

Recreation access points to be culled into central database

By Stacey Powells
Mammoth Times Staff Writer

Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA) and Friends of the Inyo have developed a proposal for Mono County to take first steps in developing a comprehensive inventory of recreational points of access.

The proposal, known as MCRAT (Mono County Recreation Access Tool), was put together by John Wentworth of MLTPA, Paul McFarland of Friends of the Inyo and Bill Taylor.

"For every recreation opportunity,

there is a point of departure, an access point where one leaves the everyday world behind," their proposal states.

Recreation access points may be developed infrastructure, like the well-signed trailhead with parking and bathroom facilities at South Tufa at Mono Lake, or the Twin Lakes Campground and trailhead up Robinson Creek; or they may be unmarked and even anecdotal, like the entrance to the Bodie Hills along State Highway 270, or the numerous fishing pull-outs along the East Walker River."

Whatever their level of development, Mono County's recreation access points share a common distinction: They do not exist as a comprehensive, well organized, easily represented and easily shared database.

"The first step is to get the data from the other places and then do an analysis of what we have," Wentworth said.

Wentworth and McFarland explained the MCRAT goals to the Mono County Supervisors at their Mar. 10 meeting.

"By getting all the information gathered in one place, it gives an opportunity for the decision makers to preserve and enhance all of the things that make Mono County special."

The first phase is to do a projected outline of the existing conditions, the second phase will be to collect and verify all the data collected and the third phase will be the final integration of the first two phases. It will include the field procedures and data control documentation, digital photographs and all verified field data with appropriate maps.

"This is a great opportunity to look at things differently than we have in the past," said Supervisor Hap Hazard. Hazard said this process stemmed from a CPT (Collaborative Planning Team) meeting several months ago when it became apparent that there was a disjointed planning effort among agencies with an interest in Mono County, such as CalTrans, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, The Town of Mammoth Lakes and the LADWP.

"We need to support each other," Hazard said.

Bauer goes to Washington

Mono County
Supervisor's main
mission is transit

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The National Association of Counties (NACO) Legislative Conference officially opened Monday, Mar. 9 in Washington, D.C. and even though much of the day's attention was focused on the implementation of the just-passed stimulus package, Mono County Supervisor Vikki Magee Bauer was there on a mission.

"My main mission is transit," Bauer said. "I'm working on a proposal for transit on federal land."

A theme for the conference is NACO's Restore the Partnership campaign, which seeks to reestablish a working partnership between the federal and county governments.

Representatives from President Obama's administration addressed the NACO board of directors at its morning meeting and the Opening General Session. They emphasized the administration's commitment to working with county government and its need to have county officials engage with them.

"We need to hear from you. We need your guidance, your wisdom," said Cecilia Munoz, director, White House Inter-governmental Affairs Office. In her remarks she stressed the critical need for governments at all levels to work well during this time of economic crisis. To not do so, she said, risks losing the trust of the American people in their governments for years to come.

Bauer is trying to add an operational stream of funding for transit in the area, including Mono, Inyo and Merced counties.

"Rural areas get money for transit from the gas tax but that is based on population," Bauer said. "We have over a million visitors a year to our areas. If they base what we get on the permanent populations of our counties, it doesn't make any sense. It's difficult for both ESTA and YARTS (Eastern Sierra Transit Authority and Yosemite Area Rapid Transit) to keep up with their operations on what they get. Something else has to be done."

Bauer has been collecting the support of transit agencies, including Marin Transit, which services the John Muir Woods area, and Visalia Transit.

"Many transit agencies have jumped in and are lobbying for more transit money," Bauer said. "We have to lobby now because the Transportation Reauthorization Bill opens every seven years and this is the year. It's where the federal government figures out where they are going to spend their transportation funds."

Bauer is meeting with U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who is the Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW).

"By my accounting we just helped her get wilderness through, so perhaps she can help us with transit so we can



Telephone cameras aren't the best, but this shot taken with Vikki Bauer's phonecam captures Senator Boxer's surprise at the Lands Bill falling short of two votes to move it on the fast track.

Mono County

get people to the wilderness," Bauer said. "It's one thing to have wilderness, it's another to make it accessible to everyone... The piece that makes that available to everyone is transit."

Bauer has been on the ESTA board and is the chairman for YARTS.

"I know where the problem is. Maybe they'll listen," Bauer said.

When Bauer isn't spending her time lobbying for transit funding she is meeting with Senator Barbara Boxer, Senator Diane Feinstein and U.S. Congressman "Buck" McKeon as well as Congressman Dennis Cardoza from California's 18th Congressional District, which includes Merced County, and Congressman George Radanovich of the 19th Congressional District, which includes Yosemite National Park. All have an interest in transit funding.

The Transportation Reauthorization Bill will be finished in September, so Bauer is working to make sure all appropriate government officials are on board.

"Everyone is allowed input on this bill," Bauer said. "We all want a piece of the funding."

She is also on the committee for the Public Lands Steering Committee.

"I'm working with committee on wildland urban interface funding. The Stimulus Bill has put money into this grant and we could use some of that money for rural fire assistance and education."

Bauer is also going to various hearings and watching how decisions are made at the D.C. level.

"This money from the Stimulus Package is coming out so fast that the government is having a hard time figuring out where to spend it."

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