

● PINE NUTS impact

ANNUAL REPORT • 2023

Pine nuts, a high-energy food, helped sustain Native peoples of the Eastern Sierra through the winter. Friends of the Inyo's annual impact report is symbolically named thus to acknowledge the support of our donors, funders, partners and volunteers, whose generosity sustains our work of protecting and caring for the land and water—and critters—of the Eastern Sierra.



Friends of the Inyo's revenue for 2023 totaled \$865,579, 6% higher than our 2022 revenue. We also received volunteering support valued at \$29,300, which was considerably lower than the more than \$50,000 in donated volunteer time received in 2022, albeit with good reason: Severe flooding from snowmelt in spring, and torrential rain from Tropical Storm Hilary in late August, shortened and disrupted the summer season, when most of our volunteering events usually take place. But, as you will see in the narrative that follows, Friends of the Inyo still managed to get lots done for the Eastern Sierra thanks to your support. Your precious "pine nuts" continue to sustain us.

Our Stewardship Team, made up of five seasonal staff and our Stewardship Director, assisted with much-needed trail maintenance and cleanup in the wake of major weather events in 2023, and:

- Served every National Forest Ranger District from Mt. Whitney to Bridgeport;
- Led interpretive hikes and yoga classes for 165 participants;
- Maintained 782 miles of trail;
- Removed 781 downed logs (5x more than the previous year!);
- Cleared 3,782 lbs. of trash;
- Educated 3,285 visitors on The 7 Principles of Leave No Trace;
- Hosted 2 backcountry volunteer work weeks, maintaining trails and removing obsolete cattle fencing in hard-to-reach Wilderness areas;
- Recruited and engaged 149 community volunteers who delivered 785 hours of service; and
- Through SnowSchool and Earth Day educational activities, imparted hands-on knowledge about the Eastern Sierra's ecology, snowfall and watershed, wildlife, fire safety, and responsible recreation, to more than 300 elementary school students from the Inyo and Mono County School Districts.

Our Policy Team, which works to protect the forests, meadows, deserts and waters of the Eastern Sierra:

- Celebrated an appellate legal victory protecting Hot Creek from a destructive mining exploration project. This precedent-setting Ninth Circuit decision limits the ability of industrial mining companies to use categorical exclusions, which require almost no environmental studies, to win approval of industrial mining projects.
- Secured funding for, and hired, a Los Angeles-based full-time Water Justice Organizer. Also, in partnership with the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission and Sierra Club, initiated a campaign to reduce water extraction in Inyo County.
- Continued to protect sensitive areas in southern Inyo County, including Conglomerate Mesa, from destructive mining exploration; provided support for the enactment of resolutions of opposition by Owens Valley tribes; elevated local voices against these threats; facilitated a demonstration in Lone Pine; and provided technical comments to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in opposition of destructive exploration projects.
- Continued to work with Indigenous communities and local land managers to permanently protect sensitive areas in the Bodie Hills, and to defend specific areas from the damage of mining exploration projects, including launching a monitoring program to keep a close watch on industrial mining activities.
- Legally intervened on a proposal for a pumped storage hydroelectric project that would destroy large areas of pristine desert in southern Inyo County.

- Provided technical comments on a multitude of issues affecting the Eastern Sierra, including transmission line replacement, Bi-state sage-grouse critical habitat, Inyo National Forest Over Snow Vehicle Plan, the BLM's West-wide Solar Energy plan, and pinyon-juniper management, among many others.
- Held the 2nd Annual Great Basin Water Justice Summit in partnership with the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission, Great Basin Water Network, and Eastern Sierra Land Trust. The summit drew 40 in-person attendees and almost 200 virtual attendees over three days, bringing together tribal representatives, environmental organizations, and activists to discuss current and future water issues across the Great Basin.

Our Spanish/English Bilingual Staff made a difference at the regional and national level by:

- Leading a dozen community organizations in hosting a local Latino Conservation Week resource fair event in Bishop in mid-July 2023; and
- Advocating passionately with Hispanic Access Foundation, the organizer of Latino Conservation Week at the national level, to change the dates of this event to the fall, which, in light of hotter summers due to climate change, is a more amenable season for outdoor activities geared toward people who do not have much experience recreating in nature. Thanks in great part to these efforts, LCW will be held from Sept. 14-22, during Hispanic Heritage Month, for the first time in 2024;
- Launching a national campaign with GreenLatinos to mobilize nonprofits and the general public to urge federal agencies to award National Park Passes to newly naturalized U.S. citizens at swearing-in ceremonies as a "Welcome to America" gift; and
- Translating literature from the Sierra Nevada Alliance's "Take Care Sierra" campaign to help educate Spanish-speaking visitors to the Eastern Sierra about responsible recreation in nature.

Thank you for continuing to place your trust in Friends of the Inyo!



Wendy Schneider, Executive Director
On behalf of Friends of the Inyo's Staff and Board



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