



*We Advocate Thorough Environmental  
Review*

**ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT  
2022-2023**

# Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Supporters,

W.A.T.E.R. is moving forward! Our keystone project, starting in 2013, to insist a thorough environmental review be performed for a proposed beverage bottling plant, has come to a close as this year the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors and the Mt. Shasta City Council rescinded all approvals for the court-ruled inadequate Environmental Impact Report and associated permits. With the lessons learned from that victory and our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan ([linked here](#)) as a guide, we have been busy continuing our mission to protect water and environmental resources that are important for healthy living in our communities.

We might ask, “What can our small communities do to make a difference in the world? What resources do we have that can help counter the difficult environmental challenges the world faces?” Well, here in the north state we have forests, and lots of them. Forests are major players in securing water resources and sequestering carbon to mitigate the existential challenge of climate change, and they are critical for protecting terrestrial biodiversity. Yet many economic interests view the forest as a resource to be decimated for profit and are falsely claiming that harvesting the forests will protect citizens from wildfire. Read on to see how W.A.T.E.R. has been working with other groups in the area to ensure important forest functions are protected.

We also continue to engage in environmental review processes for state, local, and federal projects that impact our area and work to counter the huge global problem of plastic pollution, because every single act of resistance matters.

Finally, in an effort to confront the huge environmental impact of war, and more critically, the social justice challenges, moral dilemmas, and existential threat war represents, W.A.T.E.R. has challenged all environmental groups to take a stand against war.

Please read on to learn more about our 2022-2023 impacts and ongoing projects. We invite you to join us in these important endeavors.

Sincerely,

*Frank S Toriello*

Frank Toriello  
President



*Frank Toriello with State Senator Brian Dahle in Bieber, CA*

## Focus on Forestry

W.A.T.E.R. participates in local efforts to ensure forestry practices evolve from the current practices designed to prioritize timber harvest to a much needed ecological approach that is designed to **prioritize carbon sequestration, protect water resources, and to return fire to the landscape as an important driver of abundant biodiversity.**

Although forest fires are a threat to human encroachment within the forest landscape, the proven best protection against fire damage to human settlements is not fire suppression, rather home hardening and one hundred feet of defensible space. Furthermore, research shows that logging of forests releases **more** carbon dioxide than forest fires.

- **Influencing US Forest Service Project Planning:**

W.A.T.E.R. participates in the public input process for US Forest Service post-fire projects, including the Antelope-Tennent Fire Restoration Plan and the River Complex Risk Reduction Project. We also participate in the agency's planning and public input process for the South Fork Sacramento Public Safety and Forest Restoration Project. In these efforts we write critical comment letters and participate in agency-hosted field trips and public hearings, and collaborate with other groups in our area including the Mt. Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center, KS Wild, and the Sierra Club's No Clear Cut group.



*Will we ever again see trees this big?*



*While touring the area of the South Fork Sacramento Public Safety and Forest Restoration Project, Dr. Hanson wonders why the US Forest Service would propose to log Northern Spotted Owl habitat.*

- **Working With the Next Generation:** W.A.T.E.R. volunteers contributed to Mt. Shasta High School's Sustainability Club activities by speaking at club meetings about environmental and forestry issues and donating to the high school library copies of Dr. Chad Hanson's book "Smoke Screen", which confronts current harmful forestry practices and outlines alternative proven approaches to forest management.
- **Public Educational Forums:** In collaboration with the Mt. Shasta High School Sustainability Club, we organized a seminar by noted forest ecologist Dr. Chad Hanson entitled "Debunking Wildfire Myths to Save Our Forests, Our Climate, Our Communities," to which student Seth Bleazard added a segment on what people can do to help keep our communities safe from wildfire ([video recording available here](#)). In collaboration with the Mt. Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center, we organized a field trip with Dr. Hanson to explore the area of the South Fork Sacramento project.

# Plastic Pollution Solutions

Mount Shasta High School has a new drinking fountain/water bottle refill station in its main lobby donated by W.A.T.E.R. The unit is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, filters and chills the water, and keeps track of the equivalent number of 20 oz. single-use plastic bottles saved from waste. The effort was spearheaded by leadership class students and ASB President Nathaniel Bekaert to reduce the single-use plastic waste associated with commercial bottled water and to ensure that all students remain well hydrated during the school day. Installation was complete in September 2022. By June of 2023 the equivalent of nearly 12,000 plastic bottles were saved from waste by students refilling their own refillable bottles.



*Leadership class students Zac Wilderman, Ares Shelly, Jacob Chapman, and Nathaniel Bekaert with W.A.T.E.R.'s Director Geneva Omann test out the newly installed drinking fountain/water bottle refill station in Mt. Shasta High School's main lobby.*



W.A.T.E.R. purchased a drinking fountain/water bottle refill station for the pickleball courts at the Mt. Shasta Resort. The unit was installed summer of 2023 by the Mt. Shasta Pickleball Club, and Resort management will maintain the unit. The unit is also located across the street from a popular entry point for the Lake Siskiyou Trail, where it will provide water for hikers, walkers, and bikers using the trail. W.A.T.E.R. is pleased to support the community in enjoying healthful activities while reducing single use plastic water bottle waste.

W.A.T.E.R. worked with the Shasta Environmental Alliance and citizens from Redding, CA, to study a “waste to energy” business proposing to build a facility in that city that would convert plastic waste and tires to fuel oil. Although the proposed technology is flaunted by the company as being “green”, in reality it has the potential to cause serious community and environmental harm. W.A.T.E.R. joined concerned citizens in educating the Redding community about the proposed project and the hazards of plastic waste at the 2023 Earth Day Celebration sponsored by Shasta Environmental Alliance.

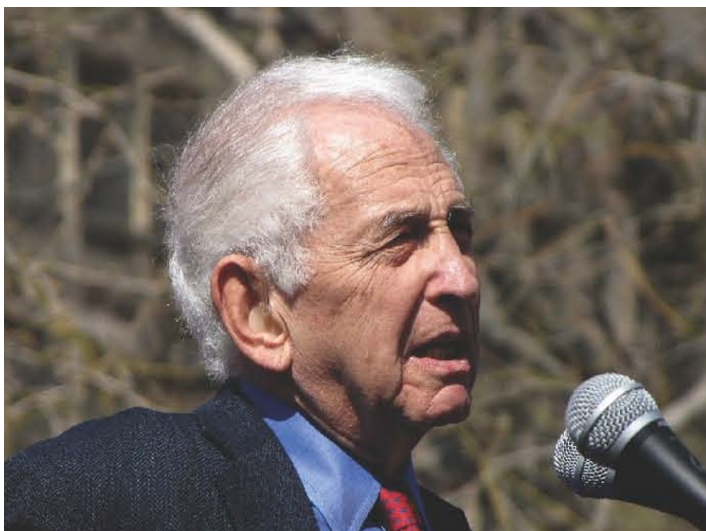


*Tableting for Earth Day 2023*

# Taking a Stand Against War

Although W.A.T.E.R. is predominantly an environmental and environmental justice group, we recognize the inter-connections of the environmental movement with many other social justice movements, particularly antiwar movements. The current environmental crises civilization faces are deeply rooted in the injustices

of our current economic system. This connection works both ways: (a) environmental crises lead to wars, and (b) wars are themselves environmental crises. The economic system is highly hierarchical, with a very rich and politically powerful elite and a relatively poor and even destitute majority. While the elites often benefit immensely from war, both from direct profits of arms manufacturing, and also from the geostrategic control of natural resources, war's many innocent victims pay the price with their lives. Thus W.A.T.E.R. has taken, and will continue to take, public stances in opposition to war based on its environmental and social justice impacts. In an article by W.A.T.E.R.'s Board of Directors, entitled, "Why Environmental Groups Must Oppose War", the economic motivations behind the Ukraine war, as an example, are exposed and other environmental groups are challenged to take a stand for peace. The article was published nationally by CounterPunch ([linked here](#)) and also listed on other national and international internet platforms including our website, Z-Net, SIS News, and the Move To Amend EcoNetwork. We have also resolved to expose the economic and environmental causes and consequences of the expanding wars in the Middle East.



In a similar vein, W.A.T.E.R. published an article ([linked here](#)) in honor of the late Daniel Ellsberg, former US Department of Defense high security nuclear strategist famous for leaking the Pentagon Papers which revealed the US government's deceitful justifications for the Vietnam war. In the decades since, Ellsberg had written and worked to expose the likely horrors of nuclear war, including the long term impact of nuclear winter, and the US government's policy of "first use". A community forum in Ellsberg's honor is planned for August 2023.

# **Weighing in on Important State and Local Issues:**

## ***The Delta Tunnel:***

The state Department of Water Resources has been attempting to build multi-billion dollar infrastructure to take more water from northern California (i.e., from the Sacramento and Trinity River watersheds) to the southern part of the state. The project must comply with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). W.A.T.E.R. participated in the public input process for both of these laws by submitting comment letters on the draft Environmental Impact Report compiled by the DWR and the Environmental Assessment drafted by the Army Corps of Engineers. There are many environmental and social justice problems with the project of relevance to the north state, in large part because the project ignores the reality that, although water flows in one direction through the rivers, ecology moves in both directions.

## ***Mt. Shasta City:***

W.A.T.E.R. submitted comments on a draft grant proposal the City of Mt. Shasta prepared for the US Environmental Protection Agency requesting funds to clean up the brownfield site at The Landing on the south end of town. Our letter highlighted some limitations of the proposed cleanup, but in general supported the City's efforts to make the site safely usable. The project was funded!

Mt. Shasta City prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for a proposed affordable housing project. W.A.T.E.R. submitted comments on the Mountain Townhomes Project IS/MND noting many contradictions and deficiencies with noted concern about protection of wetlands and biological resources. In response to the many comments from community members and planning commissioners, some improvements were made to the project that was ultimately approved (although not unanimously) by the City Planning Commissioners.

## ***The City of Weed:***

Loves Truck Stop Update: In November 2022, the Weed City Council rescinded and set aside its prior approvals of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and associated reports and permits for the proposed Love's Travel Stop in the south Weed area. The Council had been ordered to do so after the third district appellate court ruled that the EIR violated the California Environment Quality Act. W.A.T.E.R. and many community members and groups had participated in the CEQA process for that project (W.A.T.E.R. was not involved in the law suit). Although the Love's corporation has the option of correcting the EIR deficiencies and beginning again the CEQA process, there has been no action on their part to do so.

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## **Ongoing Collaborations:**

W.A.T.E.R. strives to collaborate with other like-minded organizations to help amplify the voices for environmental protections and justice. These collaborations allow us to engage in and influence local, state- and nation-wide issues that impact our area. In addition to the organizations already mentioned, we participate with the state-wide Nongovernmental Organization Groundwater Collaborative which strives to protect and equitably distribute California's groundwater resources, the CEQA Works coalition dedicated to strengthening the California Environmental Quality Act, our Regional Water Action Group which has brought millions of California Department of Water Resources dollars to our region for water infrastructure projects, and the national Move To Amend EcoNetwork which facilitates communication between environmental groups across the country.

# Volunteer Profiles

## Raven Stevens

Raven is a former W.A.T.E.R. board member who has continued to volunteer for a number of projects that she originally spearheaded as a board member. She represents W.A.T.E.R. at the statewide Nongovernmental Organization Groundwater Collaborative and the Upper Sacramento Region Water Action Group, and conducts ongoing groundwater elevation studies now entering the second decade. Raven presented results of her groundwater elevation research at the NGO-GWC Annual Convening and has worked with California's Department of Water Resources to have her data incorporated into the state groundwater elevation database.



In 2023 Raven began a new project with DWR to install 15 real-time data loggers/transducers in local domestic wells to monitor groundwater levels on an hourly basis. These wells are located in Mt. Shasta and McCloud. The project will be completed in 2024.

Professionally, Raven has been an animal communicator since 1999. She is the creator of Paws for Reflection, a healing practice focusing on the use of animal communication and flower essences connecting companion animals and their humans ([www.paws4reflection.net](http://www.paws4reflection.net)).

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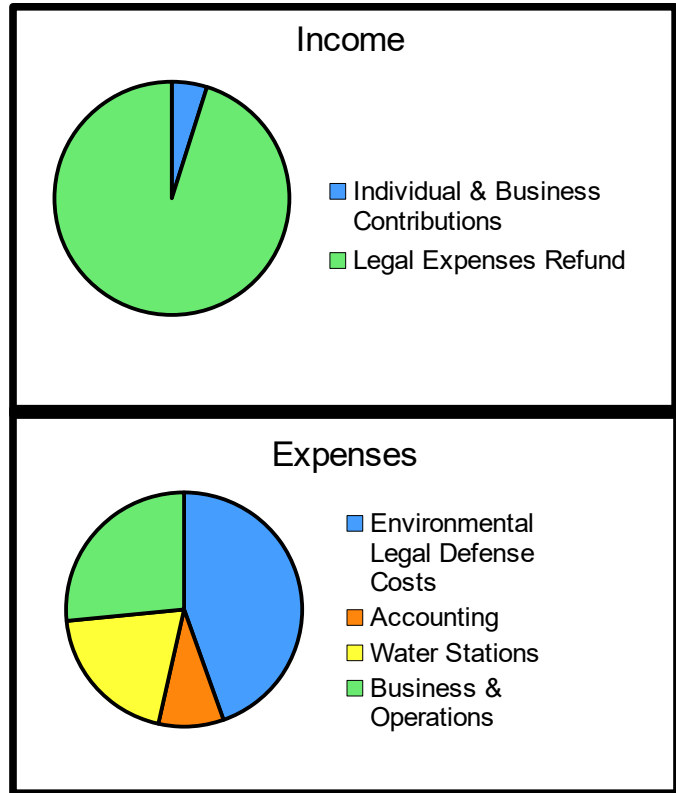
## Molly Brown

Molly has been a staunch supporter and volunteer since W.A.T.E.R.'s inception. She has helped with tabling, writing and editing press releases and educational materials, writing and speaking comments in public hearings, and she nominated W.A.T.E.R. for the Anthony Prize, for which W.A.T.E.R. was a finalist in 2022. We are delighted to have Molly join our core leadership team this year.

Molly is an author and internationally noted speaker and facilitator for The Work That Reconnects, a form of group work that helps people experience their interconnections in the web of life and their authority to take action on its behalf. She holds a masters degree in psychology and a Masters of Divinity and is currently the editor of *Deep Times: A Journal of the Work That Reconnects*.

# Financial Report: July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

Income	\$123,013
Expenses	\$17,803
Net Revenue	\$105,210
End of Year Assets:	\$142,244

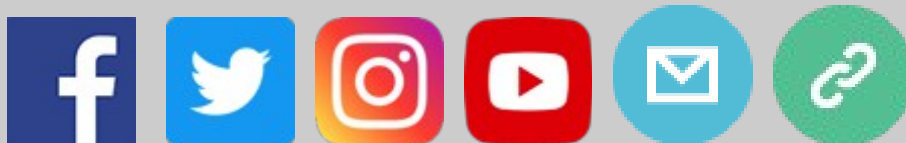


Many, many thanks to:

- Wonderful individual donors from our community and around the world!
- Community Foundation of the North State for organizing North State Giving Tuesday
- Myra Vilella Consulting LLC for providing accounting services

## Our Social Media Presence

W.A.T.E.R. maintains a social media/internet presence via Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, our website, e-mail, and YouTube channel. You can sign up for our e-newsletter [here](#). We use these platforms to share information and images on the environment and issues affecting our region, including our own in depth analyses of local and global issues that impact our lives. We invite you to explore any or all of these options.





# About Us

## Board of Directors 2022-2023:



Frank Toriello, President



Bruce Hillman, Treasurer



Geneva Omann, Secretary



Dan Axelrod, Member



Mark Kennedy, Member

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