



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Accept and File Final Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Initiative Document and Discuss Future ESCOG Engagement
Meeting date: February 28, 2024
Prepared on: February 19, 2023
Attachments: A) Final Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreational Planning Initiative Document

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

In 2022, the ESCOG was awarded funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in support of the Buttermilk infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative (BIRPI) for infrastructure improvements and recreation planning in the Buttermilk recreation area west of Bishop. The Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative (BIRPI) was implemented in two phases: the first phase installed a double vault toilet replacing the existing vault toilet at the bouldering area and the second phase was to develop a high level recreation plan for the greater Buttermilk area.

Staff is requesting the Board accept and file the final BIRPI conceptual recreation plan and discuss ESCOG's ongoing engagement with the project.

ANALYSIS:

The Buttermilk Planning and Recreation Initiative was a collaborative, stakeholder informed effort to identify the needs and gaps in recreation management and infrastructure in the increasingly popular Buttermilk recreation area. The project team conducted meetings with affected agency partners and key user groups such as the Bishop Area Climbers Coalition and the Bishop Paiute Tribe. Building upon these conversations and insights, the project team hosted three in-person workshops. Each workshop was well attended by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, many of whom participated throughout the entire process. Workshops were iterative, building the resulting document as a group as follows:

- **Workshop 1:** Explore comments received on input map together; breakout session: 3-word vision for the area, common ground challenges, biggest priorities
- **Workshop 2:** Report back workshop 1 comments, discuss range of potential solutions; breakout session: ranking challenges and potential solutions in terms of both level of effort and priority
- **Workshop 3:** Report back workshop 2 comments, refine goals and range of solutions; breakout session: group discussion regarding roles, implementation, and next steps

The resulting BIRPI document captures a broad range of potential solutions to 12 key challenge areas as identified by workshop participants: Consensus Management, Buttermilk Road, Camping, Climbing Rangers, Education, Habitat Destruction, Maintenance and Staffing, Overcrowding, Parking, Trails, Tribal Involvement, and Wildfires. In order to underscore that this was a community-driven process, the document is rich in direct quotes and comments wherever possible.

The final document recommends several near-term implementation actions that can be taken to begin addressing stakeholder concerns, though many areas of concern will require long-term coordination among agencies, additional stakeholder input and potential environmental review. Near-term recommendations include:

- Establish Consensus-Based Management Body
- Climbing Rangers
- Data Collection/Baselining
- Education
- Signage
- Trail Delineation
- Tribal Consulting
- Welcome Kiosk

Inyo County Supervisor Roeser has taken initiative to organize a consensus-based management body to take action on implementing the recommendations and has invited ESCOG staff to remain engaged to assist with transitioning from the planning phase to an effective implementation strategy, contingent on the ESCOG Board's approval.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests the ESCOG Board accept and file the Final Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative.