

Eagle Lake Guardians

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Spalding Tract, Eagle Lake
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2014 NEWSLETTER

Well, the year has ended and a new one began. So far our winter has been warm and dry. As of this newsletter we have only seen 0.39" of moisture in Spalding. Hopefully spring rains will come and at least refresh some ground water and give all the foliage a drink. It's going to be a long, long summer and a dangerous fire season ahead. Hopefully we will see a wet spring.

Without moisture, Pine Creek will not flow. But, this could be a blessing in disguise (always hopeful thinking). The longer we have dry weather, the faster work can begin when the ground thaws out. At this time Lassen National Forest has determined that the trout can't spawn in Pine Creek in the condition it is in now. They came up with a meager plan to restore some flow to Pine Creek in one area and replace what they gave back in another. In other words, trade water for water. I had a conversation with USFWS on the November plan and concluded that they want to see more flow returned to Pine Creek and that this plan was inadequate. I feel we are in good hands, perhaps better hands with USFWS doing the bidding for water. However, we are keeping an eye on things. We are being reassured that a listing will not stop fishing on the lake, however it could change what fish we can keep. I don't think this part has been thought thru fully and we need to keep a good eye on it.

The creek not flowing can also come back and bite us in the butt. The fish definitely can't spawn if there is no water to flow. We are not alone. The drought can't last forever & history has proven that. But how much longer is anyone's guess. The entire state is in a bad way and all we can hope for is that our wet season hasn't arrived just yet. Pine Creek Slough is now just pockets of water and hundreds of yards from the frozen lake.

This year we have conducted water testing in our watershed. We have been testing for heavy metals that are known to be in cloud seeding components not necessarily listed by PG&E and Silver Iodide isn't the only chemical that helps make snow. Patents for PG&E cloud seeding chemicals are not easily found on the internet under PG&E. This must be spelled out as Pacific Gas and Electric Company for searching online. Our tests in Pine Creek show mercury, lead and barium (note there are natural levels). All tests are below or just slightly below reportable levels. In comparison to all other tests conducted in the Sierras we are holding close but elevated here and there (test results on website). However, the question of the barium numbers in some tests are concerning, even though the test results are not above any reporting levels. The silver iodides PGE claim they are using also change once they hit the environment. Over 60+ years of cloud seeding it is doubtful that we will ever know what was "natural". Quite a few of the comparison areas in the Sierras are also cloud seeded areas. Obviously long term exposure causes health problems, perhaps more in some folks than others. The water from the reservoirs and watersheds is used for agriculture. Cattle drink it and crops need water to grow. We may never know how many heavy metals and other chemicals we are eating & have our whole lives. However, I look at the autism rates increasing substantially in the last 15 years and wonder if our food & these added chemicals isn't to some extent to blame. We may never know. Rarely is it mentioned that the weather has been being manipulated globally for over 60 years. We are not the only area that is affected. The problem is that it isn't shared with everyone that is affected. But, even at that, there haven't been a lot of storms this year to seed and the entire area of northern California has been dry. Our group in Almanor continues this fight on this issue while Rebecca is tending to her health & on the mend.

There are several ways to look at the dryness this year. Positive: It will give Lassen National Forest time to actually get down to the physical work of the first part of restoring some flow to Pine Creek. Negative: it could give more evidence to USFWS to actually list our trout as an endangered species. The final determination has been extended once again to September 2014. As long as the USFS has proposals for restoring water to Pine Creek I believe we will see more extensions by USFWS being granted.

Due to the wheels of the government spinning slowly, we haven't been able to donate a grant to assist in a project just yet. We're just thankful that our persistence is keeping the wheels spinning. Once we see a solidly binding plan, we plan on donating a grant to assist in getting the job done and the two hatcheries handling our allotment of trout indicated a need for some equipment & tools as theirs are used all the time and simply wear out. We will have to hold a meeting in order to get these matters taken care of. As this is a seasonal lake, so is our time to be affective. This may not be understood by the state but we are finally reaching a point of having a project to help on. We have our water quality testing device now. It arrived a little too late in the season for our biologist to be able to schedule testing last year but we will be out once we can access the lake easier. Val has been overloaded the last few months but is studying the device manual. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Val at home 530 825-2115 as cell service is spotty here at the lake. See you this season!