

TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES STAFF REPORT

Title: Trail Counter/Trail Usage Report – Summer 2024

Meeting Date: December 12, 2024

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Overview: Since 2017, roughly 30 infrared TRAFx trail counters are installed each summer at various trailheads and along Multi Use Pathways throughout the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Summer 2024 was my first full summer season in charge of deploying, maintaining, and collecting the data that these trail counters collect. I have prepared 5 years' worth of data for review in the attached presentation.

Methodology: Near the start of the summer season as snow is melting, MLTPA staff prepares the counters, checks their batteries, name status, and functionality then goes to the different pre-selected locations and installs the counters for the summer season. They are then routinely checked and the data is uploaded to the TRAFx trail counter data management website.

Counters: There are two types of counters that are deployed and regularly maintained: infrared and vehicle counters.

- **Infrared counters** are used to count individuals.
 - Infrared counters that are stationed at the start of trailheads will likely include people passing going onto the trail and coming off.
 - While most locations operate smoothly without complications, occasionally counters are disrupted by weather, battery issues, and unfortunately human disturbances. A handful of locations are favored by some individuals where they stuff the counter housing boxes which prevents the sensor from working.
- **Vehicle counters** are used to count vehicles.
 - There are 2 vehicle counters deployed, one at the entrance to Shady Rest Park and the other at the start of the Sherwin Meadows Parking Lot.
 - These are set with a radius to hopefully only catch one side of the road, although Shady Rest Park counter's radius might catch both directions.

End Of Season Summary: The 2024 Summer season was a relatively normal season after a very average snow year. Nothing impacted the start of the trail counter program, so all sites were active at the start of June. There were thankfully no major fire events near us, so there was no smoke impact or forest closures on the trail system this season. Data showed continued high use at many of the popular sites and similar year over year usage at most of the sites. The data shows that recreation has been fairly consistent the last couple of years post COVID. Some locations have seen some moderate growth in usage, while others have stayed largely constant.