



Fall 2023 Newsletter

Our Mission: to take action, cultivate partnerships, and empower communities to create and sustain resilient landscapes for future generations.

A Look Ahead:

Hello Partners,

After a frenetic summer packing all our work into a very narrow window, we are ready for a much slower pace. With fall in the air, I'm filled with gratitude for our team here at Whitebark, whose members have poured their hearts into their work this year. And I'm humbled by the support that residents of the Eastern Sierra have given to our little organization.

Despite the intense season, we didn't miss a beat, helped mercifully by a reprieve of drought conditions. We accomplished everything we had planned, and launched some new programs that we are excited to share. It wasn't easy, but because our partners rallied around us, and our team has real *grit*, it was possible.

Among the accomplishments in our **Forest Resiliency Program** this year:

Please see AHEAD, page 4



IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Implementation and ESCCRP Planning updates*
- *Biomass utilization progress*
- *Firewise neighborhoods*
- *New leadership and more*

Janet Hatfield
Forest Health Program Manager
(and Interim Executive Director)
Whitebark Institute

Implementation Updates



BEFORE
Aug 30

AFTER
Sep 28

Summer 2023 Fuels Reduction:

Non-Federal Units

- Four community meetings were held July 24 – 31, one virtual and one at each parcel
- Mammoth Creek Parcel (18.5 acres)
Bell-Shaped Parcel (7 acres) and Camp High Sierra (35 acres)

Federal Units

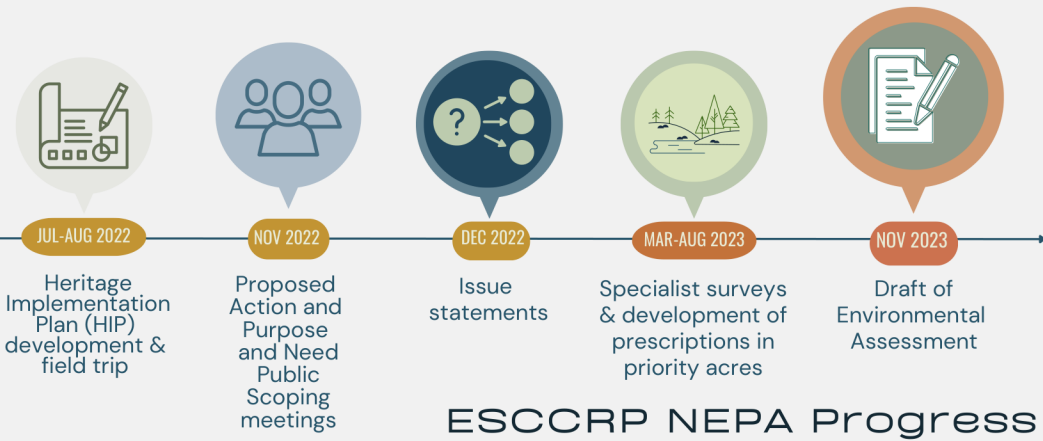
- New Shady Rest Campground (80 acres)
- Lakes Basin (63 acres)
- Partner led units (250 acres)
- Inyo National Forest Prescribed burning (2100 acres)

Treatment Goals in 2024: Reds Meadow
739 acres



Environmental Planning

Whitebark is finalizing the Environmental Assessment of the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process with the goal of publishing a draft in November 2023. Meanwhile, our team completed all of the hydrology and botany surveys in the priority acres over the summer. And we've continued development of prescriptions in the priority acres.



*Our team has continued to work with **local tribes** and the **Inyo National Forest** to work through the development of the **Heritage Implementation Plan (HIP)** which has included multiple field trips with local tribes and presentations to local tribal councils.*



The HIP outlines the process the Inyo National Forest will follow to meet National Historic Preservation Act responsibilities for the duration of the ESCCRP, including identification and evaluation of historic properties, assessment of effect, and resolution of adverse effects.

Need Assessment Progress

Biomass Utilization:

*Our partners have secured **\$1.3M** and have **\$16.5M** in pending grants applications*

to fund a bioenergy facility to handle the enormous biomass coming out of these fuels reduction projects and a small wood pellet mill to better utilize forest “waste”

Workforce:

Beginning talks to develop local tribal fuels crew

Sustainable Funding:

Momentum to identify long-term funding for ESCCRP

from AHEAD, page 1

- We completed the CEQA on non-federal units;
- We completed fuels reduction on all non-federal and three federal units for a total of 204 acres of treatment.

In our **Community Resilience Program**, we completed two Community Wildfire Protection Plans with SWCA consultants, began assisting with another plan for all of Inyo County, completed environmental analysis for the Bishop Paiute Tribe’s fuel reduction project, assisted the new Wildfire Mitigation coordinators for Inyo and Mono counties, and prepared several proposals and project plans.

Working at a small nonprofit isn’t for the faint of heart.

As a new organization with little infrastructure in place when we began last year, many on our staff have held multiple jobs, often for extended periods. Their sacrifice is about to yield to big things: We are ecstatic to announce the hiring of our **new Executive Director, Laura Beardsley** (see page 7), who will be coming on in early November to help put Whitebark on more solid ground.

We are looking forward to seeing how Laura’s leadership will guide this talented team and have big plans going into 2024.

These pages hopefully show the progress we’ve made this summer despite the odds, and my hope is that our message instills a bit of hope in all of you, as we band together in pursuit of a better future.



Outreach & Education

In addition to traditional presentations, workshops and tabling at events, this summer we experimented with ways to engage new demographics. In order to begin a culture shift, we reached out to younger generations. We want to empower communities throughout the Eastern Sierra to amplify this message:

PROTECT ecological forest health, **PREVENT** accidental ignitions via responsible recreation, and **PREPARE** by creating resilience on our own properties.



VALENTINE RESERVE FOREST HEALTH WALKS

While allowing people to deepen their connection with nature, we discussed the role of regenerative fire, fuels management, and landscape stewardship.



MISSOULA FIREWORKS PROGRAM

The first generation of educators from Mammoth School District and the Valentine Reserve were exposed to curriculum that will help them teach applicable real-world science of fire ecology to students.



WILDFIRE SCIENCE ON-TAP TRIVIA NIGHTS

Hosted at breweries in Mammoth, June and Bishop, this engaging format provided a new fun way to discuss wildfire safety topics.



Becoming Firewise



A Fire-Adapted Community consists of informed and prepared citizens collaboratively planning and taking action to safely coexist with wildland fire.



It is our responsibility as individuals to do our part on our own properties to help prevent the spread of wildfire.

In partnership with **Mammoth Fire Protection District**, we will begin the formation of **Firewise neighborhoods** to create defensible space and harden our homes, allowing us to take ownership of the safety of ourselves and the community.



WILDFIRE RESILIENCE WEEK

This was a collaboration with the Wildfire Preparedness Coordinators from both Mono and Inyo Counties to bring distinguished speaker, forester and scientist, Yana Valachovic, to present on fire behavior and the importance of fire-adapted communities.

We tailored a series of different events to speak directly to diverse groups including: residents, contractors, realtors, tribal leaders, the Board of Supervisors, and future homeowners from Bridgeport to Lone Pine.

Expanding our Reach

Whitebark is growing!

Whitebark welcomes new Executive Director **Laura Beardsley** (below, left), beginning in November. Laura comes to us from Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra, where she served as ED since 2020. Also new to our staff is **Elizabeth Glazner** as Communications Manager, and **Rachel Drattler** as Project Manager. Our Board of Directors welcomes new members **Amanda Serenyi** and **Jerry Keir**.



VISITOR CONNECTION PACKAGE

To increase the availability of information to the visiting public, we are partnering with Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Initiative in launching the **Visitor Connection Package (VCP)**. The underlying strategy of the VCP is to create a platform for sustainable and cohesive regional messaging surrounding important issues across the eastern Sierra. This platform will help Whitebark extend our reach and amplify our wildfire resiliency messaging at an elevated scale across Inyo, Mono & Alpine counties, furthering our commitment to regional resilience across the Eastern Sierra.

These organizations
generously support our
work:

