

TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Title: Town of Mammoth Lakes priorities for the FY24 Inyo National Forest Program of Work.

Meeting Date: September 6, 2023

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RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the proposed or modified Town priority areas of work to be submitted to the Inyo National Forest for consideration for inclusion in their FY24 Program of Work

BACKGROUND:

Each year the Inyo National Forest establishes a forest wide program of work to assist the prioritization of Forest Service Staff assignments and to allocate other resources. One of the factors determining workloads is development and review of NEPA related work requirements. One of the ways to assist the Forest Service in their management of resources and establishing their Program of Work (POW) is a request to local agencies to submit a prioritized list of projects that are anticipated to require Forest Service resources, especially in the area of NEPA.

Based on current Town projects and work programs a list of priority projects and a list of ongoing work programs and longer-range planning efforts was submitted. Environmental work for the noted projects is not necessarily funded at this stage of the project work. This includes the following high priority projects, with more detail provided below:

Town of Mammoth Lakes Requested Program of Work requiring NEPA related work

- 1) Continued Sherwin's Meadows (SHARP) trail planning and implementation.
- 2) Extension of "Snow Pit" Use Permit and longer-term land tenure.
- 3) Collaborative efforts on Fuels Management.
- 4) Mammoth Creek Park (East) – Bike Park
- 5) Acquisition of USFS Land surrounding Mammoth Yosemite Airport – Townsite Act or other Land Conveyance mechanism.

Our ongoing work programs and coordination of planning efforts includes

- a) Trail Maintenance / Cleaning / Signage
- b) Sherwin's Area Trails and Shovel ready Trailhead
- c) Enhanced Trailhead parking/access
- d) Restroom Cleaning and Trash support in the Lakes Basin, etc.
- e) Adopt a Trail program / Other stewardship programs
- f) Lakes Basin Connector Trail Construction Completion

- g) Trail / Community Host Program – Visitor/Local engagement program
- h) Updates to websites, maps, informational handouts, etc.
- i) Preparation of annual operating plans for existing agreements/consolidation of agreements.

Major Planning Projects

- a. Sherwin’s Area Trails (SHARP)
- b. Subpart C – Stakeholder Collaborative
- c. Joint NEPA/CEQA process for consideration of improvements at Mammoth Mountain Main Lodge Redevelopment.
- d. Shady Rest Recreation Study
- e. Continue discussion on potential joint housing project at Mammoth Ranger District Administrative Site
- f. Node Planning

Detailed FY24 Proposed Scope of Work for INF

Purpose and Need – Detailed Work Program

The only incorporated community in Mono County, the Town of Mammoth Lakes (population ≈ 8,000) occupies ≈ 25 mi² (urban limit ≈ 4 mi²) is surrounded entirely by National Forest system lands. The community has a tourism-based economy; with recreation, trails and public access playing an integral role in the Town’s sustainable economy and quality of life. A popular gateway community and recreation destination, Mammoth Lakes receives an estimated 3-5 million visitors annually – by far, the single greatest concentrated use occurring on Inyo National Forest system-lands over a 12-month period.

Due to its geographic and economic ties to federally managed Public Lands and reduced capacity within the U.S. Forest Service, the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) and Inyo National Forest (INF) are reliant upon mutual-aid agreements to manage recreation, roads, trails, municipal, and resource-related issues in the Mammoth Ranger District. Cooperative Agreements include:

Special Use Permits:

- Paved Multi-Use Pathways (≈ 18 miles)
- Shady Rest Park and Disc Golf Course (≈ 20 acres)
- Mammoth Creek Park (≈20 acres)
- Easements and Roads Maintenance/ Other/ Airport/ Infrastructure, etc.
- Snow Storage
- Visitors Bureau Building

Memorandum of Understanding:

- Mammoth Lakes Trail System (≈ 30 miles of soft-surface trails, signs, and associated infrastructure)
 - Provides for on-going maintenance, grooming, management of volunteer programs and events, system wayfinding, and the planning and implementation of recreation infrastructure within the MLTS.
 - Expires 12/31/2024
 - This work is concurrently authorized under a Non-Funded Challenge cost share.

- Shady Rest Winter Grooming
 - Expires 12/31/2023
 - This work is concurrently authorized under a Non-Funded Challenge cost share.
- Mammoth Lakes Trail System Website
 - Provides for management of MammothTrails.org and associated VIS services.

Challenge Cost Share Agreements:

- MLTS – Recreation Site Management & Maintenance
 - Winter grooming
 - MLTS
 - Multi-Use Pathway maintenance
- Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP)

Funding is provided by TOML General Fund, and Special-Use Taxes Measure R, and Measure U. Measure R is a special fund designated for use by the Town of Mammoth Lakes for the planning, construction, operation, maintenance, programming and administration of all trails, parks and recreation facilities managed by the Town of Mammoth Lakes without supplanting existing parks and recreation facility maintenance funds. Measure U is applied for planning, construction, operation, maintenance, programming and administration of facilities and projects for mobility, recreation and arts and culture.

The purpose of this document is to align different departmental needs within the Town of Mammoth Lakes with priorities identified on Inyo National Forest managed lands. Due to increased visitation and decreased appropriated funding, it is critical for local government and partner-agencies to closely coordinate priorities and resources. TOML priorities are consistent with the Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes Trail System Master Plan, General Plan and Mobility Element, Lakes Basin Special Study, and Sherwins Area Recreation Plan. TOML priorities are categorized as 1) Planning/NEPA; 2) Administration/Land-Uses; 3) Implementation; and 4) Operations/Maintenance.

TOML Priorities:

1) Planning/ NEPA

- **Sherwin Meadow Trails (SHARP)**
 - Continued environmental analysis & development of proposed action
 - Continue to refine proposed action through environmental analysis
 - Contracted Heritage Analysis with Stantec
 - Draft NEPA/CEQA documents
 - Decision
 - Implementation
- **Mammoth Creek Park East Recreation Amenities**
 - Dirt Jumps & Pump Track w/adjacent Kids Zone (Bike Park)
 - Develop proposed action
- **Collaborative efforts on Fuels Management**
 - Regional partnership on ESCCRP work
 - Stewardship project process for fuels work in support of biomass facility

- **Subpart C – Stakeholder Collaborative**
 - Continued formal engagement in Subpart C process
 - Collaborative efforts on subpart C implementation
 - Pursue expanded grooming through Subpart C process
 - Identify recommendations for winter recreation infrastructure, winter trails, staging areas, snow-play areas, and non-motorized recreation activities
- **Shady Rest Recreation Study**
 - Engage ORMAT related to development of planning documents to mitigate any recreation impacts as a result of the new pipeline
- **Doe Ridge Trail Concept**
 - Multi-use single track trail network
 - Develop Proposed Action with BLM & USFS
- **Shady Rest Inyo Craters (SRIC) OHV Multi-Use Trails**
 - Currently on hold per Inyo Leadership
 - 3-year planning grant to develop multi-use, motorized trails, staging areas, and infrastructure in the SRIC sub-region. Current grant closed out and will reapply in the future.
 - Emphasis on dispersing users and providing opportunities for motorized and non-motorized trail experiences including e-bike accessible networks – connecting the communities of June and Mammoth
- **Ski Back Public Access Trail**
 - In collaboration with MMSA, develop a free public-access trail on the Ski Back ‘road’.

2) Administration/Land-Uses

- **Snow Pit**
 - Currently managed under a temporary Special Use Permit
 - Long-term agreement/solution required/requested
- **Land Acquisition/Permitting**
 - Airport Land (Townsite Act or other mechanism)
 - Small tracts – (Next to Mammoth Creek Park)
 - USFS parcel adjacent to MCWD
 - Snow Pit
- **Coordination of with U.S. Forest Service on Housing Options**
 - Analysis of use of administrative site for USFS/Other Housing
 - Determine Feasibility, Scope and Process
 - Investigate 2018 Farm Bill Leasing Authority
- **Clean-up remaining SUP and Cooperative Agreements**
 - Permit consolidation & reissue
 - Submitted Summer/Fall 2022
 - Consider SUPs to replace MOUs & Agreements where feasible

3) Implementation

- **Lakes Basin Connector Trails**
 - Continue with Trail Construction
 - Plan Ribbon Cutting Fall 2023

- **Trail Reroutes**
 - As needed/desired
 - Continued coordination with Inyo Staff
- **Marking of existing routes on established dirt roads**
 - Provide opportunities for gravel & e-bikers.
- **Sherwin’s Trailhead**
 - Development of shovel-ready trailhead & associated infrastructure
 - Estimated start date: Summer 2024

4) Operations/Maintenance

- Town funded restroom/Trash maintenance for designated sites (Town Allocation \$40,000)
- Coordination of Transit Services to U.S. Forest Service Lands
- MLTS trail maintenance managed under MOU, NFCCSA
- Mammoth PD enforcement – Mammoth Lakes Basin/Shady Rest Focus/Dogs off leash/Parking
- MLTS Trail Days volunteer events
- Adopt-a-Trail Program
- Trashy Thursdays
- “Clean Up The Lake” Events
- MLTS Trail Hosts/ Visitor Information Services
 - Host Program Transitioning to TOML in Sept. 2022
- Snow Removal / Road maintenance / Signage (Lakes Basin/Reds Meadow/OMR)
- Traffic Control and visitor management as needed
- Sign installation on new Lakes Basin Connector Trails
- Management of existing grooming program
- Cooperation with Lions Club on new ADA dock at Twin Lakes
- Coordination of Reds Meadow Road reconstruction

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Funding is provided through the Town’s General Fund, and Special-Use Taxes Measure R, and Measure U. Staff support is provided through the Office of Outdoor Recreation, other Town Departments, and contracted services. Measure R is a special fund designated for use by the Town of Mammoth Lakes for the planning, construction, operation, maintenance, programming and administration of all trails, parks and recreation facilities managed by the Town of Mammoth Lakes without supplanting existing parks and recreation facility maintenance funds. Measure U is applied for planning, construction, operation, maintenance, programming and administration of facilities and projects for mobility, recreation and arts and culture.