



Mammoth Lakes Winter Recreation Summit Saturday March 19, 2016

Track: Winter Recreation in the Lakes Basin

Presenter: Joel Rathje; Joined by Eric Clark of MMSA - Tamarack

Presentation Notes

“State of the Lakes Basin” - Eric Clark

What we are currently doing:

- a. Mission:
 - i. Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA) strives to give the people, guests, employees, and constituents what they want.
 - ii. Tamarack Cross Country Ski Area strives to be a professional, friendly, unique, and peaceful winter experience.
 - iii. Tamarack Cat Crew strives to provide the best quality grooming to Nordic skiers.
- b. See many multi-users at Tamarack XC Ski Area
 - i. 15,500 skiers this year
 - ii. 1,990 public users counted in 12/15/2016 at road closure gate; 916 public users counted 12/16/2016 at start of Tamarack grooming (gallery).
 - iii. Same survey count done in January; same result of about ½ lost in first mile between road closure and start of Tamarack grooming (gallery).
- c. Survey every user (by email) who buys pass; ask season pass holders for comments
 - i. General comments are that not grooming before (gallery) helps with keeping public (snowshoers, dog walkers, snowplay participants) off of groomed track, but they would like it to be groomed from road closure for their own convenience.
- d. New signs for 2015/16 season highlighting public access corridor and regulations
 - i. Feel more signs will educate people more
 - ii. But, do understand that (signage) impacts wilderness/pristine experience
- e. Increased host hours (almost triple of 2014)
- f. Plow berms to separate public/private trails
- g. What we plan to do in the future:
- h. More hosts
- i. Increase signage
- j. Increase enforcement efforts

- k. Provide dog clean up stations
- l. Improve parking and restrooms
- m. Offer public transportation incentives
- n. Shared financial responsibility for non-fee area management (public access corridor, road closure parking area)

Discussion Notes

1. Current grooming program (beginning grooming at the gallery):
 - a. Before any decision is made about doing it in the future, MMSA needs to evaluate results.
 - b. Feel it is working by capturing approximately one-half of users before reaching a point of conflict; helping to keep the walkers off groomed track.
 - c. MMSA does realize it is inconveniencing season pass holders.
 - d. Seems to be working which lends to keeping.
2. Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) and MMSA didn't work together very well during the creation of the Lakes Basin Multi-Use Path (MUP).
 - a. Will the creation of any new MUPS be different?
 - i. TOML and MMSA are working together to integrate new MUP; it will be a much smaller section than the Lakes Basin MUP.
 - ii. Currently checking for logistics like path width.
 - iii. Communication is much better this time around.
3. Will there be a formalization and consistency with what is the public access corridor?
 - a. It used to be groomed around Lake Mary; will that be coming back?
 - i. Education is most important, where the public can walk when a trail is groomed, not just in the Lakes Basin, but in areas that are groomed.
 - ii. Interpretive signage is doing good job of telling where public access is. This lends to grooming around Lake Mary again because people are learning about, and respecting the groomed track.
 - b. If it is working to not groom Panorama Dome Vista trail, what other opportunities exist to replace that terrain?
4. As a season pass holder:
 - a. Panorama Dome Vista trail not being groomed is the biggest impact; don't want to ski there, which eliminates 3K of trail
 - i. Is there an opportunity to make a hiking trail there that goes in a different direction?
 - b. Public uses trail anyway when the fence is gone.
 - c. Would like to see grooming from the road closure to the gallery.
 - d. The trail around Lake Mary has improved since the public access corridor has not been groomed.
 - i. Agreement by audience
5. Did any of the ideas expressed by the recent recreation focus group get into your stakeholder meeting; such as making it easier to get to Coldwater, etc.?

- a. Not really. We should have been at all the meetings.
 - b. Need to think about how the access affects the experience.
 - c. Could potentially use portal at Mill City to disperse use if it had grooming treatments.
6. A Lake Tahoe XC Ski Area has trails for both dogs and fat bikes.
- a. It is a possibility.
 - b. Don't understand the demand yet, but know it is coming.
 - c. Don't know what the United States Forest Service (USFS) is going to do/require.
 - d. Those type of trails would require more management.
 - i. Users would be willing to pay an additional fee and possibly only use during restricted hours.
7. Need to know what MMSA has in mind for fat biking
- a. Program the right way in the right spot.
8. Need to find way to groom MUP for walking, biking, etc.
- a. Lakes Basin MUP is a \$20 million project that sits under snow; need to figure out how to repurpose in order to utilize and reduce strain on other resources.
9. Need to plan for multi-use.
- a. Plans to build more MUPs
 - i. As the network grows, only makes sense to use year round.
10. Need to start to plan TOGETHER, not straining any one user group or management entity.
11. These ideas don't address parking, bathrooms, etc. which is a crucial component.
- a. Offer a discount for XC Skiing if a person rides the bus to Tamarack
 - b. Season pass comes with parking pass, or users pay for parking.
12. Access to Lakes Basin
- a. Tamarack explore idea of shuttle service to get users closer to Mammoth Crest.
 - i. Simple as a tow-rope on a snowmobile.
 - ii. Great terrain near Mammoth Crest, but backcountry users don't want to use because of two-mile flat to get to.
 - 1. Number of backcountry skiers showing steady growth.
 - 2. May be awkward, but could be very useful.
 - 3. Nowhere else has that great of terrain with public transit ability.
 - iii. Older users would use.
 - a. Don't have to expend all energy getting back.
 - iv. Summer guests that come in winter and don't realize they don't have the same access as summertime.
 - 1. Provide a way to get them back and they will not trample trails.
13. How do we engage with USFS about management? How do know our proposals will be listened to before spending a lot of money to only get shut down entirely?

- a. Come with a very concrete plan- drawings, details, etc.
 - b. Follow similar process as MUPS; they weren't USFS idea.
 - c. Having MMSA and TOML involved eliminates USFS wondering how the plan will affect each.
 - d. Work with USFS in the process of creating the polished plan.
 - i. Have a USFS employee at every planning meeting.
14. Need to revisit hard closure of Tamarack XC Ski Area annually on April 17th.
- a. Make more dependent on snow depth
15. Uses after April 17th (or closure date):
- a. Weekend of dog and walking only
 - b. Restricted use on different days.
 - c. Backcountry access
 - d. Mountain biking access
16. Raise awareness of who legally allowed to do what in the Lakes Basin.
17. Need to be careful putting everything on one weekend.
18. Next steps:
- a. Work together and continue the process.
 - b. More stakeholder meetings.