

Sherwins Working Group
Sherwins Area Recreation Plan (2009)
PREAMBLE

The Sherwins Area Recreation Plan (SHARP) is the work product of a diverse coalition of volunteer citizens known as the Sherwins Working Group (SWG). Facilitated by the Center for Collaborative Policy, convened by the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA), and with technical support from the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) and the Inyo National Forest, the SWG met over a six-month period to develop and recommend summer and winter recreation development and management plans for the Sherwins and Mammoth Meadows areas.

The Sherwins is the landscape immediately to the south of the TOML's Urban Growth Boundary and is a uniquely diverse natural environment offering equally diverse recreation opportunities. Dog walkers, backcountry skiers and snowboarders, equestrians, mountain bikers, Nordic skiers, motorized recreationists, world-class athletes in training, hikers, climbers, individuals in pursuit of quiet and reflective natural experiences, and visiting families, among others, coexist with wildlife, wetlands, native forests, and Eastern Sierra granite.

Participants in the SWG represented varied recreation interests, generations, activities, and perspectives, including private property and commercial interests, and all shared a common acknowledgement of the increasing and future usage of the Sherwins area and an abiding concern for the landscape's health and well-being. The SWG was completely open to the public, and SWG members ensured an open invitation to participate in any of its many meetings was extended to any interested individuals and/or groups. It was the overriding intent of the SWG to speak for and represent all interests whether those interests were present in spirit or in person.

The values of the SWG were informed by local knowledge and experience and were built around a common respect for the natural environment and the following goals:

- Achieve appropriate land use and avoidance of potential user conflicts.
- Use what is already present and improve it or make it more defined.
- Have a low overall impact on the region while providing for a coherent and satisfying trail and use network that includes appropriate signage and wayfinding.
- Ensure that trails and facilities are stealth and undercover—never clear-cut, bold, or pretentious in their visual impact.
- Apply preference for discrete trails and facilities that blend with the landscape and each other.
- Identify increased opportunities for connectivity.
- Identify opportunities to enhance public safety.
- Further wildlife and resource protection, sustainability, and stewardship.
- Achieve sustainable, practical solutions that make sense.
- Maintain opportunities for wildlife observation and interaction.

The decision-making process of the SWG was built on the following:

- Respect for one another and the activities and interests each participant represents
- One person speaking at a time and people listening to understand
- A very strong effort to understand everyone else at the table
- A consensus decision-making process used at every step of the way. When the group is comfortable with a direction, its participants mutually agree to move forward.
- An uncommon degree of productivity
- All members of the group may not always completely agree, but everyone stands behind a decision once it is made
- A commitment to getting the proposal done and hanging in there until it is complete and ready for hand-off
- Focus on concepts and philosophies of land use and avoidance of the trap of jumping into operational levels of detail
- Recognition of the role and importance of professional designers and planners in deciding on the final levels of detail and design
- Embracing of activities from low-key to extreme, local to international, and novice to elite

The SWG did not come to 100 percent agreement on all recreational uses and management solutions, but there was long discussion, general goodwill, and consensus in arriving at compromise recommendations. Participants in the process believe that the SWG process should serve as a model for collaborative and cooperative efforts on behalf of public lands in the region, wide varieties of recreation interests, and the Eastern Sierra's residents and visitors.

The Sherwins Area Recreation Plan that follows represents the general and sometimes specific recommendations from the SWG to the Inyo National Forest for the recreational uses and natural habitat/resources protection of Mammoth Meadows and the Sherwins Range.