

TOWN OF MAMMOTH LAKES STAFF REPORT

Title: Trail Counter/Trail Usage Report – Winter 2024-2025

Meeting Date: June 4, 2025

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Overview: Since 2017, infrared TRAFx trail counters and 2 magnetic vehicle counters are installed each winter at winter recreation locations in/near the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Winter 2025 was my first full summer season in charge of deploying, maintaining, and collecting the data that these trail counters collect.

Methodology: Near the start of the winter season before snow levels get too deep, 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 winter season. They are then checked weekly 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.
 - This year, there were 4 infrared counters placed during the winter at the following locations: Shady Rest Park, Old Shady, Welcome Center, and Lake Mary Road Closure.
- **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 2025 Winter season was a very normal season after a very normal snow year. Nothing impacted the start of the trail counter program, so all sites were active by the end of November. Data showed continued high use at many of the popular sites and similar year over year usage at most of the sites. Some notable events, such as the construction at the Sherwin Parking area, are evident in the counter data. The data shows that recreation has been fairly consistent the last couple of years post Covid. Unsurprisingly, lower snow years affect the areas around Shady Rest, most likely due to a lack of being able to groom trails.