



# Natural Resources Department Newsletter

## From the Natural Resources Director

### Greetings from the Natural Resources Department!

We have had a great year in the Natural Resources Department with fulfilling all of our grant obligations. The Youth Camp and several other events were held along with other public outreach activities. We conducted a fun Earth Day for elementary school visitors by having each program within Natural Resources run a booth to show the work done in the departments. Natchez Elementary School students from the fourth grade and several community members got to observe and participate in hands on demonstrations. In June, we also held a 2-day youth camp, where attendees had a chance to be educated on environmental issues and participate in activities. And since it was summer, we made sure to squeeze in some fun in the sun as well.

Other outreach events included clean-ups, presentations and activities with the daycare, and recycling events. The Natural Resources Department is committed to getting the youth and community involved in learning about the protection of our natural resources, and to help clean up the reservation. We are compelled to promote public outreach and opportunities to get the community involved in environmental activities. We are planning next year's events, so if you have any suggestions please call or email and let us know.

The Natural Resources Department is entirely funded by

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grants. Our continuing grants help us to achieve our objectives in monitoring water and air quality, minimizing non-point source pollution, eradicating noxious weeds, evaluating Brownfields sites, assessing wetlands, scheduling water deliveries, overseeing the irrigation systems, exploring renewable energy projects, improving fish passage, supporting summer college interns, monitoring illegal dumping, restoration of river streambanks, and buying water rights for Pyramid Lake. The next program we are building in the department is a streambank restoration program that will help water quality in the river and prevent the erosion of the river banks. These tasks are very important in the protection of Tribal resources, but we are always building capacity within the department to include sustainable programs to address other environmental concerns. To help determine where the department will focus on in the future, we are assessing and prioritizing the critical issues impacting the environment.

It has been a challenge this year as there is an abundance of funding available, but limited staff to execute the grant tasks. We have kept all our staff this year, but are looking for technicians to help maintain our databases and environmental monitoring. A large portion of the grants are project oriented and not available for long term employment personnel. Some of these projects include fish passage projects, restoration project, and recycling infrastructure project. The department continues to apply for grants to protect the environment and ensure that our programs contribute financially to the Tribe through indirect costs.

### **Aquatic Invasive Species**

The Aquatic Invasive Species program has really advanced this year. They have been inspecting and decontaminating boats in both fishing season and this summer. The program is adding technicians this year to have the inspection station open more often. The program continues to monitor the river and lake to assess for invasive species. The program is now charging for boat decontamination and working on the procedures for annual stamps for additional income to make the program sustainable.

### **Water Quality**

The Water Quality Program completed the water quality monitoring of the surface water on the reservation. This included the river, lake, wetlands and springs. New ground water monitoring wells were established in Wadsworth. These wells will allow us to monitor ground water levels regionally to ensure pumping outside the reservation has no effect on the tribe's groundwater. Water quality department also monitors the algae bloom in the lake and notifies visitors and tribal members about the hazards associated with the bloom. The program continues to monitor water quality in the lake, river, streams, and wetlands on the reservation.

## **Fish Passage**

The Fish Passage project design is complete and moving into permitting. The Numana Dam project is beginning to plan for the construction phase of the project and procurement of the tons of rock needed to complete the ramp in the river. The fish screen design is completed and the grant to fund the construction was submitted in June. Permitting for the Numana fish project will be completed by the end of the year and construction will begin late 2025 when the fish are out of the river. The other fish passage project is Herman ditch where we are moving the point of diversion to Tribal lands and utilizing an induction well to provide water to the agricultural fields. These grants and the development of this new program, has allow our department to grow without encumbering the current work being completed.

## **Water Management**

Water management of the reservoirs and Truckee River flows were average this year after such a wet year in 2023. The ample snow pack has made for a great run-off through the month of July. The reservoirs are full which will provide water through any upcoming drought years. The flows were above ideal conditions with natural flows being able to provide excess water during fish spawning season. The Truckee Canal diverted water only for the Fernley irrigators as the Carson River met all demands for Fallon. Fish and Wildlife Service were able to monitor fish passage at Marble Bluff, and the fry out migration with screw traps. The water in storage is full so we are prepared for any drought conditions in the future.

## **Groundwater**

The groundwater issues persisted in the Wadsworth area as the Tribe reviewed the methods to be used to stabilize the pit wall in Area A on the CEMEX lease. CEMEX ceased operations in June 2024 so we will be monitoring the reclamation activities on site. These reclamation activities will not require any dewatering to the Truckee River.

The groundwater and geothermal water on the reservation may be threatened by new geothermal plants developed by Ormat. The San Emidio valley plant expansion is under construction but the BLM and the Tribe required groundwater monitoring of the springs and new monitoring wells. The new production well was drilled in 2024 as part of the expansion. The background data is being collected from the springs and the wells will be completed this year. The wells will hopefully be drilled this fall or next year.

## **Fire Restoration**

The Department is still working on the restoration of the Tule, Truckee, Tohakum, and Perry Fires. Most of the restoration and protection work was completed, along with the herbicide treatment to reduce the cheat grass and the final seeding of the treated are-

as. The follow-up monitoring of the seeded areas will proceed for the next few years and be re-treated if necessary. The western boundary fence will be repaired for the Perry Fire by the end of this year. Hardscrabble creek restoration designs and permitting will be completed by the end of this year, and prevent flooding and debris mobilization during high water events. Truckee fire compensates have been completed and we will continue to work on road improvements for the Tohakum fire. We are focused on the restoration of these lands and protecting the water quality in the streams and lake.

### **EPA Tribal Environmental Plan (ETEP)**

The ETEP document was developed by the Natural Resources Department as a strategic planning tool to guide the workplans and scope of work we are developing for grants. This document is revisited every five years to review and include any new objectives within the department. The department wants to address any environmental issues the membership has, so if you see an environmental problem please contact me and I will try to add it into a workplan, if possible.

The Natural Resources Departments mission is “to ensure clean air, water and lands to maintain healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations for future generations to preserve the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe’s culture and way of life,” and we take this mission seriously by thinking about it every work day, and with every decision made.

Respectfully,

Donna Marie Noel  
Natural Resources Director

## **Natural Resources Assistant Updates**

Hello,

My name is Dehan Dominguez, and I have worked for the Natural Resources Department for three years as the Natural Resources Assistant (N/R). I help with all the billings for the department, coordinate Interdisciplinary Team Meetings every month, and schedule employee monthly meetings; during our monthly employee meetings we have a potluck afterwards. We have decided that doing this helps all of us know what is going on within our different programs. Then we can lend a hand to other programs if needed. Most all our employees are crossed trained, so when we are shorthanded in that department, we can all help out with River Assessments, Rangeland, Air Quality, AIS, and Recycling. Any other Pyramid Lake Departments that are in need of help with their event N/R will try to help as much as possible. We help out every year with the Pyramid Lake Community events, Senior Fun Day, Thanksgiving & Christmas dinners, for both the elders and residents of the Pyramid Lake Reservation.

Outreach events were: The Natural Resources' yearly youth camp June 16th and 17th, 2024. We had fourteen youth attend the camp at Big Bend. We invited Fish and Wildlife, UNR Geology, US Forestry Department, UNR Cooperative Extension Wildlife Biology & Herpetology. One of the main collaborations was from the Pyramid Lake Jr/Sr High School's kitchen. Tina Moore made us bagged breakfasts and lunches. Thank You PLHS, and Tina Moore for helping out with the Natural Resources events.

During the month of April 2024, the Pyramid Lake Natural Resources (PLNR) Recycling Program was very busy. The Natural Resources Department was involved in two beach clean-ups. One was with the whole Pyramid Lake Jr/Sr High School. A total of 132 students and teachers went to Howards Bay on the East side of the lake, this is where all the floaties, toys and firework debris end up because of the lakes current. The high school picked up more than 60 pounds of trash. Thanks to collaborations within other PLPT departments, Roads Maintenance, Gus Mix went out to Howards Bay and cleaned the road to the beach so the school buses could drive and have a parking area.

The second clean-up was with PLPT Enterprises, Natural Resources, PLPT Fisheries, Taxes and folks from our Natchez Elementary School. This group cleaned beaches where fireworks are allowed. There was about 30 people that participated.

The Natural Resources Department had an Earth Day event on April 17th. We invited the community and 23 third graders from Natchez Elementary School. Every program at the Natural Resources Department maintained a booth and explained and showed each youth group what their program does for the tribe.

E-Waste Day was held on April 16th and 17th. Between the community and our tribal offices. I was able to accumulate over 460 pounds of electrical waste!!!!!! The Recycling Program will have another E-Waste Day in October of 2024. Look for updated postings.

Composting was a weekly part of Pyramid Lake Parks & Recreations Summer Youth Camp for six weeks. Attendees were anywhere from 60 to 100 youth a day, ages four & up. The Recycling Program went to the gym once a week to explain/teach the youth about recycling "Green Waste." The youth saved their fruit and veggies from their daily breakfast & lunch program to feed the Red Wiggler Worms that will eat the green waste to make the best enriched soil for your plants or garden.

The Natural Resources Recycling program is working on making recycling easier for community members and departments. There are cardboard bins in front of the Natural Resources building with a boxcutter to make it easier. As well as big blue bins for plastics and cans next to the handicap ramp. At this point, I am not able to pick up any recyclables from homes or departments as I am the only one in this department. PLEASE break down your boxes when you get them. Store them flat so that when you bring your cardboard to the bins, it is a lot easier and faster.

The broken-down car pick-up is on hold. For those of you that have already turned their paperwork in, thank you. I will be sending information to all once we get everything ready to go all at once. Thank You for your patience!

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is our program that protects our lake from getting anything into the water that could harm or change the ecosystem. Currently, I have completed both one & two decontamination classes. I help out with this program at least twice a week and more when we work on holiday weekends. We also do river assessments to check the water temperature, substrate and look for AIS.

Dehan Dominguez

Natural Resources Assistant / Recycling Coordinator

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## The Pyramid Lake Tribal Air Monitoring Program Updates

The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's (PLPT) Tribal Air Monitoring program continues to maintain the air quality (AQ) monitoring stations at the Wadsworth and Nixon sites. Both stations are equipped with a coarse particulate matter (PM10) monitor and weather sensors such as temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and wind direction. Data from the Wadsworth station is collected and stored on the online data management system, the Quality Review and Exchange Systems for Tribes (QREST) network. The public can access this information at <https://www.qrest.net/>.

Alongside ambient air monitoring, the Tribal Air program continues to build program capacity by incorporating an indoor air component to the department. The development of an Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) assessment will allow the ability to conduct home/building assessments. IAQ assessments are designed to evaluate the quality of air inside of your home/building. IAQ assessments help to identify air pollution sources and give the opportunity to improve indoor air quality for overall health and comfort.

Questions or concerns regarding air quality can be directed to the Tribal Air Monitoring program at, 775-574-0101 ext. 18.

Tanda Roberts

Air Quality Specialist

[troberts@plpt.nsn.us](mailto:troberts@plpt.nsn.us)

## Meet Our New Environmental Technician

I recently started working for the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, about three months ago, in the Natural Resources Department as an Environmental Technician. When I started, I didn't know what to expect from the job, as I had never worked in the Environmental field. All I knew was that I enjoyed and respected the natural beauty, and wealth of my home, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Indian Reservation.

Other than dealing with the occasional bureaucracy that comes with any government funded job, I can say whole heartedly that I have very much enjoyed my time working in Natural Resources. It has provided me with a content challenge to learn and grow in my position, and as a person. I can't thank my mentors, coworkers, and tribe enough for giving that to me, and look forward to paying it forward to others.

Jarom Arrington  
Environmental Technician

## Meet Our Environmental Intern

My name is Cristian Burke, a third-year undergraduate student at Oregon State University studying Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences. Before starting college, I always had plans to return to the reservation to work here, and the Natural Resources Department provided just the kind of experience I was looking for. This is my second summer working with the department as an intern and I'm even more excited this time around. My time here has been split mostly between the Water Quality and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) programs. Whether it's performing phosphorus tests in the lab or getting wet in the river during the visual AIS presence/absence surveys, it has always been a great environment to learn and even have a bit of fun. But it's not only the valuable skills in field and lab work that the position offers, but also the greater appreciation for the reservation that I have developed, and especially for those working to protect the resources. My time here has only reinforced that desire to pursue higher education and bring something back to the reservation.

## Updates from the Aquatic Invasive Species Program

Aquatic invasive species are non-native to an ecosystem and whose introduction threatens the diversity and abundance of native species, the ecological stability of infested waters, or economic impacts to hatcheries, agriculture, and recreation.

The Goal of the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program is to prevent the introduction/

spread of invasive species in the waters of the Pyramid Lake Paiute reservation



In order to accomplish this task, boat inspections continue out in Sutcliffe. This year the AIS program is excited to announce that we have hired a new full time technician as well as two seasonal techs, allowing us to open the watercraft inspection station more than ever before! Invasive species remain a threat to the waters of Pyramid Lake, having the inspection station open more hours is crucial to protecting the sacred waters.

The program has deployed a number of artificial substrate samplers in the lake and river. The samplers are then checked once a month to see if any aquatic invasive species have settled on them. The program has also been conducting the annual presence/absence surveys along the lake and river, these surveys are our chance to really dig around and look for any invasives we can find. This year we plan on doubling our plankton tow efforts, so that we can get a better chance for early detection of invasive mussels.



Last October, we had a wilderness first aid course which we learned how to save lives and keep ourselves safe while in the field. Our field work can bring us to some pretty remote locations, with no cell service and sometimes far from the main road. Learning wilderness first aid techniques has been very enriching and valuable knowledge for us to gain! Another training will be conducted this September along the Truckee River for white-water rescue! During the summer and fall we do a lot of survey work in the river looking for invasive species. This white-water rescue training will give us the skills to survive the sometimes-dangerous conditions of the lower Truckee.

**Public Outreach-** This year the AIS program has participated in the summer youth camp hosted by Natural Resources department and in the earth day event for the kids at Natchez. We taught the kids about crawdads, how to hold them without getting pinched, and about their presence as an invasive species in the Truckee





River system. During Youth camp we had the opportunity to show the kids how crawdad traps are baited and set in the river near Big Bend!

### How can YOU help?

One of the biggest ways aquatic invasive species are spread is through human activities.

In order to help prevent the spread of invasive species here are some things you can do to help!

Clean drain and dry your boat in between every different water body

Clean drain and dry beach toys, life jackets and inflatables between every waterbody

Clean drain and dry waders (especially felt soled wader, which are notorious for spreading invasive species such as the New Zealand Mud snails)

Never release pets into the wild (including goldfish, bullfrogs, etc.)



**For more information, please visit:**

**[PyramidLakeAIS.org](http://PyramidLakeAIS.org)**

**Or**

**on Facebook @Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Aquatic Invasive Species Program**

## Updates for the Water Quality Program

Hello, it's been a busy season for field work, as there's been no shortage of things that require water quality monitoring.

To start, we are beginning the end of our work updating the Nonpoint Source Pollution Assessment Report, and then we will be updating the Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan. After releasing the update, we'll accept public comment for the next 30 days, after which we will incorporate public input into the final version, which needs Tribal Council review & approval, planned in September. We will begin announcing the steps in the process through Tribal social media platforms, as well as publicizing the dates by also posting flyers at prominent places on the reservation. We are also moving towards reporting our annual Water Quality Assessment Report electronically on ATTAINS, beginning this fall.

We have resumed our annual Harmful Algal Blooms monitoring, which involves

weekly site observations, monthly monitoring and sampling and responses to reports of HABs or adverse health events. So far this year, the lake has been inactive, but this will change when the days get hotter and the water warmer. The last two bloom events occurred relatively late in the season, during September in 2021 and October last year. In the event of a bloom, we are asking to limit exposure to suspected bloom patches in the water, and to prevent animals from drinking the water. We have developed a weekly status report of Pyramid Lake for alerting the public of current conditions on Pyramid Lake, this report will be published every Friday and is valid through the following Monday. We hope this will better educate the public in building awareness for blooms. Please report a suspected bloom to the Natural Resources Department, at (775) 574-0101, or by email at: [abill@plpt.nsn.us](mailto:abill@plpt.nsn.us).

Last year was a year of change, with the Water Quality Program losing staff. Patrick John left the program after joining in 2016, and Kaylie Wilmot also left her Wetlands Specialist position. Both employees were here longer than a year, and we wish them well in their new places of employment. We also hired some Tribal members for roles with the Department, in 2024. Cody Nish was hired as a temporary seasonal worker during Winter 2024, and contributed to water quality, wildlife, aquatic invasive species and other programs. Cody chose to remain as our regular, full-time Environmental Technician, where he works in the Water Quality Program helping with data collection, field activities and laboratory duties. Cody enjoys his position and enjoys visiting the remote areas of the reservation that few can see. Jarom Arrington was also hired in 2024, as a regular, full-time Environmental Technician, where he splits time with the Water Quality and the Aquatic Invasive Species programs. Jarom enjoys working in water quality, performing field and lab work and learning new aspects of his position. We want to take this time to welcome them to the Water Quality Program!

Finally, we are looking for Environmental Specialists within the Natural Resources Department, for the upcoming fiscal year 2025. We are looking to hire Specialists for Water Quality Standards, and for our Wetlands Program. The major requirement is a college degree (Bachelor's) in a scientific field of study, or an environmental-related field, from an accredited institution. Please inquire about the roles at the PLPT Human Resources Office.

Aaron Bill  
Water Quality Program Manager



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Pyramid Lake Natural Resources Department:  
[www.plptnaturalresources.org](http://www.plptnaturalresources.org)  
Aquatic Invasive Species: [www.pyramidlakeaid.org](http://www.pyramidlakeaid.org)  
Tribal Response Program: [www.plptbrownfields.org](http://www.plptbrownfields.org)  
Water Quality: [www.plptwq.org](http://www.plptwq.org)

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Environmental Department is to preserve the health and culture of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe through the protection and restoration of the natural environment including air, water, and lands upon which the Tribal Members have depended on for thousands of years.

### **Vision Statement**

Ensure clean air, water, and lands to maintain healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations for future generations to preserve the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's culture and way of life.