

File Code: 2350

Date: 04/06/2018

Dear Interested Public,

The Mammoth Ranger District of the Inyo National Forest (NF) proposes to implement trail improvements in the Sherwins area to provide diverse trail-based recreational opportunities near the Town of Mammoth Lakes while protecting natural and cultural resources. Proposed improvements include repair or closure of a number user-created trails as well as construction of new non-motorized trails

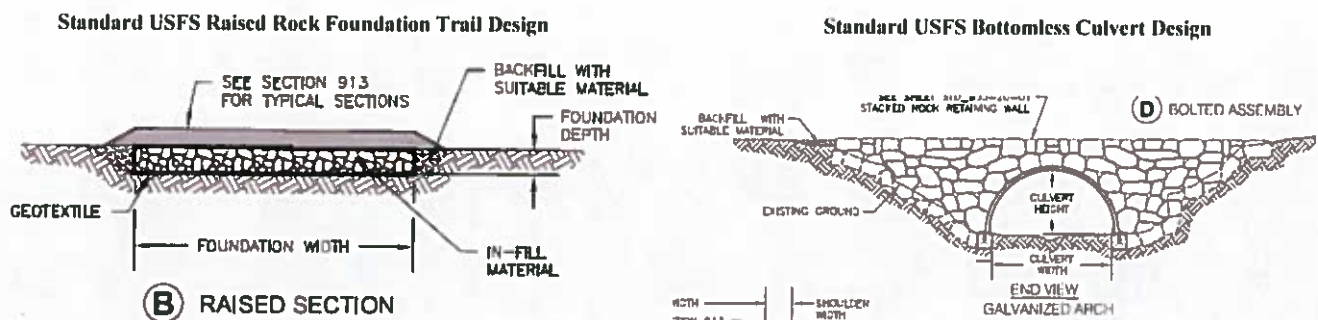
The project area lies in Management Area #9 (Mammoth), as allocated in the *1988 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest (the Plan)*. Management Area #9 (Mammoth) outlines direction for establishment of trail interface opportunities with the community of Mammoth Lakes. Additionally, the Plan includes direction for development of new trails in areas of concentrated use while protecting sensitive riparian and water areas to minimize resource damage.

A well-designed system of non-motorized trails that includes multiple loop opportunities of varying lengths and levels of challenge adjacent to the Town of Mammoth Lakes will provide for improved trail-user experiences while reducing impacts to sensitive natural resources.

Proposed Action (Refer to Maps 1 & 2)

Reconstruct and Designate User-Created Trails

Reconstruct approximately 2-3 miles of user-created trails identified as largely adhering to sustainable design standards. To ensure long-term sustainability, reconstruction activities will include small-scale trail relocations as well as adding features to reduce impacts to meadows/wet areas such as raised-rock foundations and bottomless culverts. Work will be performed with hand-tools and/or a small trail machine.



Following reconstruction, trails will adhere to USFS trail design specifications (Designed Use – Pack and Saddle, Trail Class 3) with a target tread width of 18-24” and designated as multi-use, non-motorized National Forest System trails.

Construct Natural Surface Loop/Connection Trails

To provide additional loop opportunities, approximately 4-5 miles of new natural surfaced multi-use, non-motorized trails will be constructed and will adhere to USFS trail design specifications (Designed Use – Pack and Saddle, Trail Class 3) with a target tread width of 18-24”. Work will be performed with hand-tools and/or a small trail machine.

Construct Permeable Surface, Multi-Use Pathway

A new permeable surface multi-use, non-motorized pathway (approximately 2-3 miles) will be constructed to adhere to USFS trail design specifications (Designed Use – Hiker, Trail Class 5) with a target tread width of 72-120”. The multi-use pathway will serve as a main artery for connecting soft-surface trails as well as connecting to the Town of Mammoth Lakes pathway system. Work will be performed with hand-tools and a small trail machines.

User-Created Trail Rehabilitation and Closure

Trail segments lacking sufficient design characteristics for long-term sustainability (approximately 3-4 miles) will be closed and rehabilitated to discourage further use and minimize erosion. Rehabilitation measures will include scarifying and recontouring the trail, placing brush, installing erosion control features (such as check dams) and native vegetation.

It is anticipated trail construction and improvement work will be implemented starting summer of 2018 and possibly into 2019. Project implementation and ongoing long-term maintenance will occur in partnership with the Town of Mammoth Lakes under authorization of the Mammoth Ranger District.

This proposal is consistent with and similar to the categories of action which may be excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS as described in 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(1).

Background

User-Created Trails

A large number of user-created trails exist within the Sherwins area near the Town of Mammoth Lakes in Mono County, California. The area receives a high level of dispersed use by foot, bicycle as well as horseback resulting in an extensive network of user-created trails to compliment a small number of designated National Forest System Trails. A number of user-created trail segments are exhibiting erosion or problems with muddiness as a result of improper location and/or design. Options to protect natural and cultural resources includes closure of user-trails. However, efforts to close user-trails are often ineffective unless paired with development of a trail system that provides opportunities trail-users desire. Development of a system of designated trails in place of an informal network will allow for improved management of trail sustainability and improved user experiences and protection of natural and cultural resources.

Planning

Demand for multi-use, non-motorized trail based opportunities adjacent to the Town of Mammoth Lakes has occurred for many years and continues to grow. In response to growing community interest, the Sherwin Working Group (SWG), an independent, community-based body of stakeholders was formed to access and formulate potential solutions. As a result of convening the SWG, a comprehensive plan for the Sherwins was adopted as part of the Town's updated "Trail System Master Plan" in October of 2011. The programmatic CEQA analysis was completed with funding from a grant to the Town of Mammoth Lakes from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC).

Full implementation of the plan includes a number of phases. In February 2017, a Decision Memo for phase 1 of SHARP was signed with project implementation being completed the following summer season by volunteers working with the "Summer of Stewardship Trail Days" planned and hosted by the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Phase 2 builds upon a continued need for establishing sustainable, highly desirable trail-based opportunities in the area. It is anticipated a third phase will be necessary to complete the project.

Preliminary Review

My preliminary assessment is that this proposal has the potential to fall under categorical exclusion 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1)— Construction and reconstruction of trails. Categorical exclusions are a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the environment; therefore, neither an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement is required (40 CFR 1508.4). I have reviewed the project proposal in cooperation with Forest Service environmental specialists. This preliminary review has identified no extraordinary circumstances that would preclude use of the categorical exclusion cited above.

California Environmental Quality Act

This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA under Section 15304. A Notice of Exemption with Mono County will be submitted by the Town of Mammoth Lakes concurrent to this letter.

How to Submit Comments

The proposed action is currently available for a 14-day comment period. This scoping period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. While comments are welcome at any time, they would be most useful if received by April 20, 2018. We would like to invite your comments regarding issues, opportunities, concerns, and suggestions for the proposed project.

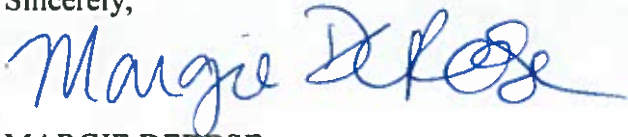
Written comments can be submitted to: Margie DeRose c/o Kerry Wood, P.O Box 148 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:30-4:30, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided during normal business hours via telephone to Kerry Wood at (760) 924-5523, or in person, or electronically. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email

message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-inyo@fs.fed.us, with subject line, "SHARP Phase II Project."

If you have questions regarding this project, you may contact Kerry Wood, Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Ranger District Office, phone number (760) 934-5523, or email kwood@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the Inyo National Forest.

Sincerely,



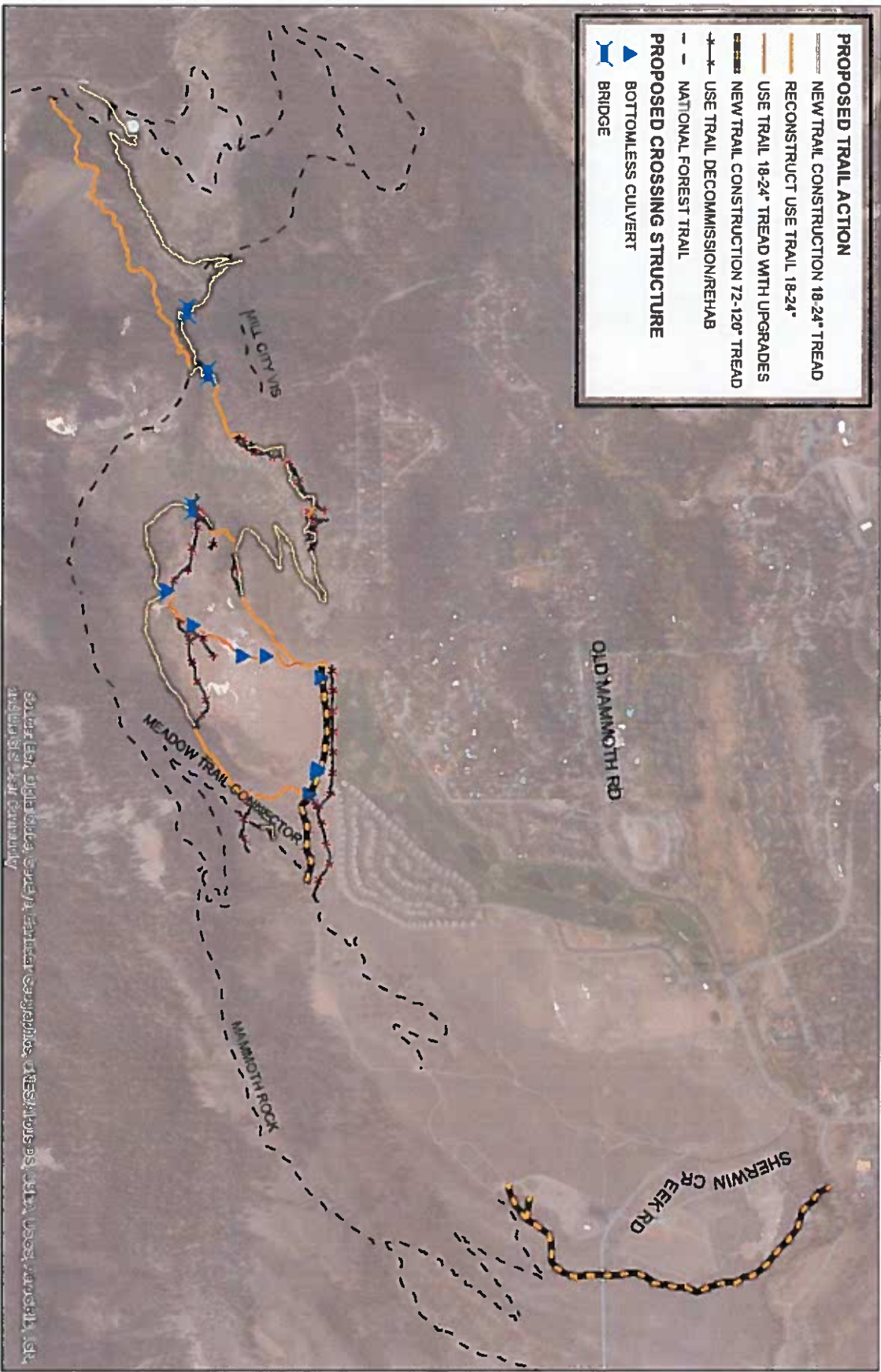
MARGIE DEROOSE
Acting District Ranger

PROPOSED TRAIL ACTION

- NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION 18-24" TREAD
- RECONSTRUCT USE TRAIL 18-24"
- USE TRAIL 18-24" TREAD WITH UPGRADES
- NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION 72-120" TREAD
- USE TRAIL DECOMMISSION/REHAB
- NATIONAL FOREST TRAIL

PROPOSED CROSSING STRUCTURE

- BOTTOMLESS CULVERT
- BRIDGE



SHERWINS AREA RECREATION PLAN (SHARP) PHASE II
MAP OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES (MAP 1 of 2)

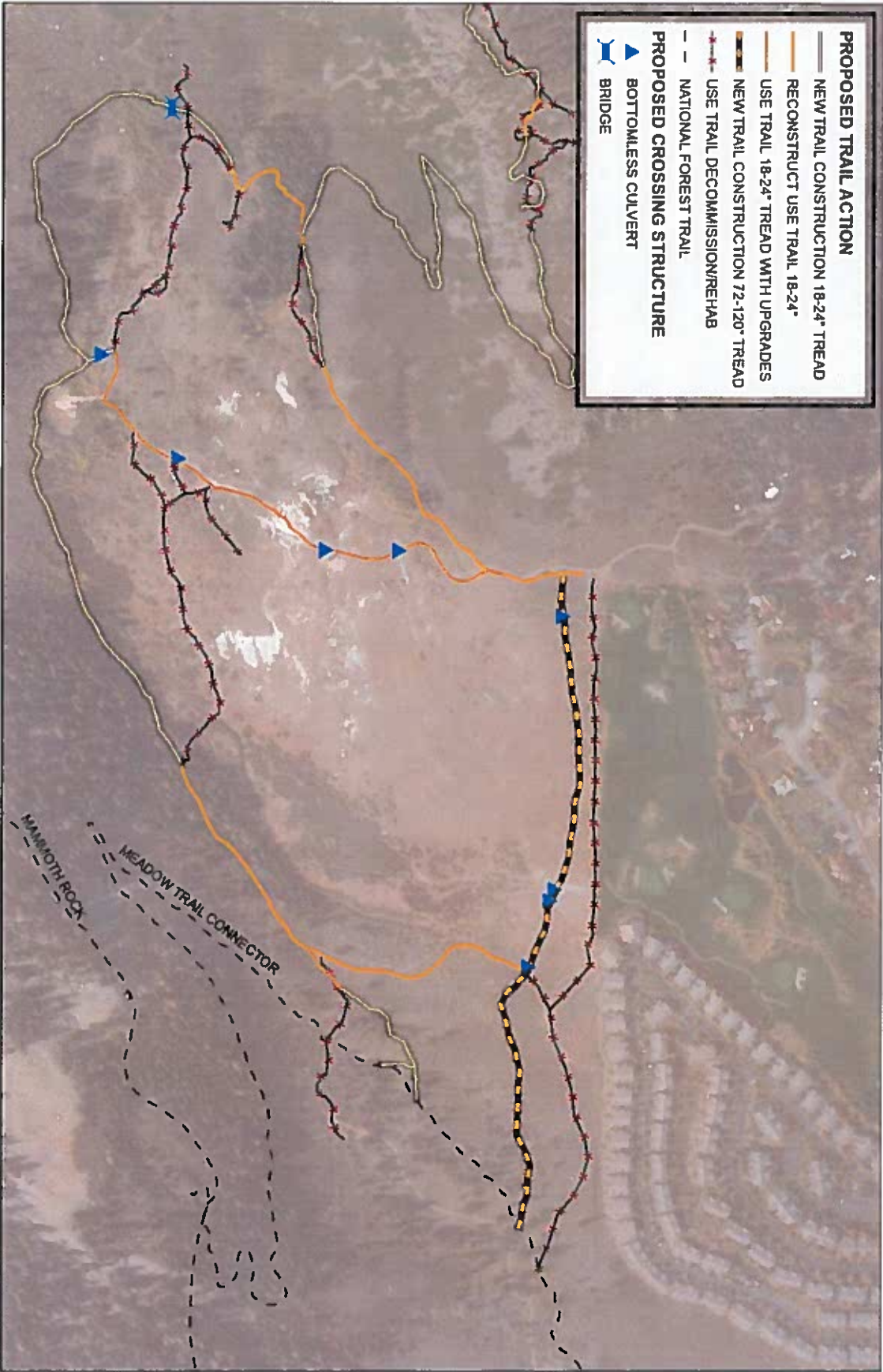


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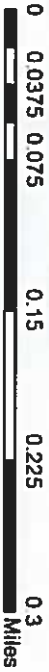
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- ▲ BOTTOMLESS CULVERT
 - ▲ BRIDGE



SHERWINS AREA RECREATION PLAN (SHARP) PHASE II

MAP OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES (MAP 2 OF 2)



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