JEFFREY PINE

journal

BIANNUAL MAGAZINE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE II • **FALL/22**

IN THIS ISSUE

From crosscut saws to social media, from fence-post pullers to the human mind, learn about a number of tools that are indispensable in the conservation trade.

FRIENDS OF THE INYO CARING FOR THE PUBLIC LANDS OF THE EASTERN SIERRA

Friends of the Inyo would like to thank **Conservation Lands Foundation** for their longstanding and critical support.

CONSERVATION LANDS FOUNDATION

JEFFREY PINE journal

Volume XX, Issue II, Fall 2022

MAGAZINE DESIGN:
Alan Urquhart Design

COVER PHOTO:
Joshua Trees at Lee Flat, Inyo Mountains.
Photo by Sydney Quinn.

FRIENDS OF THE INYO SINCE 1986

621 W. Line Street, Suite 201
Bishop, California 93514
(760) 873-6500
www.friendsoftheinyo.org

Printed on Recycled Paper

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 (Nüümü), Shoshone (Newe) and Timbisha peoples. Many of these lands are now known by names recognizing people who never set foot here. These lands are called Payahuunadü or Panawe by the Nuumu and Newe peoples, respectively. This land acknowledgement 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.

Silver Lake in Mono County. Photo by Louis Medina.

Aerial photographs from 1968 and 2016 show an area beyond the eastern edge of the Big Pine Paiute Reservation (to the right of the green line) that used to support acres of groundwater-dependent vegetation. That land is owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). The darker vegetation below the 1:12000 scale in the 1968 black and white photo depicts groundwater-dependent vegetation that was subsequently lost once LADWP expanded its groundwater pumping operations in 1970. Groundwater pumping increased aggressively throughout the Owens Valley in 1970 to fill the newly constructed second barrel of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Today, this area lies mostly barren and is hardly a shadow of its former self (color photo). The exposed ground contributes to ongoing dust pollution and is a haven for non-native invasive species and desert shrubs. (Inyo Water Department Archive photos and Google Earth images provided by Noah Williams, Water Program Coordinator of the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley.)

‘Living on the edge of a broken heart’

because of **water injustice.** Enough is **enough!**

By Wendy Schneider, Executive Director, Friends of the Inyo

I love it when it rains. With every drop that falls from the sky, it feels to me like Mother Nature is conspiring with us to bring back the life that should be thriving in Payahuunadu, the Paiute "land of flowing water."

I should feel the same sense of satisfaction when I see the snowpack running into streams, but I don't. That is because the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP or DWP) pretty quickly snatches up most of that water and spirits it away to nourish non-native species in a faraway land.

So our plants and animals don't really get to use the water created by the snowpack, as it is effectively and efficiently sent south before it has time to bestow its life-giving properties on us, here in Payahuunadu.

But rainfall is different.

So far, the voracious agency has failed to devise a way to grab our rainfall. The rain falls on the ground all over Payahuunadu, wherever Mother Earth puts it, and nourishes our diverse ecosystems. Even though most of that water probably does end up in the aqueduct sooner or later, at least our lands get to use it for a while. So I love it when it rains.

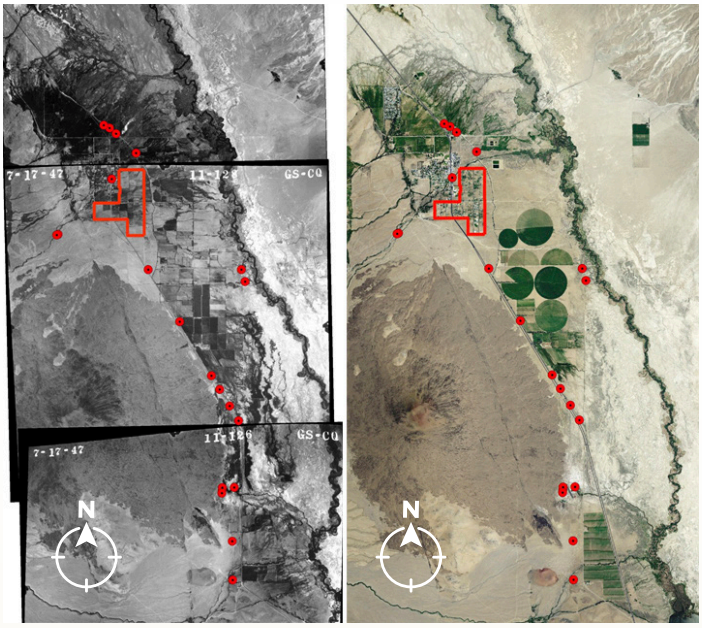
Over the last three years it has become clear to me that, to effectively protect and care for the lands of Payahuunadu, it is necessary for Friends of the Inyo to join the ranks of those fighting for water justice in Inyo and Mono Counties. We do so with humility, and want to express our gratitude to tireless partners who have been carrying this torch for the last century, especially the tribes.

What do we hope to bring to existing water protection efforts? Well, for one, we are focused on protecting water in Long and Little Round Valleys, two of the only areas in Payahuunadu that are not protected by court order from DWP efforts to increase extraction of surface or groundwater. As such, these areas are vulnerable to LADWP's insatiable thirst. Friends of the Inyo is working to protect these areas by leading the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition, a network that includes tribes, ranchers and environmentalists. At this time, we are working with Mono County to prevent DWP from removing irrigation water or initiating groundwater pumping.

Another initiative that Friends of the Inyo has undertaken is the application of pressure on LADWP to present a water extraction reduction schedule for Inyo and Mono Counties. LADWP frequently brags about how the City of Los Angeles has finally begun to make real progress toward capturing stormwater, utilizing its own groundwater, and recycling significant amounts of sewage and gray water. While these efforts are laudable, we are not seeing any indication that their success will lead to more water being left up here in Payahuunadu. We intend to pressure the agency to begin to reduce the amount of water it extracts.

Our efforts come at a critical time. The ongoing drought has everyone looking for water, and we need to make sure that at this pivotal moment, LADWP does the right thing–that is, focus on truly locally sourcing its water – and not the wrong thing – which is to increase extraction from us. As temperatures rise and the snowpack decreases, we need more of our water left up here even to maintain the dismal status quo of our vegetation and wildlife.

Big Pine area, 1947 versus 2009, showing Reservation boundary and DWP pumps.

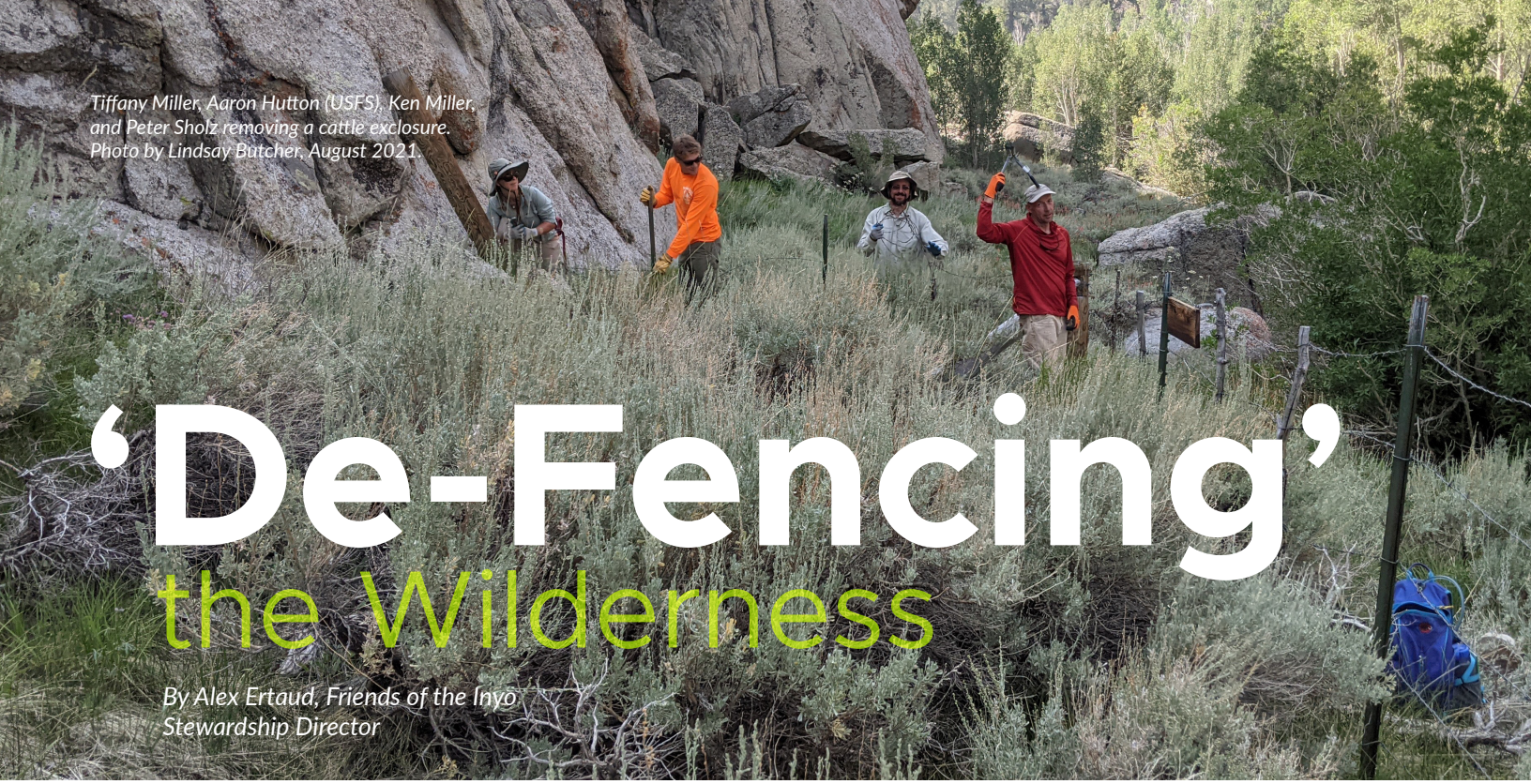


In this side-by-side photo comparison of black-and-white Inyo County Water Department Archive photos from 1947 and Google Earth color images from 2009, one can see, by looking at the dark and light areas, the Owens River riparian forest and other habitat loss caused by the L.A. Department of Water and Power's water extraction through the decades. From a presentation by Noah Williams, Water Program Coordinator of the Big Pine Paiute Tribe. Red dots depict LADWP groundwater pumps put in at different times over the decades.

In August of this year, I attended the inspiring First Annual Great Basin Water Justice Summit and was privileged to connect with water protectors from our area, and from outside Las Vegas. It was at this event that I saw a shocking presentation by Noah Williams, Water Program Coordinator for the Big Pine Paiute Tribe's Environmental Department, regarding the ravages of water diversion and pumping in the Big Pine area. It was heartbreaking to see the side-by-side slides that showed the disappearance of ponds, streams and springs, and the corresponding disappearance of trees and other vegetation.

Also at this event, I learned that the water protectors fighting for the health of six valleys outside of Las Vegas, a fight they have kept up for over twenty years, use as their battle cry: "Remember the Owens Valley." While I wish we weren't best known for the extraction injustice and corresponding ecological disaster that occurred in our valley over the last century, I take some comfort from the knowledge that our tragedy might save another place. And that's one good thing.

FOI will add its resources to the battle that is still going on right here. As one Water Justice Conference attendee put it, everyone who fights for water in the Eastern Sierra lives on the edge of a broken heart. I hope our efforts will change that. ■



Tiffany Miller, Aaron Hutton (USFS), Ken Miller, and Peter Sholz removing a cattle exclosure. Photo by Lindsay Butcher, August 2021.

'De-Fencing' the Wilderness

By Alex Ertaud, Friends of the Inyo Stewardship Director

Imagine you're in Granite Meadow, deep in the White Mountains on the eastern side of the crest, enjoying the last strands of summer before the 'nip in the air' of fall becomes the 'biting cold' of winter. The Cottonwood Creek Wild & Scenic River burbles by as a light breeze makes the golden Aspen leaves dance an upbeat jig. You're walking down the Cottonwood Creek trail, when you see something peculiar up ahead. Is that….a fence?! As big as three football fields?!! Out here?!!! In the middle of a Wilderness area?!!!!

In short, yes, believe it or not. Up until recently, these areas had been used for cattle grazing, and the fencing in question is called a "cattle exclosure," an area fenced off so that cattle do not enter. Over the years, for a variety of reasons, cattle have no longer been grazing in the area. So, these exclosures have become obsolete. But many are still where they were erected. Thanks to work performed by Friends of the Inyo and Inyo National Forest staff and hearty volunteers, however, they are disappearing from the White Mountain Wilderness landscape.

How the project started

A couple of years ago, Adam Barnett, Public Services Staff Officer for the Inyo National Forest, approached Friends of the Inyo with a "many hands make quick work" type of project that takes advantage of our ability to harness the power of volunteers in a meaningful way to remove this fencing.

Going back to the first decade of the century, Friends of the Inyo worked hard to have this section of Wilderness included in the $410 Billion 2009 Omnibus Bill to strengthen domestic programs, including in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the U.S. Forest Service. In more recent years, our policy team has provided a great deal of input to the INF with regard to the management plan of the Cottonwood Creek Wild & Scenic River. So, when we have a stewardship project that acts as the real-world, tangible manifestation of years of hard work from the policy side of things, we almost feel as though we have to jump in feet first to get that work done, because those opportunities do not come along often enough. Plus, we always love a good challenge of a remote work site with a rough 4-wheel drive road to the trailhead to keep us on our toes.

In 2021, then, thanks to support from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance's (NWSA) Wilderness Stewardship Performance grant, our first seven-member exclosure dismantling team of FOI and INF staff plus four volunteers ventured out to the north fork of Cottonwood Creek to the first three exclosures we set our sights on.

The inaugural group had only a vague sense of what to expect. We knew we would be taking down these fences, but had no idea what the best way to do so would be, what tools would prove invaluable, and what order of operations would turn our collection of seven individual workers into a well-oiled machine with no limits to its potential.

Real-life hard work

We had to lug a heavy steel-fence-post puller into the backcountry to remove the obstinate T-posts that were holding up the fencing. Having an anchor at the bottom, these posts are designed to stay in the ground, ››

and boy do they! Particularly when they are mischievously wedged between two rocks. When these posts prove unwilling to part ways with the soil they were driven into, we have to bust out the pick-mattock and the hardhat, and get to swinging to loosen the soil around the post a bit. But even then, sometimes they just won't budge.

There were three posts in camp that we weren't sure we would be able to extricate at all. We got our shovels and removed all the soil around them, and we still couldn't get them out! It took digging them out within three inches of the end before we could pull them out.

In addition to those T-posts, the corners of the exclosures were made up of an arrangement of heavy five-foot treated-wood posts that were riddled with nails and staples to keep the barbed-wire securely attached. The first step in taking these down was to pull all the metal out of them, and for that reason we couldn't have too many fence pliers and bolt cutters.

Volunteer Ken Miller and his prior master-level experience as a sound technician for music venues, events, and studios proved invaluable. Knowing how to roll yards and yards of speaker cable efficiently, without tangling it, he instantly became the team's "barbed-wire whisperer," coaxing and cajoling the unruly barbed wire so that it coiled into tidy, perfect bundles, ready for easy carrying. Altogether, we removed three exclosures totaling 1,875 feet of fence, 156 T-posts, and 14 wooden posts.

Ian Bell removes a fence post. Photo by Amy Wicks, August 2021.

A job well done calls for... more work!

The success of 2021 had Adam and Friends of the Inyo plotting other areas where more exclosures remained, ripe for extraction. With more work to be done in the Cottonwood Basin, we shifted to the south fork of Cottonwood Creek and the exclosure the size of three football fields I mentioned earlier, a whole mile and a half from our trailhead.

With more funding from the generous folks at the NWSA and another stellar cast of volunteers and INF staff supporting us, in July of 2022, another seven-member team headed out for more fence-pulling fun.

Together, over a three-night, four-day stint, we took care of the 500x300-foot exclosure, plus an additional 100 foot drift fence. All in all, we removed another 50 T-posts, 1,600 feet of fence, 10 wooden posts, and 11,375 feet (roughly 700 pounds) of barbed wire from the Wilderness area and the Wild & Scenic River corridor.

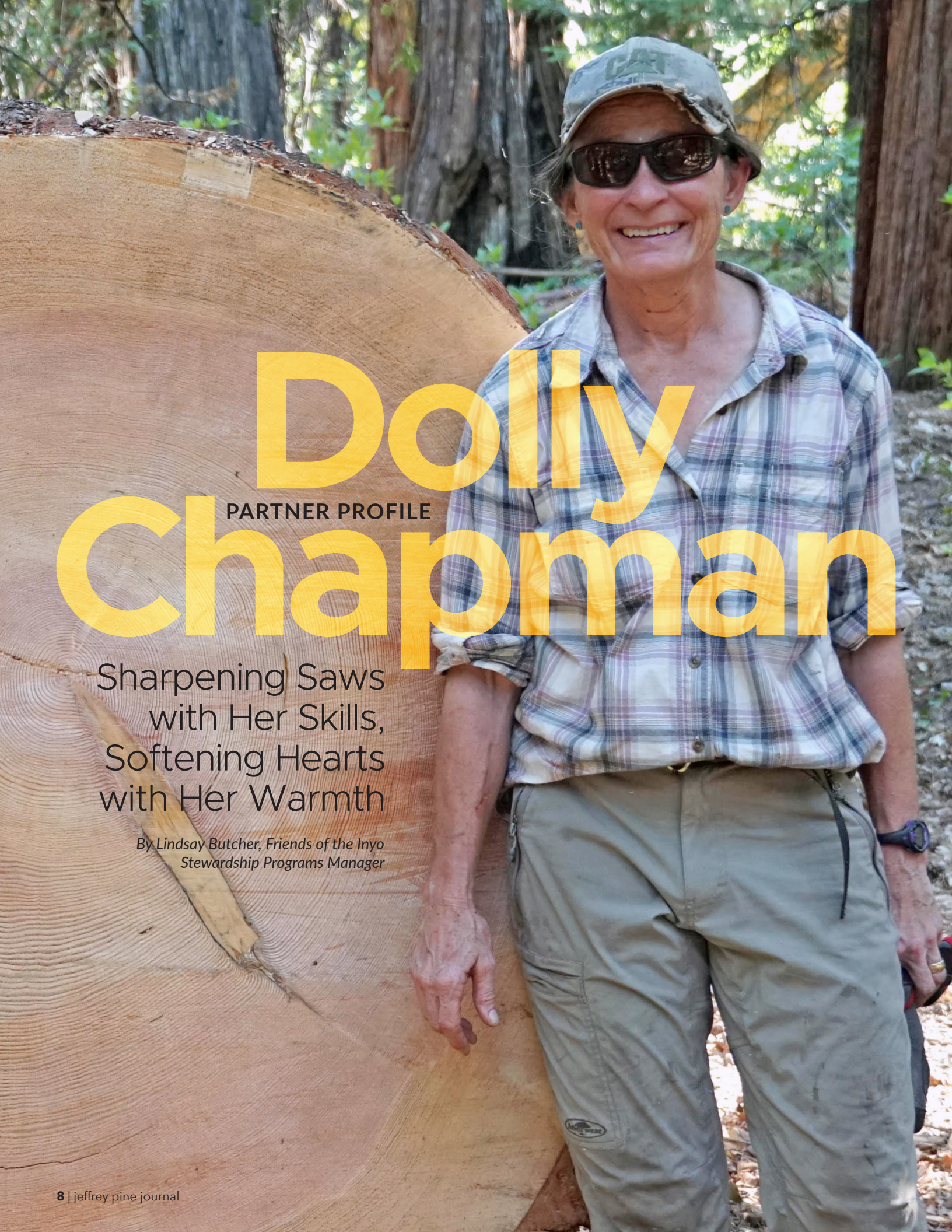
Oddly enough, I was impacted more by the absence of the exclosure than I had been by its previous presence. The constraint of the fence on the meadow had felt constraining to me personally as well, and I could only imagine how freeing its removal would be to critters that would be able to roam unimpeded once again. Even the fresh air felt freer as I looked upon the unfettered landscape.

In addition to the tangible work done on this trip, we were also able to scout out other locations with exclosures ready for removal. We found some fencing in Granite Meadow, a three-mile hike in from the trailhead, and we're excited to continue heading out with more Friends of the Inyo staff, volunteers, and Inyo National Forest

Fences don't belong in wilderness. Front, Lindsay Butcher (Friends of the Inyo); Rear, Aaron Hutton (USFS). Photo by Ken Miller, August 2021.

partners to collect and extricate even more posts, barbed wire, and other detritus from the backcountry. Plus, we have been in close contact with the Inyo National Forest's Range Management team to bring this work to other parts of the Forest, and are excited to be working on doing some projects on the Kern Plateau and the Golden Trout Wilderness.

The work continues, and I personally love this new type of work we've found for ourselves. It feels good to go into remote areas and remove obsolete infrastructure, allowing the natural landscapes to breathe with new life, unencumbered by restraining barbed wire. ■



PARTNER PROFILE

Dolly Chapman

Sharpening Saws with Her Skills, Softening Hearts with Her Warmth

By Lindsay Butcher, Friends of the Inyo Stewardship Programs Manager

Intro:

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established that certain lands must be preserved and protected in their natural condition, and that protected Wilderness lands would be managed via traditional means to help them preserve their wild character. This means that, beyond the Wilderness boundaries in National Forests, no mechanized or motorized tools may be used in forest maintenance and stewardship work – just hand tools and good old fashioned elbow grease. So, when a tree eventually falls across a trail in Wilderness, a crew gets to hike out carrying five-foot or longer crosscut saws and all the accompanying accoutrement on their backs. Crosscut saws were once on the cutting edge (Ba-dum-ch!) of logging tool technology; then, in the 1950s, chainsaws made them obsolete. Since then the quality of modern saws has taken a nose-dive. Vintage saws, however, have a niche cult following among land management folk. But the maintenance and care for those vintage saws is becoming a lost art. Enter Dolly Chapman. She is something of a celebrity among sawyers and trail maintenance enthusiasts as one of the few people in the country with the top-notch skills capable of handling these increasingly-precious saws. Dolly lives in Calpine, California, about 50 miles northwest of Lake Tahoe; and while she retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 2010, she is still plying her trade. This past winter I had the honor of getting to know her, after commissioning her to sharpen Friends of the Inyo's saws. Let me tell you: Our saws have never cut faster, cleaner, or more enjoyably than they do now! In coordinating with Dolly, I learned that she is an absolutely lovely human, and she has some fun stories about getting into the trade of trails and saws.

Interview:

Hi Dolly, and thanks for taking the time to do this interview. I am sure you are in demand during the trail season, which historically ran from late May/June till October, depending on the snow levels. But it seems the season is shifting with the changing climate. I've heard rumors that sometimes when a tree is really complicated, someone decides it's time to bring in the "big gun" and get Dolly. Do you get opportunities to get out and work with crews still?

Yes, of course! I volunteer some every year with various Parks and Forests and stewardship groups. For the last couple of summers I have been on backpack logout trips with the Yosemite Wilderness Rangers and with volunteers on the Pacific Crest Trail. I also get a lot of field time teaching sawyer certification classes.

Where are you originally from, and what brought you to the Sierra Nevada?

I grew up in Ada, Michigan. I like to say that I ran away and joined a trail crew after high school. Actually, I signed up for a conservation work crew in Yosemite with the Student Conservation Association. I decided pretty quickly that I wanted to spend the rest of my life near the Sierra Nevada. I had spent my 16th summer in Michigan working on a Youth Conservation Corps crew on the Ottawa National Forest. We did all sorts of forestry and recreation related work. That made me certain that I wanted to work outdoors. When I first worked alongside the Yosemite trail crew, I knew that I had found people who enjoyed just the right mix of teamwork and independence, doing challenging work that was very meaningful. My life path might have led to something other than trail work, but regardless of the type of work, I would have kept looking until I found that mix of teamwork, independence, challenge and meaningfulness.

Did you grow up around tools and trails?

I was lucky to grow up in a rural area. My parents gardened and my father cleared trails through the woods. He had all sorts of tools for all sorts of projects. He always encouraged me in anything I wanted to do. From an early age, I liked building forts and tree houses. I still had a lot to learn when I joined the Yosemite trail crew, but I certainly got a good start at home.

What Ranger Districts have you worked on and which was your favorite?

I started my Forest Service career on the White Mountain Ranger District of the Inyo National Forest. I have also worked for the Supervisor's Office of the Inyo, the Truckee District of the Tahoe, the High Sierra District of the Sierra, and the Supervisor's Office of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests. It's hard to identify a favorite because the good times always remind me of other good times.

What is your favorite tool and why?

Oh gosh – it depends on what I am trying to do! I love the fine detail and magic in a good crosscut saw and I love the teamwork in using one, but I also love my double bit axes. And the five-foot rockbar is the tool that gave me the confidence that I could do trail work as well as anyone.

I read that when you first started with the SCA, women weren't hired officially to trail crews with the National Park Service, so you volunteered until you were eventually hired to a crew with the U.S. Forest Service! Was it ever intimidating to work in the industry?

The Forest Service hired me as a crew foreman after I had volunteered two seasons with the Park Service. I didn't feel intimidated, though I admit it took a while for me to prove to myself that I could do the work. I suppose there were folks here and there who thought I wasn't right for the job, but I have had other things to think about.

What drew you to sawyering, and particularly to specializing in sharpening?

Clearing trees that fall across the trail is part of the job. After a season of using saws that didn't cut very well, I looked into sharpening. It was fascinating to learn that there is a lot more to a good cutting saw than sharp teeth. »

Dolly with saw.

Who/when/where did you learn to care for saws from?

I started learning from the Forest Service Crosscut Saw Manual written by the late Warren Miller. I was lucky to meet and learn from some other excellent filers who worked for the SCA and the US Forest Service. I have continued learning from the students who come to my classes. It is wonderful how learners bring fresh perspective and ask questions that help me continue to improve at and enjoy saw filing.

What do you like most about your job?

I am self-employed now and I like setting my own schedule, and choosing what jobs to take.

What is the biggest tree you've cut? Or what is your most memorable crosscut/general trail crew experience? (And it doesn't have to be crosscut.)

I have helped cut a few trees that were five-to-six-feet wide and piled up or suspended above the trail! Big challenging jobs are always satisfying, but really, it's the camaraderie of working with a crew that is most memorable. When I think of the best times, I think of sitting in the dirt to eat lunch with folks who seem nicer and nicer as I get to know them. I think of watching a project go from overwhelming to almost done, and the good feeling when everyone on the crew credits everyone else for making it happen. Sometimes the details of a project are blurry or forgotten, but you can google a project that I documented well in 2008 called "Details of a Wilderness Trail Repair Project."

What do you do for fun?

The best fun includes my three big dogs, Baron, Leo and Merlin, who are big Shepherd mixes from shelters. Shannon Hoyt is my husband of 31 years. We hike, camp, mountain bike and cross-country ski together with our dogs, who are our only "kids."

What is your favorite place in the Sierra Nevada or on the East Side?

If I could narrow it down to one place, I wouldn't tell you.

Anything else you want to tell the readers of the Jeffrey Pine Journal about?

You asked quite a few questions about favorites and most memorables and bests. You reminded me that I have come to think that it is important to see the best and most memorable in every day, everyone and everything I do. That may not seem easy, but in the long run, it's the easier way to go.

For more information on Dolly and her work, check out her website, sharpcrosscut.com. ■

Dolly with her dogs.

Hello WILDERNESS

My **New** 'Old Friend'

By Bradley Olson,
Summer 2022
Trail Ambassador for
Friends of the Inyo

Cold brisk air filled my lungs and a golden reflection off the West Walker River met my eyes as I closed the truck door behind me.

"Ooooh boy, it sure feels like fall," said Erin, one of my Forest Service partners.

Just the day before, my wilderness crew lead, Lizzie, asked me if I wanted to join her, Erin, and another ranger named Hunter in repairing a wilderness sign up the Leavitt Meadows trail that had been damaged and knocked over the winter before. I jumped at the opportunity as it seemed like a perfect bookend to the season working on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The fix needed to be done now or never, as the ground would be freezing soon.

We triple-checked that we had all the proper equipment to repair the sign, and took off cheerfully down the trail.

Peering over the first bridge we crossed revealed a tranquil shallow brook. It was all that was left of the West Walker River thirty feet below.

"Wow," I said, "looks a lot different from the raging monster it was five months ago when the snow was melting."

Across the river canyon, the trail began to meander through a sage-covered hillside with a meadow nestled just downhill from it. Instead of the lush vibrant greens that filled the expanse in early summer, it was now speckled with accents of yellow from the autumn bloom of rabbit brush and the changing colors of the willows on the banks of the river.

After walking for a couple of miles, I found myself contemplating what this and the other trails I had worked on over the course of the season meant to me.

Contemplating my personal journey

Before working as a Trail Ambassador for Friends of the Inyo, I had rarely frequented the landscapes of the Hoover Wilderness. I longed to explore this new region of the Sierra Nevada, and see as much of it as possible.

The desire to explore new places was not new to me. Since hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2018, which traverses the westernmost states, and the Continental Divide Trail along the spine of the Rocky Mountains ››

Bradley Olson on Crown Point, 11,346 ft., Hoover Wilderness, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

"Friends of the Inyo's mission to preserve and conserve these lands is truly a legacy that my wife and I are honored to contribute to." - Paul & Marjorie Shock

Make this your Legacy

You, too, can protect the Eastern Sierra through your will or trust and leave a legacy of conservation by becoming a Friends of the Inyo Legacy Gift Donor!

Our endowment honors legacy donors' wishes by investing contributions from their estate, including real estate or cash assets (like a portion of a 401k or IRA account), in the protection and care of the Eastern Sierra for generations.

Visit **FriendsoftheInyo.org/legacy**
or write to **info@friendsoftheinyo.org**
include "Legacy Giving Program" in the subject line, and let us help you set up your legacy gift today

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in 2021, I had fallen in love with backpacking long distances. Moving through terrain with efficiency and grace was truly satisfying. There's nothing like looking back on the horizon to distant mountains you had been on top of just days before, and knowing that you got to where you now were solely by the strength of your body.

This style of hiking, however, doesn't allow for much down time. To finish any of the long trails, one has to maintain a hefty pace, covering a few thousand miles within four to six months before the first snows of winter bring the journey to an abrupt end.

While on both of these treks, I saw an immense amount of territory hosting an incredible variety of ecosystems. But I rarely got to truly soak in the soul of any one place.

I expected that spending the summer working as a Trail Ambassador out of Bridgeport would look a bit different from thru-hiking. Instead of moving down the trail quickly and only once, I would be focusing on the segments that needed the most attention.

Initially, I was exploring canyons that were completely new to me. But after the first few weeks, the novelty began to wane. I revisited the same trailheads, sometimes spending hours brushing just a hundred feet of trail, or a whole day at a lake dismantling fire rings too close to the water's edge.

As the weeks went on, I worried things might get a bit boring, but what I discovered was quite the opposite. I looked at the same trees, boulders, and sometimes birds that would circle the lakes as friends I was getting to know better.

I gazed at sections of trail I had previously worked on with pride, remembering what the weather had been like that day, or the meaningful conversation I had with a brother and sister backpacking duo under the shade of a ponderosa pine.

I also began to notice the subtle changes that take place as we circle the sun.

In June, the snow receded, giving way to new life, new colors, and cascading streams of lively crystal water. The next month would bring the explosive rainbow of wildflowers that are so indicative of the Range of Light.

August storms brought dramatic shows of thunder and precipitation; then, soon after that, the all too familiar smell of smoke reminded me of the impermanence of bliss, that things are always changing. It was just more apparent now that I was spending so much time in one place.

Completing the Circle

I snapped back to the present moment as we approached the site where the damaged sign lay helplessly on the ground. The four of us dove into digging the nearly three-foot hole for the replacement post as we spoke of our upcoming winter plans.

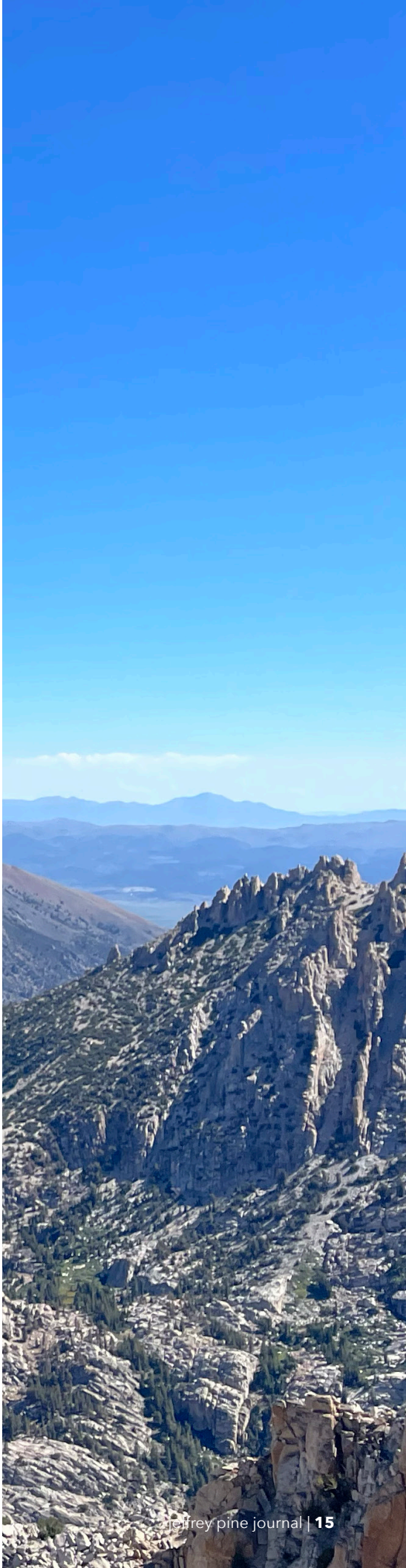
At some point, Hunter said, "Wow, I guess it's the last day we'll all be working together, huh?" We looked around at one other with the realization that things were coming to an end with a friendly nostalgia.

"I'm so grateful I've been able to work with y'all," I responded. "Hopefully we can all work together or hang out next season!"

Eventually, the sign was up, a proud marker of the wilderness I had gotten to know so well over the previous months.

We all gave each other high fives and headed back towards the trailhead.

Before rounding the corner into the golden light of the setting September sun, I turned to look over my shoulder at the sign one more time and whispered, "Until next time, Friend." ■



First Tool to Pack in a Trail Building Toolkit?

The Mind!

By Marty Hornick,
Retired Inyo National Forest
Trail Program Coordinator

Marty Hornick using a clinometer for measuring the angle or elevation of slopes.

It was at the end of another exhausting and rewarding workday in the Golden Trout Wilderness. My crew and I had been wrestling rocks into walls, underpinning a new trail we had nearly finished building when I discovered it—something I had stopped searching for months earlier.

At that time, a couple of us had spent long days traversing this area, probing hidden nooks and crannies, gullies, ridges and benches, in search of the ideal path connecting a new trailhead to an old destination. I can't recall how many times we had crissed and crossed that terrain, tracing and retracing our steps, tying and untying flags and then marking yet another better line before we had finally christened the "perfect" alignment.

Now, heading back to camp that evening — taking a different route, weaving through trunks of magnificent foxtail pine that gleamed golden in the low evening sun — I had inadvertently found an even more perfect line!

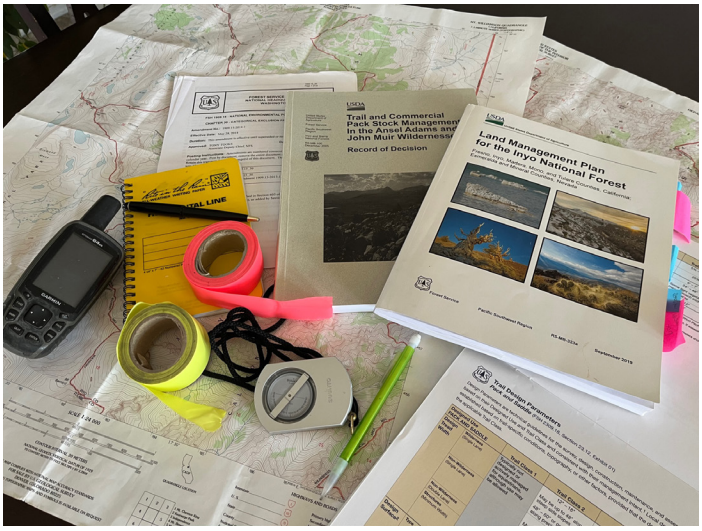
It was almost magical: a short variation to be sure, but cleaner, with easier construction; fewer issues with steep slopes and drainage; a little less up-and-down for every future hiker; less maintenance over the long term.

While it was too late to move that trail, I had stumbled upon a true gift. I had learned the value of doing even more searching, observing, opening my eyes and mind even wider before punching that first steel tool into the landscape. I had learned to reach into my cache of tools and load up the most important one first—my brain.

In trail building, certain tools jump immediately to mind for most of us – shovels, McLeods (a rake/hoe combo), axes, rock bars, picks, loppers, saws – both the gas-powered and sweat-powered types. Less common, but often indispensable, are explosives, rock drills, grip-hoists (a fancy hand winch), rigging (including tire chains!) for moving logs and rocks, and even rock-climbing gear, ropes and harnesses, when building in cliffs. But we rarely think of the tools that go into planning and designing a trail.

In the old days, we didn't have GPS, Google Earth, or even cellphones with Avenza – or drones for that matter. But good trail design and planning today use most of the same tools and cerebral hemisphere engagement we used in pre-digital days: a good map; a clinometer for measuring grades (critical in steep terrain); flagging to mark possible paths; waterproof notebook and pencils; focused, observant eyes to catch critical obstacles such as waterflow, snowmelt patterns, and other issues that can affect construction and long-term maintenance; enough time to ensure that we don't find the "perfect line" just a little too late. Have I mentioned the brain yet?

Trail building doesn't happen in a vacuum. Rarely is one mind enough to really do a trail project right. Fortunately, planning processes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) ensure a bit more involvement from others with neurons finely attuned to additional issues. A lot of gray matter goes into recognizing issues with wildlife,



Tools for trail design and building.

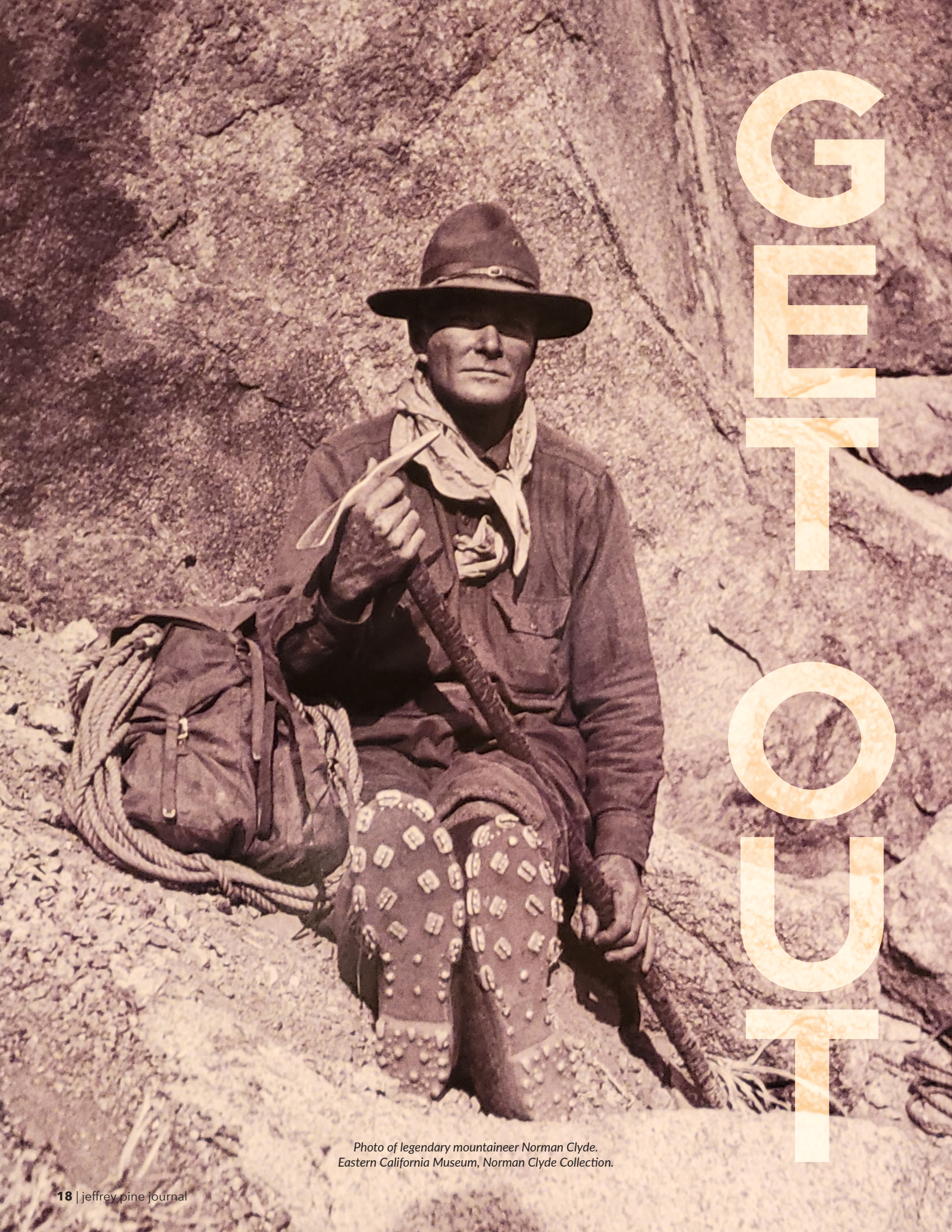
botany, hydrology, riparian, wilderness, archaeology and public concerns in shaping the ideal, resource-stable trail. The best trails are created when all those heads come together before any other tools break ground.

Then there's money. Some say it's the root of all evil, but it's truly a key tool to ensure we can enjoy free and freeing experiences in our "big backyard." I don't have enough room for a lot of details, but building and caring for our trails (especially repairs after floods and catastrophic events) takes more dollars and resources than one might imagine. We need to applaud our local agencies for all they do with so little. By my calculations, the Inyo National Forest today is working with literally 10-15% of the annual trail budget it had in the 1990s in real dollars. Try running a household with an 85% cut in income. Creative partnerships with groups like Friends of the Inyo and other dedicated volunteers make a real difference in protecting our trails and the resources they traverse.

Some tools are baked into trail design years or even decades before a trail is built or reconstructed or maintained. Forest Land and Resource Management Plans and Forest Trail Inventories with Trail Management Objectives outline the purpose and intent of each trail—user types and skills, difficulty/comfort/development levels, and constraints of wilderness or other special area designations. Nature dictates even more: soils/erosion, vegetation, steepness, weather effects. Without these tools and considerations in mind, the ideal trail will never be found.

It takes more than a shovel to build a good trail. And more than a clinometer. It starts with putting the frontal lobe out front! ■

Marty Hornick worked in the Inyo National Forest Recreation, Trails and Wilderness Programs for almost 40 years. Now retired, he enjoys wandering off-trail, unencumbered, through the Sierra backcountry.



GET OUT

Photo of legendary mountaineer Norman Clyde.
Eastern California Museum, Norman Clyde Collection.

Eastern California Museum: A Local Knowledge Gateway to the Eastern Sierra

By Louis Medina, Friends of the Inyo Communications and Philanthropy Director

At the west end of town in Independence, the Inyo County seat, one can find a veritable knowledge depot from which to start—or enhance—one's journey through the Eastern Sierra.

The Eastern California Museum has existed since 1928, according to Museum Curator Heather Todd. And like many other community-minded causes, it was volunteer-founded by local stakeholders: "People who were concerned that so much of the county's early history was disappearing," she said.

Managed by Inyo County since 1968, "the purpose of the museum is to educate," Todd said.

Here are some museum highlights to help you understand the Eastern Sierra better and add quality to any of your other outings:

- **Indigenous Lifeways Gallery:** One-half of the museum space is dedicated to an extensive collection of some 400 Paiute-Shoshone baskets plus other traditional artifacts such as articles of clothing, traditional items and more.
- **Manzanar Exhibit:** A collection of artifacts and photographs donated by former incarcerees of the Manzanar War Relocation Center. Todd explained that before the establishment in the 1990s of what is now the Manzanar National Historic Site on the location of the war relocation center six miles down the road from Independence, Manzanar survivors looked to the museum for a place to exhibit historical artifacts, and museum staff readily said, "We'll give you a space to tell your story."
- **L.A. Aqueduct Exhibit:** This section features lots of photos and interpretive panels detailing the construction of that feat of early-twentieth-century engineering responsible for altering the Eastern Sierra's aquatic landscape.
- **Norman Clyde Exhibit:** An extensive biographical exhibit of the renowned and much-loved Sierra Nevada mountaineer who lived from 1885 – 1972, and made more than 120 ascents all over the Sierra while hauling his famous 80-pound pack. Some of his personal belongings on display include a set of skis, snowshoes, an ice ax, a gun and holster, and more. »

These ledgers are among many primary source materials available at the research library of the Eastern California Museum. Photo by Louis Medina.

The Indigenous Lifeways Gallery of the Eastern California Museum in Independence has one of the largest Paiute-Shoshone basket collections in the world. Photo by Louis Medina.

- **Research Library:** The museum has a useful library area full of historical books and primary source materials that can be consulted on site at the museum–materials cannot be checked out. Todd said the museum deals with almost 200 requests each year from local, out-of-state and even international historians, journalists and filmmakers needing to consult the museum's ample research collection. Todd said it is best to make an appointment if you intend to use the museum's research library.
- **Books and Souvenirs for Sale:** The museum's bookstore features best sellers and a wide range of titles on anything from Eastern Sierra flora and fauna, to water, astronomy, geology, mining, Manzanar history, local Tribes, art, young adults and children's books, and more. Sometimes, the bookstore features titles not available at other local bookstores. "We try to get every local book that we can get our hands on," Todd said. There are plenty of fun museum and Eastern Sierra souvenirs available for purchase as well.

On the grounds outside the museum:

- Enjoy the new **Jane Bright Memorial Rock Garden,** just inaugurated this spring, and featuring chronologically arranged rocks that provide an idea of the different types of minerals mined in Inyo County.
- Stroll through the **Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden** maintained by the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, which the garden's namesake founded. DeDecker, who lived from 1909-2000, was a botanist and a committed conservationist and environmentalist.
- Travel back in time as you walk through the **Little Pine Village,** an agglomeration of old wooden structures made to resemble a ghost town, and the **Historic Equipment Yard** on the way to see the **Slim Princess, Locomotive #18,** which, according to Todd was "one of the Southern Pacific Railroad's narrow-gauge engines that ran up and down the Owens Valley," from Laws to Keeler, until it was retired in 1955.
- Have a picnic on one of half a dozen picnic tables, or on the lawn, of the pleasant, **shady area west of the museum parking lot** that provides stunning views of the Sierra.

Admission to the museum is free, but donations are welcome and appreciated. ■

If you go:

Eastern California Museum
Open Thursday – Tuesday, 10am to 5pm
Closed Wednesdays & Holidays
155 N. Grant Street,
Independence, CA 93526
760.878.0258 • Email: **ecmuseum@inyocounty.us**
Website: **InyoCounty.us** > Home > Residents > Things To Do > Eastern California Museum

Allison in Organizer Wonderland - Thanks to hardware, software, and a community of supporters

By Allison Weber, Keep Long Valley Green Coalition Organizer

I got my first iPhone when I was 9, a luxurious hand-me-down from my mother. Today, I justify the replacement of my broken iPhone 6 with the newest model because, I think, the iPhone 14 Plus' fancy new camera might help me make the internet care about the beauty and values of Long Valley–the wetlands, meadows, and the way of life I am working to protect.

Whatever handheld device I happen to own at any one time is a key part of my working world, allowing me to take crisp photos and videos, engage with my community through various social media platforms, and fill out public comment forms and write letters ››

Allison Weber (right) and coworker Kayla Browne get ready to join this year's California Indian Day Parade in Bishop on September 23. Photo by Louis Medina.

to public officials. I can take notes and record conversations and even draft articles like this one on my phone, polishing and editing on my laptop later thanks to continuous access via the internet. From my house in Mammoth Lakes, I can attend a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board Meeting, 300 miles away, standing up for my rural community in the face of urban water demand.

In my world

I have grown up in the age in which social media is a given, and have come into a working world in which it is a critical marketing tool. Through social media, I can interact with people all over the world; I even use the power of persuasion to try to convince them to care about environmental causes in the Eastern Sierra in a matter of seconds. And I can do all this for FREE, which is important for nonprofits–including my employer, Friends of the Inyo.

For better or worse, social media platforms are where many people gain easily digestible information nowadays–from updates on family members to breaking international news. People are no longer only interested in life updates from their friends on social media; they tune in to listen to the channels of activists and community leaders from their phones. Like armchair detectives eager to help solve crimes, today we have armchair activists signing petitions, calling representatives following prompts from their favorite nonprofits, and telling the stories of these fights to their friends, one post at a time. Social media and email newsletters (like the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition's *Every Last Drop*) allow community members far and wide to engage in protecting the cultural and natural resources of the Eastern Sierra, making their voices heard without having to physically be in the area or take time off of work to attend a meeting.

In an internet forward world, visually appealing materials, from fliers to e-newsletters and films, are first and foremost. Easy-to-use online platforms like Canva give anyone a hand at graphic design, and, in August, KLVG debuted a more visually engaging look for *Every Last Drop* via Adobe Express's crisp and modern web page design. More than ever can be done in house by a young community organizer but much remains in the hands of professionals and community members. This year we had the pleasure of launching Metabolic Studio's short documentary *Without Water*, on the fight to Keep Long Valley Green. The film premiered virtually, streaming on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube with a live Q&A panel following. Since then, the film has toured, both in live screenings and virtually, in festivals across California and Nevada, inspiring more people to get involved.

Wonderful opportunities abound

It is a community organizer's job to make action accessible to all those who have a stake in a particular issue. Online media allows us to do so broadly and efficiently, but it is not the only way we have to facilitate engagement. Physically getting out in the community by tabling, hosting events, and leading in-person meetings remains as important as ever. A community organizer, in a way, is never not working: on the chairlift, out hiking, at parties, whenever I am asked what I do, I have a critical opportunity to share our story with others.

My job is nothing without everyone in our community who donates, shows up to meetings, writes to elected officials, or hosts us or allows us to display our printed literature and banners at their businesses and events. We drop off lawn signs and stickers for the public to pick up for free at various businesses up and down the Eastern Sierra, and they go fast! Putting a lawn sign in a yard or window and slapping a KLVG sticker on a car or laptop are just two ways our community members show their continuing support–and this support is our greatest tool in public lands conservation.

Grassroots support happens when people and organizations share resources, such as when wonderful, caring folks reach out to us, asking to show our film at their events and providing us with platforms to tell the story of Long Valley, or simply when anyone just takes a minute to share our social media or newsletter. Every person who engages grows our people power: the sharing of ideas, knowledge, and experience to stand up for the Eastern Sierra.

I use a whole laundry list of apps and programs to accomplish the work I do for my community. Some are more intuitive than others, some more modern, but all further community engagement. Often, it is the most low-tech, traditional methods, such as sharing a meal or walking the land, that beat all the best designed user interfaces. Unifying diverse voices, like those in the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition, in support of the land and all its inhabitants, will always be our most powerful conservation tool. Technology is simply another road we take to get there. ■

Allison Weber at the joint Keep Long Valley Green & Friends of the Inyo outreach table at this year's Tri-County Fair in Bishop. Photo by Louis Medina.

(760) 873-6500
621 W. Line Street, Ste 201
Bishop, CA 93514
info@friendsoftheinyo.org
FriendsoftheInyo.org
@FriendsoftheInyo
@FriendsofInyo

THANK YOU!

Besides our steadfast individual donors, Friends of the Inyo would also like to acknowledge the following generous funding partners for their support: