

Annual Report

July 1 2019 – June 30 2020



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Letter from the President

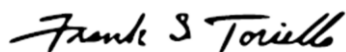
Dear Friends and Supporters,

March 2020 marked the 5 year anniversary of W.A.T.E.R. as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (we started our work in 2013). In addition to continuing our ongoing programming, which you will read about in this report, we started a strategic planning process to chart a course for the next 5 years. Shortly after we began the process, the Covid 19 pandemic hit, and we, like so many others, find ourselves trying to make plans for a very uncertain future. However, the pandemic is showing us that the relationship humanity currently has with our planet is flawed, and thus our mission to change the way society's structures interact with nature and the environment is more urgent than ever.

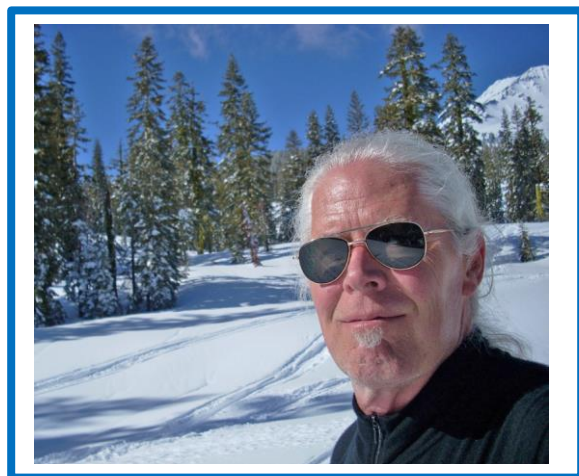
This report is organized around the five components of our mission statement. As you read through this report you will see examples of how our achievements align with each of these components; many overlap. To give some insights into what motivates our team of dedicated leaders, each of the other board members has made a statement of why a component is important to them. For myself, the clean air and pure water along with the beauty of the area and the welcoming community animated my choice to live here and also instilled the desire to preserve and enhance these same qualities through the work of W.A.T.E.R.

We suspect the motivations of you, our supporters, are similar. We are ever grateful for the ongoing support from our community, and dedicated to carrying the mission into the future, no matter how uncertain it becomes. We invite you to email us with your thoughts and ideas as we move forward together.

With Gratitude,



Frank Toriello
President, Board of Directors



Mission Objective 1

advocate preservation of natural resources and a healthy environment

We prioritize preservation of our natural resources and a healthy environment because they are **absolutely essential to ensuring humanity's future**. All of our work addresses this objective...whether it is challenging the inadequate environmental impact report for a beverage bottling company, hosting a community movie night, or promoting a plastic pollution-free Siskiyou County (you'll read more about these below).

Effective advocacy requires collaboration. As we move through the challenges of this environmental justice work, we find there are so many environmental issues that overlap with other social justice movements. We continue our ongoing collaborations with the Winnemem Wintu Tribe (the Indigenous People of this area) and community groups you will read about below. In addition, in this past year we became a member of the **Shasta Environmental Alliance**, a group based in Redding, CA, that works to coordinate environmental justice issues in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties. We have also joined with the **Last Chance Alliance** in asking that the State address the ongoing climate, health, and environmental justice emergency caused by the oil and gas industry in California. We have become an endorsing organization for the National **Move to Amend** effort, a movement to promote democratic participation in governance and end corporate personhood, thus returning control of our governance system and our communities to the people.

Why do we join with these other regional, state, and national efforts? Because what happens globally impacts what happens locally. We cannot address the local issues in a vacuum because they are ultimately tied to our existing economic and societal structures. Collaboration is key to amplifying all our voices.

“Human beings, and in fact all living things, are products of this Earth. We have evolved together to be dependent on the Earth and interdependent with each other. Thus if we want humanity to thrive now and in the future (and most of us do), we must steward a healthy planet.”

– Dan Axelrod, Board Member



W.A.T.E.R. board members and supporters showed up to support the Mt. Shasta Youth Climate March. Part of a global action to call attention to the climate crisis and its impact on future generations, the event was organized by the local community group, “School Café”.

Mission Objective 2

advocate long-range community planning and regenerative practices to protect all citizens and to promote a thriving community

"This objective is key to a healthy, vital and thriving community. I follow Indigenous wisdom that says to be truly responsible we must look ahead seven generations when making decisions. We need progressive planning and forward thinking about how to live here in Siskiyou County, creating the lightest footprint possible so that all Life can be sustained. "

—Raven Stevens, Board Member

The **General Plan for the City of Mt. Shasta** is being updated to create a template for how the City will govern over the next 25 years. W.A.T.E.R. participates in this process to ensure that important environmental issues of the future are addressed. By participating in public hearings and input sessions and reviewing and commenting on draft chapters, we are advocating for a plan that will protect our local environment which is so important for the health of our economy and our citizens.



Spirit of Mt. Shasta
General Plan Revision **2045**

As a member of the **Upper Sacramento Regional Water Action Group (RWAG)**, a collaborative of local governing agencies, NGOs and Tribes, W.A.T.E.R. helps to administer and carry out an integrated water management

plan for the upper Sacramento, McCloud, and Lower Pit River areas. RWAG successfully competes for funds from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to improve grey and green water infrastructure, this year receiving \$3 million for a groundwater quality survey and water infrastructure projects in McCloud, Mt. Shasta City, and Dunsmuir. Board member Raven Stevens participates on the technical advisory committee that critiques, polishes and rates proposals prior to submission to the DWR.

Water and Air Quality Monitoring

Because the volcanic aquifers underlying our area are poorly understood, gaining knowledge of local groundwater levels and water quality are essential for long-range planning. For seven years, W.A.T.E.R. and the Gateway Neighborhood Association (GNA) have been collecting quarterly groundwater level data in the neighborhood surrounding the proposed Crystal Geyser Water Company plant. We have also periodically tested groundwater quality in the GNA area and at Big Springs in City Park. The data have been useful in relating groundwater levels with annual precipitation and will serve as a baseline to study the impacts of the bottling plant should it open.

In a similar vein, we have installed five air quality monitors in the neighborhood around the bottling plant. Baseline data is currently being archived for comparison with future activity in that area.

Mission Objective 3

communicate these concerns to local government officials and agencies

To communicate environmental concerns to government officials and agencies, we engage in the CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) process by critiquing environmental studies and pointing out flaws and insufficiencies that must be addressed:

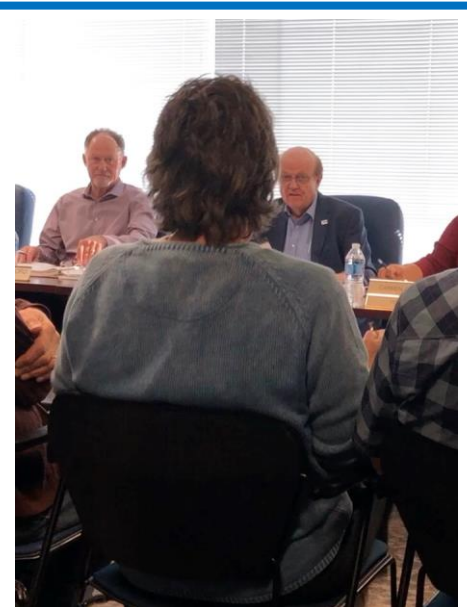
- Reviewed and submitted comments to the City of Mt. Shasta noting deficiencies of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for a proposed **car wash and mini-storage facility**. Many other community members commented, and the City Planning Commission denied the project as presented.
- Filed a letter commenting on deficiencies in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the **State Water Board's Delta Conveyance Project** proposing to build a tunnel to divert water from the Sacramento River, upstream of the Delta, and deliver it to the California Aqueduct pumping facilities and on to southern California. Although this project is located in the Central Valley southeast of the Bay Area, its negative environmental and traditional cultural impacts will reach up to the Sacramento River headwaters. W.A.T.E.R. board members Frank Toriello and Raven Stevens attended a "scoping meeting" in March for the NOP, again to express our many concerns.

In addition to the CEQA process, W.A.T.E.R. utilizes other avenues to influence environmental policy:

- We participated in public hearings and critiqued the draft "**Water Resilience Portfolio**", compiled by the Governor's Office, to identify and address the State's future water needs. We noted many watershed/source water issues the document did not address.
- We participate in a State-wide NGO **Groundwater Collaborative** and endorsed several letters to State legislators, policy makers and the State Water Board regarding stronger protections for and equitable distribution of the State's water resources.
- Board member Raven Stevens spoke at the quarterly Directors' meeting of the **State Water Board** and delivered a petition with 214 signatures demanding they reinstate ongoing monitoring of the Crystal Geyser Water Company's wells. To date there has been no response from the Water Board.

"The environment and its resources are an integral part of our economy and daily life and often sadly excluded as part of local planning decisions. Governing board decisions can be hurried and forced by various influences without giving merit to the very environment so vital to our future. Working with governing boards and committees to promote respect for environmental issues is a top priority for our group.

--Diane Lowe, Board Member



Raven Stevens faces off with the State Water Board.

Mission Objective 4

encourage community-wide participation through educating the public about these issues

In September, W.A.T.E.R. sponsored a movie screening, **“Water and Power: A California Heist”**, a documentary film exposing the behind-the-scenes grab for privatization and control of our State’s water resources. The water demands of the dry, heavily populated and industrialized areas of the south are threatening to drain our more sparsely populated and wetter region. The forum that followed connected and informed community members and supporters about the threats to our community.

Taking on Plastic Pollution at its Source:

W.A.T.E.R. has launched a campaign to help reduce global plastic pollution. Spearheaded by volunteer Nina Hyatt, the program educates and engages the community to reduce plastic consumption in two ways:

- The ‘How to Reduce Plastic Pollution Tip Sheet’ includes many suggestions for how we can reduce plastic use in our households.
- A petition was created asking local retailers to add more non-plastic products to their merchandise.

As both lists grow with community input, the public is helping to reduce the plastic pollution crisis.

Contributing to Federal Legislation:

Legislation to “Break Free from Plastic Pollution” has been introduced into the US Congress. W.A.T.E.R. evaluated and commented (twice) on drafts of this legislation pointing out, among other things, that reducing plastic pollution requires reducing plastic production and thus the need for an end to subsidies to the oil extraction industry.

“We live in a time when information is managed by those who have wealth and power, or is mismanaged by social media outlets. Truth and facts have become irrelevant, and the amount of misinformation is overwhelming. Thus it is essential to engage the community in discussions of the reality we are all facing and how we as citizens in a democracy must work to find the truth and rebuild a world where all life can thrive.”

—Geneva Omann, Board Secretary



Stop Plastic Pollution!

Mission Objective 5

defend these issues with public interest litigation
activities if necessary

“Sometimes the only way to make a point is to bring in the lawyers. I feel that peoples’ organizing and community activism are the real catalysts for change, but using the legal system to challenge misguided or harmful projects is a needed and sometimes effective strategy.” -- Bruce Hillman, Board Treasurer



W.A.T.E.R. started more than 5 years ago to challenge the suitability of Crystal Geyser Water Company’s (CGWC) proposed operations in Siskiyou County. With co-petitioners the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, we have legal challenges against Siskiyou County, Mt. Shasta City, and CGWC slowly grinding through the court system.

In August of 2019 Siskiyou County Superior Court ruled against our petition/lawsuit challenging the County’s approval of the CGWC Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR). In a related case, that same court ruled against our petition/lawsuit challenging the City of Mt. Shasta’s approval of an industrial waste permit to CGWC. In November 2019 we filed a “Notice of Appeal” for both cases to the California Appellate Court in Sacramento. Things move slowly through the appellate court and are slowed even further by the Covid 19 pandemic. As of June 30, 2020, the cases are still tied up in Sacramento. Meanwhile, the bottling plant has not opened!

McCloud Update

On June 22, 2020, the McCloud Community Services District Board of Directors voted 5-0 not to extend a 6 year contract between McCloud Artesian Spring Water Co (Artesians) and the McCloud Community Services District (MCSD) for the purchase and sale of McCloud’s precious spring water. The promises of bottlers have once again failed after two lengthy attempts. The Artesians EIR Notice of Preparation was responded to earlier by many citizens and organizations including an extensive questioning by W.A.T.E.R., however, the Artesians were unable to produce a required EIR concerning their project. As history shows, water purveyors are constantly eyeing the spring water sources for which the MCSD holds water rights, and we will continue to monitor the situation there.

Volunteer Profiles



Nina at the Youth Climate March

Nina Hyatt

In January of 2019 Nina joined the volunteer team. She brings boundless energy and enthusiasm, a passion for the environment and social justice, and a desire to serve. Nina recently retired to Siskiyou County from her 20-year stint as an elementary school teacher in the south Bay Area. In her classroom she was committed to introducing the kids to issues of racial and environmental justice.

Nina was drawn to work with W.A.T.E.R. because of her respect for the sacredness of Water, her respect for the local Winnemem Wintu Tribe and their quest to bring the salmon back to the McCloud River, and her dedication to the local environment. For all these reasons she has spearheaded the effort to raise awareness about how plastic pollution affects water locally and also downstream. She is determined to do all she can to reduce single-use plastic. Go Nina...and thank you!

Brenda Montaño

Brenda Montaño is the daughter of people who migrated between Jalisco, Mexico and the southern parts of California since before it was called California. She is a mother, community organizer, DIY media maker and birth worker. After years in the Bay area, she and her partner sought a more sustainable, steady life for their family, based on the power of health and consistency. Thus, they moved to the beautiful land of the Winnemem Wintu people, a sacred place that they are now blessed to call home. Because they live on this land, Brenda knows that it is her absolute responsibility to defend and maintain the sacredness of this region that is filled with incredible biodiversity.

Brenda was first made aware of the battle over Crystal Geyser close to five years ago. She saw that W.A.T.E.R. was at the forefront of that struggle and wanted to support our work. She is honored to work in solidarity with W.A.T.E.R. and the Winnemem Wintu Tribe by fundraising for legal fees, raising awareness by tabling on various issues and by attending locally organized events. She looks forward to this on-going relationship, based on the love of the land, to continue to grow and prosper. Gracias Brenda!

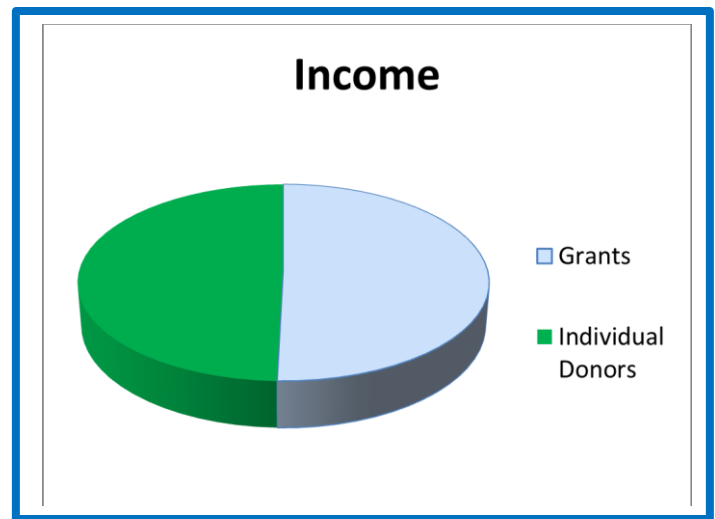


*Brenda with her partner,
Michael Sanchez*

Financial Report

Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

Total Income: 40,188.36
Expenses: 18,812.33
Net revenue: 21,376.03



Much Gratitude to:

- The many individuals who have supported our cause with donations
- Shasta Regional Community Foundation for organizing the North State Giving Tuesday on-line fundraising event
- Patagonia and the Rose Foundation for grants supporting our work
- Myra Villella Consulting, LLC for reviewing our financial accounting



Board Treasurer Bruce Hillman and a supporter pose for the camera while tabling for Giving Tuesday.



Board President Frank Toriello picks up the check from the North State Giving Tuesday fundraiser.

About Us

All board members are founding members of W.A.T.E.R.:

Frank Toriello, President
Bruce Hillman, Treasurer
Geneva M. Omann, Secretary
Raven Stevens, Member
Daniel Axelrod, Member
Diane Lowe, Member



www.cawater.net
www.facebook.com/mtshastawater
mountshastawater@gmail.com

P.O. Box 873
Mount Shasta CA 96067-0873
530-918-8805

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