



Post Office Box 2486, Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

June 26, 2020

Gordon Martin, District Ranger
Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Ranger District
Post Office Box 148
Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

Re: Support for the Lakes Basin and Sherwins Area Trail Enhancement Project

Dear District Ranger Martin,

The Sierra Eastside Mountain Bike Association (SEMBA) is a 100% volunteer-based non-profit organization that operates in the within the general geographic territory of Inyo and Mono Counties, from Lone Pine to Bridgeport and the surrounding areas. The mission of SEMBA is to advocate for, enhance, preserve, and promote existing mountain biking trails, while creating new opportunities, access, and experiences for all mountain bikers in the Eastern Sierra. We are writing this letter to express our support for the Lakes Basin and Sherwins Area Trail Enhancement Project. We know that the Eastern Sierra can greatly benefit from properly built sustainable multi-use trails that do not enter wilderness.

A public trail system that is intelligently built and maintained on our public lands is long overdue. With hundreds of miles of existing illegally constructed trails and many more under construction now, local residents are telling us that they have given up on formal process and public agencies to provide the trail facilities that are desired by many. By building trails illegally, local residents are telling us that poorly designed old resource extraction roads do not offer quality trail experiences. With hundreds upon hundreds of miles of trails in wilderness areas and only about 25 miles of trails in our front country, our region is not providing for the types of experiences that today's outdoor recreation community seeks (Please see the attached map).

We think that the most sensitive ecosystems lie in wilderness areas. If resource protection is desired, there are trails and disturbed places in wilderness that should take priority for protection. Many of the trails in wilderness are not sustainable and deliver sediment into waterways. By building well designed and sustainable fun trails near communities and in non-wilderness areas, we can manage impacts more effectively while providing quality infrastructure for people to enjoy with friends and family. This approach can lessen impacts to sensitive wilderness areas by providing quality trail experiences in non-wilderness areas closer to communities where services and impacts are already taking place. By dispersing trail users away from sensitive areas, we can give wildlife more space. Just imagine if we could build a trail system so great that the demand for wilderness permits was well mitigated and the wilderness actually felt like wilderness again. Imagine if mountain bikers stopped poaching wilderness trails because there was no good reason for it. Imagine if each of our small communities had extensive free public access trail systems that no one has to drive to. People who live in Bridgeport, Lee Vining, Crowley Lake, and Bishop should not have to drive 30 minutes or more to enjoy legal multi-use trail experiences. We seek what many other mountain recreation gateway communities across the west already have in place.

SEMBA is a registered 501(c)(3) public charity
Federal Employer Identification Number 47-4965465
California State Charity Registration Number CT0262250



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This project will only proceed by avoiding sensitive habitats, archaeological and heritage sites, and by following strict construction guidelines and standards. This project as proposed does not intrude on any known sensitive resources as the professionals who designed it had the data to support environmentally sound design on the front end. By working with specialists, they were able to choose lines that work for the landscape and for the community. We ask that you trust the science and the specialists and not just oppose trails based on faith. There is broad support for this project with unanimous votes by the Mammoth Trails Committee and Town Council over several years. Our community has spoken formally in meetings and informally by building unsustainable trails without us. Public support is represented on the record since 2008. The City of Bishop has more than 100 new miles of new illegally constructed trails that the community celebrates. There are only 17 miles of trails around Mammoth Lakes, but there is a great illegal trail system that extends from Mammoth to Crowley and beyond in all directions. If illegal trails are the desired outcome, we have succeeded. If limiting surface disturbance is a goal, it is not working. There is a better way that has been proven out across the US and the world. The Town intends to hire a large trail crew for this project. These will be good jobs that pay about \$20 per hour at a time when people need jobs. We can build community with sustainable trails. By opposing sustainable trail projects, valuable local tax dollars will be wasted. Twelve years of time and lots of public money will be wasted. The public has spoken.

The days of saying "no" need to end, and we can all celebrate a new era of well-designed trails for residents and visitors to enjoy together. Trails are good for us. It is why we live here. We can do something special together as a community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Braun, Board President
Sierra Eastside Mountain Bike Association
PO Box 2486
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
Email: sembabike@outlook.com

Attachment: Singletrack Map

Copy: Council, Town of Mammoth Lakes
Mono County Board of Supervisors
Mammoth Lakes Recreation
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation