

Progress Report – MLR Review of the SHARP NEPA Deliverable

Following the Town contract deliverable to "Collaborate with the Town and partners on providing recommendations for the continuation, prioritization, implementation and design of programs and services to support the Mammoth Lakes Trail System (MLTS)...", the MLTS Committee of the Mammoth Lakes Recreation Board has completed an initial review of the unfinished work previously assigned to the Mammoth Lakes Trails System Coordinating Committee (MLTSCC) as it relates to the SHARP NEPA process.

The MLTS Committee intended to analyze the specific deliverable under this portion of the contract to "...review and confirm the list of initial trails to be incorporated in the SHARP NEPA review by December 31, 2014 and recommend a level(s) of funding to be committed for future SHARP area trail maintenance."

This progress report is based on a review of work products and the last three MLTSCC meetings via Granicus along with the original SHARP documents, and documents provided by the Town. This includes:

- Sherwins Area Recreation Plan (November 2009), including the Summer and Winter Narratives and technical reports
- December 1, 2014 Town Manager memo to MLR re: SHARP NEPA Work Program
- Challenge Cost Share Supplemental Project Agreement (May 2013)

While much research has been completed by the MLTS Committee, the MLR Board is requesting an extension of time for additional information gathering and conferring with Town staff in order to complete the items outlined in the December 1, 2014 Work Program memo from the Town Manager.

MLR requests a discussion of these items this evening, with the intention to return on January 7, 2015 with recommendations for specific action items.

Below is an outline of areas the MLTS Committee has initially recommended to be addressed as part of this contract deliverable along with a brief description of possible steps to be taken for each area. MLR is aware that any delays might constrain projects targeted for completion over Summer 2015, but believes that the information gathering, clarifications, communications and collaborations are pertinent to making strategic decisions on future trails development and maintenance in the SHARP area.

Please note that the following items are numbered for ease in discussion, no priority intended.

1. Reconvene the Sherwins Working Group (SWG) for one meeting to provide the community with information on the NEPA process and receive input on changes/updates in this project's scope and priorities and resolve possible inconsistencies between previously identified priorities.

2. MLR recommends that the Town continue to advance the community's concerns that the SHARP NEPA process includes an analysis of cumulative effects for the entire area, not just selected trails and alignments.
3. MLR is requesting the Scope of the Challenge Cost Share Supplemental Project Agreement be clarified, including a report on expenditures and actions completed to date against the original \$152,075 MLTS Award, and on any potential changes in the scope of the NEPA process.
4. MLR is requesting that results of the resource studies be made public, where possible, to help inform the trails priorities discussions.
5. MLR is requesting to work with Town staff on finalizing trail maintenance funding definitions so the MLTS Committee can recommend funding levels as requested in the contract deliverable.
6. Reconciliation of MLTSCC Projects will require input from Town staff and the previous MLR Reconciliation Ad Hoc Committee as well as the current MLR Reconciliation Committee in order to prioritize projects for FY 15-16.
7. A Change in the use of an existing MLTSCC Award for previous MLTSCC Support may be requested for the following uses:
 - a. Authorize MLR to use a portion of the funding to hire or contract for a Trails Coordinator; and/or
 - b. Consider a facilitator for one public meeting regarding trails to be included in site-specific SHARP NEPA discussion as noted in #1 above.
8. MLR is ready to begin defining the working relationships in the contract through a collaborative process with the Town and partners.
9. MLR intends to make decisions and recommend Town Council actions based on an overall strategy, not on an ad hoc basis. Discussions are underway on the broader strategy for MLR, to be concluded and presented to Town Council over the next few months.
10. Completed project definitions and responsibilities will be requested in order to inform priorities and strategies, especially in the area of ownership and/or responsibility for constructed trails.
11. Clarification of the status of Subpart C/Winter Trails OSV analyses is desired in order to determine any impacts to the Winter use of trails included in the SHARP NEPA process before that list can be finalized.
12. SHARP Area FY 14-15 Projects already assigned to Town Staff will be reviewed and timelines/staff capacity clarified through further discussions between the MLR MLTS Committee and Town Staff.



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December 1, 2014

To: Mammoth Lakes Recreation – MLTS Subcommittee

From: Daniel C. Holler, Town Manager

RE: SHARP NEPA Work Program

Background

One of the contractual items for Mammoth Lakes Recreation (MLR) is to provide recommendations for moving forward with the SHARP NEPA work. This work was initiated under a Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the Town and the USFS to fund a “Sherwin Trail, Additions Planning and Decision Making” process. The work program was funded out of the dedicated Trail Allocation from Measure R. The total Measure R allocation was \$152,072. To date \$38,357.76 has been expended. There is a separate allocation of \$10,000 for the Town’s estimated cost in doing CEQA review as part of the overall environmental process. The CEQA analysis needs a defined project scope to be used in the review.

The MLTSCC was working with the United States Forest Service (USFS) on the designation of the initial trails to be included in the SHARP NEPA analysis. The purpose of reducing the number of trails to be reviewed was to limit expenses, have a resulting useful NEPA document for actual trail work that would not “expire” prior to trails being worked on and to address the funding need for actual construction and ongoing maintenance. The NEPA document is designed to address the SHARP area and address concerns over cumulative effects as future trails are developed, with additional environmental review.

To continue the NEPA process two requests have been made by the USFS. First is the confirmation of a limited number of trails to be used in next phase of the NEPA Work. Second, is the level of funding commitment that can be made to assist in the ongoing maintenance and potential construction of new trails. If Measure R funds are to be used then a mechanism will need to be implemented to meet the Town “owned or managed” language of Measure R. A number of current trails are managed under a Use Permit.

MLR Work Program

Prior to being disbanded the MLTSCC identified seven trail segments to be reviewed in detail under the NEPA process. The trail segments are included in the attached draft letter to the USFS. The Agreement between the Town and USFS also provides that the

trails and review process be approved by the District Ranger. While subject to final approval, the trails identified in the attached letter have preliminarily been supported by the USFS.

With the transition from multiple Town committees engaged with Measure R to utilizing one organization (MLR), Town Staff is requesting MLR review and confirm or request modifications to the draft list of trails to serve as the focal point of the NEPA work. The Town is not looking at an exhaustive review. The Town agrees with the USFS that the number of trails to be reviewed in detail should be limited. MLR may recommend the same list, a shorter list of the trails noted or a modified list of trails, with justification for those recommendations. An expanded list of trails is not anticipated. Identification of specific trails is needed as the next step in the process will include a significant amount of archeological work that will be site specific based on the proposed trail locations.

Secondly, MLR will need to recommend some level of ongoing maintenance funding that may be applied primarily to new trails. An ongoing fiscal challenge for both the USFS and the Town is the addition of new public amenities often without any funding commitments to maintain the amenities. Staff is not looking for an exhaustive study on the maintenance demands, processes, etc. but more of a commitment to a reasonable regular funding amount for maintenance (i.e. \$15,000 - \$25,000).

The previous MLTSCC had begun to set aside funds for future SHARP projects (\$39,000), which may still be done with a dedication of funds for maintenance and/construction.. Not “every dollar” of the funds allocated to trails needs to be specifically dedicated and it is anticipated that both dedicated and undedicated reserves will be used to account for trail related funds. The amount actually used for maintenance may be subject to change as trails are completed but a commitment is needed to proceed with the planning effort. To plan for projects that will not be built or maintained is not in the interest of the Town or the USFS. Any recommendations regarding potential funding in support of construction is also appreciated, which may be more appropriately addressed in a future specific “allocation.”

Summary

To move the NEPA work forward on the trail system enhancement within the SHARP planning area, Town Staff is requesting two recommendations from MLR:

1. A confirmation on the listing initial trails to be focused on in the NEPA work for trails that may realistically be planned for construction in the next five years; and
2. A recommended level of funding to be set aside for the maintenance of new facilities.

Attachments:

1. SHERWINS Working Group Report for Summer and Winter - November 3, 2009
2. Challenge Cost Share Supplemental Project Agreement
3. Draft Letter providing list of potential trials to focus the NEPA work

CC: Without Attachments
Town Council
Grady Dutton, Public Works Director
Stuart Brown, Recreation Manager