

NOT YOUR ORDINARY SUMMER CAMP

MLTPA's version beats poison ivy

By McKenna

Traditionally, summer camp is a time when youngsters learn crafts like macramé, arts like necking in the bushes and the embarrassment of getting poison ivy in unmentionable places.

Last weekend, MLTPA (Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access) held its first-ever CAMP: Summer and, luckily, it didn't contain any of the aforementioned summer camp classics, but did offer promise of alternative ways to move around Mammoth.

CAMP stands for Concept and Master Planning and its inaugural, open to the public, local installment focused on summer, or trail uses during the snow-less months. CAMP: Winter is scheduled for the first few days of February. I was lucky enough to partake in two of CAMP's activities: Thursday's opening night cocktail reception (naturally), and a Friday morning restoration tour of Hidden Lake, also sometimes called Mammoth Meadows.

Todd Ellsworth and Mike Schlafmann of the US Forest Service led the tour, which began with a trolley ride from Canyon Lodge across town to the end of Tamarack Street. Dropping us off in a spot sure to someday be one of Mammoth's most unique.

As it currently stands, the end of Tamarack Street is a de facto public access route many locals use to get to or from the numerous trails that zig-zag throughout Mammoth Meadows. Some of which lead to the currently waterless Hidden Lake. However, the land between the public street and the public-use-allowed USFS land in the Meadows is private. All 5 1/2 acres, which belong to a man named Terry Plum.

The bad news, for some, is that Plum plans on building 4 homes on

his land—well below the number of homes he could legally build there. But the good news for all Mammothites is that Plum is trying to spearhead a project that will build a permanent public access path to the Meadows, including six parking spots.

"I could build nine homes here, but I'm not going to. We all know how valuable property is in Mammoth, and this is a pretty good piece of property, but I'm willing to give it to the town," Plum said, as a group of about 20 locals and second homeowners walked across his land towards the Meadows. "I'm willing to be a good Samaritan. People around here have been enjoying this place for a long time and I want to make sure that after all of us are gone our kids and grandkids can still have access to the Meadows and Hidden Lake."

"We're very fortunate to have Terry," Schlafmann responded, who added that Plum is the key component in a unique project that will involve the

Town, USFS, Water Department and other private homeowners on that section of Tamarack.

As for just what kind of paths the public access will lead to, that's just what the USFS—with as much help from the public as possible—is trying to figure out.

"Our goal is to allow public access by foot, bike or horseback through the Meadows while focusing on restoring its hydrology and degraded areas," Ellsworth explained. "We don't have a plan yet. We're just looking for help and ideas."

For those interested in helping, the next Hidden Lake/Mammoth Meadows public forum is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, November 29 at the USFS Visitor's Center. For more info call 924-5500 or e-mail tellsworth@fs.fed.us.

Overall, MLTPA's Communication Manager Kim Stravers called CAMP: Summer a swimming success—although, unlike any other summer camp, no one actually did any swim-

ming.

"It was an opportunity to move the community forward and have everyone involved. After all, everybody uses the trail system for one reason or another and so what we're doing is really going to benefit everyone," said Stravers, who was delighted with the "energetic and enthusiastic" local participation.

"To be able to get people who live here and use the trail systems to actually physically point out to the design professionals the important aspects or what they like or don't like about the local trails is invaluable," Stravers said.

As for the value of the CAMP's Developer's Forum, Stravers had no problem putting a value on that. Thanks to \$25,000 donations from both Mammoth Crossing and Cardinal Investments (the proposed Sherwin's project across from the driving range), MLTPA has 50,000 more reasons to keep their feet moving in the right direction.

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