

Sherwins Working Group

Meeting #1 (May 9, 2009)

DRAFT Meeting Summary



10:00 - 10:10 Welcome from Sherwins Working Group Conveners

The conveners expressed both their thanks for such a large turnout and their excitement for this process to begin. The following roles were explained:

- **Inyo National Forest “USFS” (Deputy District Ranger Mike Schlafmann):** Provide sideboards and technical support; take final proposed alternative through NEPA.
- **Town of Mammoth Lakes “TOML” (Tourism & Recreation Department Director Danna Stroud):** Provide technical support.
- **Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access “MLTPA” (CEO/Board President John Wentworth):** Convene SWG; provide administrative support (venue, minutes, agendas, Web site, etc.); act as primary contact between partners and participants.

10:10 - 10:40 Agenda Overview and Introductions

As the facilitator for the effort, Austin McInerney walked the group through each part of the agenda. He explained that the Sherwins Working Group (SWG) will participate in an iterative process: At each meeting, the group will review the changes made to working documents at the previous meeting, then determine via consensus whether to adopt these changes. Please see the attached Excel sheet (“050509 meeting_why here.xls”) for a breakdown of the group’s introductions. Each attendee introduced him/herself and stated why they came to the meeting and what they hope the overall effort achieves.

10:40 - 11:00 Conveners’ Perspective & Desire (Mike Schlafmann)

Mr. Schlafmann encouraged the group to think beyond their roles as “just citizens” and to embrace the opportunity to be a part of good government and participatory planning. He noted that the group has already formed the nucleus of taking on problems in a different way, through a new process, and is shaping the course of the future. Mr. Schlafmann proceeded to explain the following:

- **What is needed/desired from process:** The ultimate goal of this process is to deliver an implementable proposal for the Sherwin Area Trails Special Study (SATSS) study area. This proposal must be representative of broad interests and diverse uses/activities, as well as comprehensive (considering trails, signage, facilities, etc.) and sustainable (both environmentally and with regard to long-term maintenance). It should advise what’s the right kind and level of use in each part of the study area; determine how to mitigate potentially negative interactions between people and wildlife; anticipate user conflict and propose solutions, whether through planning or education; and be mindful of connectivity within the study area as well as to the surrounding lands.

- **Description of challenge confronting management:** The USFS and TOML will be challenged to source technical expertise to meet the group's needs (i.e., specialists in wildlife, soils, biology, hydrology, etc., as well as reference documents) and by finding funding opportunities to implement the plan once adopted by the USFS. As this is an open process, the USFS will help to guide discussions outside the study area if that's what it takes to answer a question of connectivity, for example. The management will look to confine this planning process to a six-month timeframe, anticipating delivery of the proposal in October 2009 so that the USFS can take it through NEPA review during the winter with an eye toward implementation beginning in the summer of 2010. Mr. Schlafmann or Forest Supervisor Jim Upchurch will make the final determination on adoption of the plan.
- **Brief overview of effort to date:** The work accomplished by the TOML through SATSS has set the groundwork for this collaborative process. Historically, it's the right time for this effort to take place: the right pieces are in place, the right opportunities are there, the economy has lessened development pressure and the right direction/support from above is available.
- **Relationship of this discussion to future NEPA environmental review process:** The USFS expects to take the SWG's proposal through NEPA review over the winter of 2009/2010. This necessary evaluation is an internal deliberative process whereby the USFS reviews the plan and allows the public to provide review and comment on it.
- **"Sideboards" that must be considered during this discussion:** The USFS will provide technical information and support as described above. However, the group should strive to figure out the right thing to do for the area, and then, with USFS and TOML help, determine how to fit that in with existing rules, regulations, laws, and policies.

11:00 - 12:00 Process Detail - "How do we do this?"

Mr. McInerny asked the group to ask questions about this process so that participants are clear on how the group moves forward. The goal is to commit to the process by signing the Charter.

- **Review of Draft Charter/Ground Rules:** Mr. McInerny took the group through the draft Charter document, stressing the importance of participants sharing the outcomes and discussions of the SWG with their represented groups, then bringing that group's reactions back to the SWG; this will foster support and avoid last-minute absence of community buy-in.
- **Membership Roles and Responsibilities:** Mr. McInerny again stressed the role of each participant as a liaison to the community. He will continue to check in with group members via phone between meetings and is available to support members in the process and in their creativity. The group agreed to strike "...or make confidential conversations public" from the fifth bullet under "Member Roles and Responsibilities" and all of statement #3 under "Ground Rules" to avoid a murky and legally binding definition of "confidential." Mr. McInerny noted that the

intent of these statements was to prevent an individual from speaking to the media on behalf of the SWG without the group's consent, to which point the development of a summary press statement was suggested. Mr. McInerny suggested that the SWG purpose statement be added to the SWG Web page. Mr. Schlafmann noted that the USFS, MLTPA, and TOML have to sign this Charter as well. The group questioned if other community members can join the SWG if they are not present at this kickoff meeting; Mr. McInerny assured open participation, but cautioned against one interest or another being overly represented. He suggested that user groups discuss individual participation and decide who is best suited to represent them and work with the SWG. He noted also that group members should determine their level of comfort with being recognized as leaders of their user groups or representatives of specific interests, as the public may contact them regarding this process.

- **Decision-Making Process:** Mr. McInerny stressed that the final proposal submitted to the USFS should have the full support of the entire SWG. He encouraged group members to speak up in the meetings, noting that there will be constant check-ins during conversations to make sure the group is in agreement or to discuss possible discomfort. He reminded the group that not everyone will get 100 percent of what they want, and that concessions will need to be made by finding solutions that, while perhaps not ideal for everyone, are acceptable or tolerable to all. Regarding the Ground Rules, Mr. McInerny explained that the intent is for the group members to avoid positioning and to take responsibility for the outcomes and process as a whole. To the group's earlier point, striking Ground Rule #3 ("Items presented as confidential will not be disclosed in other forums or used in a way to disadvantage any member of the group") was recommended, to which the group consented with the caveat that a group member may request confidentiality at any time. Mr. McInerny clarified Ground Rule #9 ("Members shall act consistently in the Working Group and other forums where similar issues are being discussed, including with the press") by stating that the intent is for each member to educate his or her user group about how this process has arrived at certain decisions, to represent the process fairly, and ultimately to gain the support of said group for the proposal and process.
- **Proposed Work Plan:** Mr. McInerny took the group through the document, with the following comments: Step 2 means to start big with areas of opportunity on the ground, rather than specific trail needs in particular places; Step 3 is the determination of how to evaluate an opportunity zone's potential uses; Step 4 shares draft maps, ideas, etc., with the greater community to assess its level of support; and Step 5 may include a site visit. (Though not expressed by the group, the steps must be renumbered to fix the repetition of "Step 5.") It was suggested that a thorough and ongoing record be kept of the group's threads of discussion and the steps taken to come to a particular decision or to resolve a particular conflict so that this information may be shared with others. Mr. McInerny replied that the narrative accompanying the final proposal may include explanations for each user group of how the proposed alternative satisfies its needs, desires, etc. Staff from the partner organizations will develop and keep track of the key agreements/actions from each meeting. It also was recommended that, in order to keep the group's work moving forward, an "outside visitor" be required to

review specific materials to get up to speed before entering the discussion. Mr. McInerney assured the group that they would be provided with meeting prep/homework instructions for each meeting in advance, and urged that they utilize the SWG Web page as an ongoing resource.

12:00 - 12:30 Lunch Break/Informal Dialogue

The group adjourned for lunch; further discussions were naturally splintered into different groups and were not formally captured.

12:30 - 1:15 Review of Work Group Composition

Mr. McInerney passed around the sign-in sheet and asked that group members indicate if they do not want their contact information shared with the group. The group proceeded to discuss whether or not the current SWG composition provides the necessary range of interests to adequately address the task.

- Mr. McInerney stated that his pre-meeting phone calls indicated a desire for more motorized use and off-leash dog walking in the summertime. The group suggested contacting the following additional parties/interests:
- Fairway Ranch and The Ranch at Snowcreek homeowners associations
- Cross-country ski clubs, such as the Eastern Sierra Nordic Ski Association
- Sierra Meadows Ranch
- Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
- Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce
- Mono Historical Society/Hayden Cabin
- Owners of the Sledz facility (Shelley Cannon, specifically) to discuss snowplay opportunities

1:15 - 2:15 Review of Sherwin Area Trails Special Study Report

TOML Principal Planner Steve Speidel walked the group through each page of the SATSS report. SATSS maps were projected on a large screen for group viewing, and Mr. Wentworth logged potential amendments on Post-It notes attached to large printed version of the maps displayed on easels. Mr. Speidel noted that some informal preliminary comments on SATSS had been made by some user groups, business owners, TOML staff, and others, but that the SATSS report is considered finished and complete; changes suggested by the SWG will be incorporated into new working maps for the next meeting.

- **Existing Conditions Memo:** Mr. Speidel explained that the usage-information pie chart had been developed from info gathered through the summer trail-use online survey that was part of CAMP: SUMMER, clarifying that the chart is not trying to quantify all uses in all areas, but represents a basic impression. Mr. McInerney asked the group to identify any activities not represented in the tables and pie charts, stating that the partners would allow a two-week window in which participants could e-mail additional suggestions to MLTPA regarding these maps for discussion at the next meeting. Ms. Stravers announced that she would send the activities list developed by MLTPA to the group and post it to the SWG Web page. Mr. Schlafmann stated that the system/non-system trail distinction doesn't matter for this discussion and process, and that the group should proceed in its development of the proposal without worrying about use trails versus system trails. The group discussed the following topics, indicating things they felt may be

missing or incorrect in the summer and winter maps. (Please also see the attached compilation of additional SWG participant comments received via e-mail and the attached compilation of map notes taken by Mr. Wentworth.)

- **Summer Map/Memo suggestions and notes:**
 - Add the flume near Mill City that comes out near the outlet from Twin Lakes, as well as the complete Bodle Ditch alignment (currently represented only in the meadow). Mammoth Community Water District (MCWD) should be able to provide this data.
 - Add motorcycles using trails to Hidden Lake and BMX dirt jumps built in the forest on the west end of Hidden Lake.
 - On the eastern end of the study area, there are some routes that go past the boundary to reach destinations that are technically outside the study area.
 - Add automobile access to the trailhead, as MCWD has to drive out there occasionally to service Well 10. Also consider regular legal vehicle use, such as access to the Indian Caves, weddings via special-use permit in Kerry Meadow, etc.
 - Add wagon rides/hayrides as an historic use, as well as sleigh rides in winter.
 - Add a missing set of trails near the study area's northeast boundary, used mostly by equestrians and part of the Sierra Meadows Ranch traditional "hour loop."
 - Include the locations of MCWD Wells 10, 11, and 14.
 - Add historic mining claims and grazing allotments.
 - The group questioned the missing depiction of Snowcreek VIII; Mr. Speidel replied that details were excluded at the request of the landowner, and that the project master plan and its adoption process, due to be presented to the Planning Commission soon, will address access/egress issues.

- **Winter Map/Memo suggestions and notes:**
 - Identify the avalanche zones under the Sherwins: Mammoth Rock, below the Bluffs, etc. Mr. Schlafmann stated that there is an existing TOML study on this, which is available on the SWG Web page, but that he can make a GIS terrain model for planning to show avalanche potential. Mr. McInerney reiterated that safety would be one of the criteria by which the group assesses opportunities.
 - The group questioned how recent vehicle ticketing issues on Sherwin Creek Road would be addressed or represented, to which Ms. Stroud replied that potential plowing farther up the road is being discussed for next winter.
 - Add the Turner Propane tank farm plans, as the farm will require Sherwin Creek Road to be four-season and plowed in the winter all the way back to the tank location. It was noted that Turner Propane will be required to have a water line out there as well, and if it's a potable water system there could be a formal trailhead with drinking water, etc.
 - It was noted that some access points depicted on the winter map can't actually be used in the winter; Mr. Speidel explained that some points

came through from the summer map and that more detail can be provided on the next map iteration regarding seasonal closures, permanent closures, temporary closures, etc.

- **Opportunities & Constraints Analysis Memo:** The group discussed the following topics. (Please also see the attached compilation of additional SWG participant comments received via e-mail and the attached compilation of map notes taken by Mr. Wentworth.)
 - **Summer Map/Memo suggestions and notes:**
 - Add a BMX park as an opportunity. It was cautioned that the borrow pit is not an ideal location, as there must be a source of water nearby to deal with our soils.
 - Add the opportunity for signage and wayfinding.
 - Add environmental considerations such as mule deer habitat/bedding/feeding as a constraint.
 - It was noted that the upper part of the meadow above Hidden Lake, toward the Bluffs, is currently flooded; the spring runoff period, typically occurring from April through June, should be added as a constraint. Mr. Schlafmann stated that the USFS would go through its data to locate existing or historic wetlands.
 - Add the Wildfire Management Plan as a constraint. Mr. Schlafmann cautioned that this plan is just getting underway.
 - Add the Mammoth Meadows Restoration Project as a constraint. Mr. Schlafmann said that he would provide a briefing on that issue.
 - Add the Valentine Reserve boundary as a constraint.
 - Mr. Schlafmann noted that Sherwin Creek Road had been under a Mono County road use permit that has now expired; it is now a USFS road and therefore Constraint #10 (“Sherwin Creek Road is a Mono County road”) is no longer valid.
 - Add the Sierra Meadows Ranch lease agreement as both a constraint and an opportunity, and add this permit to the Web-based document library.
 - It was noted that Opportunity #28 (“Dedicated public access easement through Tamarack Street”) could also be a constraint.
 - It was noted that there is no parking area identified for possible future bus-only access to the Lakes Basin. Mr. Schlafmann responded that the USFS will look into that.

The group agreed to Mr. McInerney’s suggested deadline of May 20 for participants to e-mail additional comments regarding the SATSS Existing Conditions and Opportunities & Constraints maps and memos to MLTPA for compilation. Mr. Wentworth offered MLTPA-led study sessions if participants so desire.

- **Winter Map/Memo suggestions and notes:**
 - It was noted that Opportunity #7 (“Connect Mammoth Meadows through Tamarack Street for skier/snowboarder/snowshoer

access/egress”) might need to be moved to a constraint at this time because it is an avalanche danger area.

- It was noted that the proposed cross-country ski system on the Snowcreek VIII project is likely to be fee-based, which would be a constraint if it is to be connected to a free public system.
 - It was noted that there is a safety issue with having the staging area for OSV and the snowplay area so close together.
- **Alternatives Memo:** Mr. Speidel represented that the intent of this memo and map set was to provide a starting point to move discussion forward, from Alternative A (less improved) to Alternative C (most improved), and that these are not “the choices.” Mr. McInerney stated that the group’s homework is to review the SATSS report thoroughly and come prepared at the next meeting to discuss potential opportunity zones and intensity of recreation development in the area. He asked that participants consider both motorized and non-motorized uses, as well as seasonality. It was requested that the “Tamarack Street Access/Egress” easement identified on page nine of the Alternatives memo, under “Alternative B,” be modified to include use by the TOML and the USFS in addition to MCWD.

2:15 - 2:30 Stretch Break

2:30 – 3:30 Identify Issues and Concerns

Participants were asked to review the following questions and provide input. Responses are captured in the summary presented above.

- Product is a narrative addendum to SATSS identifying unique values and special opportunities in management of the Sherwins area and problems requiring special attention
- What issues and managerial concerns relate to distinctive features and characteristics of the Sherwins area?
- What, if anything, needs to be added or revised in either the Existing Conditions and/or Opportunities & Constraints memos?

3:30 - 4:00 Meeting Wrap-Up

Review of what has been decided: The group agreed on the schedule through October 2009 as well as the May 20 deadline for notes on SATSS. The partners will send the group the agenda and additional materials for the June 16 meeting well in advance. Mr. Wentworth clarified that MLTPA is the contact point between participants and the partners.

Next steps/meeting schedule: The group agreed to set the following meeting schedule, with MLTPA to secure a venue for each date:

- Tuesday, June 16, 6–9 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 14, 4–7 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 11, 4–7 p.m.
- Thursday, September 3, 4–7 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 22, 4–7 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 13, 4–7 p.m.

**Sherwins Working Group (SWG) 2009:
Participant Sign-In Sheet: Meeting #1, 05/09/09**

First Name	Last Name	Club/Organization	Reasons for participating/desired outcomes
Jim	Barnes		Concerned community member who loves to play outside; sees the Sherwins area as "a big recreational ball of clay"; wants to preserve access and develop opportunities; first time participating in this kind of process
Lesley	Bruns		Mammoth local for 10 years; lives adjacent to the study area and enjoys biking, birdwatching, and XC skiing, among other activities; wants to contribute to the appreciation and protection of the area
Malcolm	Clark	Sierra Club, Range of Light Chapter (President)	Enjoys hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing; 5-year resident; sees the area as a tremendous resource for Mammoth, both for visitors and for residents; hopes to learn more about the area through this process, as he hasn't used it much and doesn't live adjacent to the study area; hopes this process can be applied to problems other than trails

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Stacy	Corless	Friends of the Inyo	Here officially representing Friends of the Inyo, but also is participating as a private resident; excited to participate in another successful collaborative process, having worked on the Collaborative Action Team during the recent Travel Management Plan Route Designation Process
Stacey	Crockett	High Sierra Equestrian Club	Here to represent 40 years of equestrian use of the study area, which was left out of initial SATSS draft
Mark	Davis		Longtime resident and mountain biker; sees this area as the town's unofficial multi-use trail system; has fear of what happens if we are not proactive—doesn't want to see this resource lost
Thom	Heller	Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District	Fire Marshal for TOML; involved in final draft of the Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan (from the late '80s), when the Sherwins area was first being considered for planning; everyone has seen what happens with areas such as Shady Rest when there isn't enough management
Andrew	Kastor	HSS president and Mammoth Track Club	Enjoys trail running and training; seeks to preserve running trails

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Alana	Levin	High Sierra Triathlon Club	Concerned/interested citizen
Hans	Ludwig		Lives on Ski Trail Lane, adjacent to study area; uses the Sherwins a lot, for skiing, hiking, snowmobiling, dog walking, running, etc.; sees how much use the area gets and is encouraged to see an opportunity to plan
Ron	Malm	Mammoth Powersports	Missed out on the Travel Management Plan process, so excited about this; customers have asked him to be the "eyes and ears" for those folks who don't live in town but have an interest in trails and public access issues in Mammoth; he skis, bikes, etc., in addition to his motorized activities
Chuck	Megivern		Skis and bikes in the study area; works for MLTPA and was heavily involved in the GIS field collection for SATSS; interested in overall outcome and environmental sustainability
Marshall	Minobe	Mobility Commission	Likes to hike and ski Sherwins especially; community needs more collaborative process

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Mike	McKenna		Eastern Sierra Hatchery Foundation Board member; should embrace private people trying to help public sector; excited to see what kind of progress we can make
Dave	Neal	fishing guide	Fisherman, but also skier, hiker; impressed with diversity of this turnout; glad to be part of this process and ultimately is representing young daughter and her future here with the Sherwins
Greg	Norby	Mammoth Community Water District	GM at MCWD, which has peripheral interest in area, but not here in official capacity; here as a private citizen; has not participated in a process like this yet and is looking forward to it
Terry	Plum	Private landowner	Hopes to provide public pedestrian access trail from his lot on Tamarack St. to USFS lands, as well as access for agencies, in exchange for letter of support from USFS, MLTPA, TOML, etc., for development of homes on west side of Snowcreek golf course; also has property on Taylor St.; has also proposed to put in six paved parking spaces and signage on north side and give town 1/2-acre for snow storage

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Patty	Schwartzkopf	Realtor	Not here for realtor purposes; backs slow and careful growth; has lived on Tamarack Street for years and has been using the meadow for 28 years; can count on residents of that street to provide feedback on Tamarack Street project
Bill	Taylor	MLTPA: Treasurer	Former USFS and TOML; town has opportunity to create top-notch trail system region-wide and this is a first step
Douglas	Will	High Sierra Equestrian Club (President)	ESNSA, Tri Club, and board member of HSS, but here for HSEC; protect historic use by equestrians
Stephanie	Wolff	Mammoth Pet Shop	Dog access; lives on Tamarack St. and uses meadow every day