviously stewardship is a large component of the Flash Foxy, you devote a whole day to it, pretty much.

SJ: Yeah, I mean as somebody who discovered the Eastside almost twice. Discovered it through snowboarding in my early adulthood, and then kind of rediscovering even more of it as I got into climbing, kind of like into my early thirties. Kind of later in life— I didn't know about it, my family didn't go there every summer. As somebody who discovered it a little bit later, the way I see it is like, "Man, there are so many people who have no idea what is right here, and if we don't take care of it, those people will never get to find out." I kind of think about like the Great Barrier Reef, which is officially dead, which is so tragic and sad. I never got a chance to see it, I never will get to see it because it's gone now, because we weren't able to take care of it properly. What I want to do, is here are these places that are so important to me, and a lot of people, and I want to make sure we can preserve it in a way that what I see and what I've experienced, what I've gotten to know is out there, that it's still available for people to discover. Because not all of us know that it's already out there; there are so many people who have no idea what's out there who are either living now, or who are going to be living soon. It's our responsibility to make sure that it's still out there to be discovered. Because the excitement of finding out what's there is so important, I think. And learning about it, the whole history of it, including the history of the indigenous people there, and the first stewards. And that I might

be discovering it for the first time, but it wasn't really discovered by anybody in a brand new way, it's been there forever. And it's been there forever because people were taking care of it. As folks who are using that space, we have that same responsibility.

AE: Absolutely. Well on that note, thank you for your time.

SJ: Yeah, thanks.



Shelma climbing at the Bachar Boulders in the June Lake Area.
PHOTO: Irene Yee



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Friend and co-adventurer, Denise, looks out upon a still-frozen Lower Lamarck Lake. PHOTO: Bryan Hatchell

GET OUT

BY BRYAN HATCHELL

In early June, my friend Denise and I, eager to shed winter pounds and get in shape for the peak-bagging season, set out to breathe the alpine air and soak in the sun above treeline. The Lamarck Lakes provide a wonderful opportunity to do just that with an accessible hike 30 minutes out of Bishop. The Lamarck Lakes trail is best used from June to early September as an escape from the lower elevation heat in the Owen's Valley. With this year's particularly snowy winter, the trail was still quite wet and we encountered many snow patches along our way to Lower Lamarck lake.

We knew the hike was relatively short at 6 miles round trip, but soon realized the elevation gain is not to be taken lightly. The trail to Lower Lamarck Lake ascends roughly 1,300 feet in 2.2 miles. In the final mile to Upper Lamarck Lake, the trail ascends another 400 feet. Many backpackers use this trail as an access point for the Lamarck

Couloir, Lamarck Peak, Darwin Bench, and Evolution Valley. As the signs will tell you, you are in the John Muir Wilderness. Be prepared for your adventures and practice Leave No Trace principles.

Getting There


To access the hike, travel Highway 168 west through Aspendell until you reach a right turn for North Lake trailhead/campground. Follow this road for the North Lake/Paiute Pass trailhead. Take caution on this road! It is very steep and narrow and contains many winding turns. Be considerate of other drivers and use the pull-outs when appropriate. Parking for day use will be about half a mile away from the actual trailhead, as the immediate area at the trailhead is a campground.

Being There

You are above the tree line. Soak it in. Enjoy views of the striking Lamarck Peak while

you fish or swim in one of these splendid alpine lakes. Please note, the water is especially cold in earlier summer months! Swim wisely. While this area sees considerable day use, there are many paths to take around the lake that will provide solitude. For an additional challenge, you can summit Lamarck Peak which rests at 13,417 feet of elevation. This will add many hours to your trip. Plan accordingly.

As always when hiking and adventuring outdoors, remember to bring plenty of water, sun protection, sturdy footwear, and snacks. Denise and I enjoyed our hike and icy swim in Lower Lamarck lake. We were blessed to have the area to ourselves the entire time. It wasn't until a mile away from the car that we saw others trekking up the trail. Whether you are visiting the Eastern Sierra or live in the area, the Lamarck Lakes provide an all-around great summer hike, achievable for most. We hope to see you out there.



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