

LAKES BASIN

Special Study

LABSS

LABSS Supplemental Materials

Project Summary



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EXCERPT from the LABSS Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2008 Grant Application

PROJECT SUMMARY: Mammoth Lakes Basin Interagency Collaborative Planning

The Town of Mammoth Lakes is a California general law city on the Eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, a community whose primary sources of economic activity are recreation and tourism. Mammoth Lakes enjoys unique opportunities as the Town is entirely surrounded by the Inyo National Forest - federal lands administered by the United States Forest Service – and is home to the world renowned winter recreation facility of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area and the unparalleled physical beauty of the Eastern Sierra. Mammoth Lakes successfully markets its recreation opportunities in Southern California and around the world, attracting over 3 million visitors annually. The impacts of this visitation are keenly felt in the Mammoth Lakes Basin, a system of tiered high country lakes, streams and year round recreation opportunities contained within the southwest quadrant of the Town's boundary and framed by the compelling drama of the 11,000 ft Mammoth Crest. While serving as a key recreation destination - as well as the town's namesake - the Mammoth Lakes Basin is a critical water source for the Town and the Owens River and the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The Mammoth Lakes Basin represents a unique opportunity for the planning of interpretive systems, resource protection, and recreation activity in the context of a dramatic, high country watershed.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes is defined within the Inyo National Forest by a set of three distinct boundaries: an urban growth boundary (UGB) which limits the physical footprint of the town to a 4.5 sq mile area, a municipal boundary (TOWN BOUNDARY) which is the legal descriptor of the Town's influence for purposes of tax collection, law enforcement, building codes, etc, and a planning area identified in the town's General Plan. While these three boundaries are distinct and operative, they are not consistent with the jurisdictional limits of the two agencies. This is particularly true in the Mammoth Lakes Basin, which resides within the Town Boundary of the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The vast majority of this same territory is public land administered by the United States Forest Service. The two agencies face significant challenges as they seek to collaborate on behalf of water quality, watershed protection, interpretive potential and recreation opportunities in the Mammoth Lakes Basin, territory over which both agencies have degrees of autonomous jurisdictional authority.

This proposal - The Mammoth Lakes Basin Interagency Collaborative Planning effort - seeks to build necessary interagency collaborative capacity for the long term benefit of the Mammoth Lakes Basin by engaging agencies in a collaborative planning effort with specified near term goals and deliverables. The Town of Mammoth Lakes and the United States Forest Service have partnered with Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA), a local non-profit organization, to engage in a three track planning project that will include: 1) an analysis of circulation and transportation in the Mammoth Lakes Basin; 2) the planning of a heritage, wildlife and water use interpretive program along the \$4 million Lake Mary Bike Path currently under construction and day use and camp sites within the Mammoth Lakes Basin; and 3) data collection and analysis of current recreation activity in the Mammoth Lakes Basin to serve as the basis for long term recreation planning. These deliverables will be produced while simultaneously building interagency collaborative capacity, the ultimate deliverable of this proposal, with desired benefits for the water quality and watershed of the Mammoth Lakes Basin, the local economy of Mammoth Lakes, and the ultimate long term benefit of the environment of the Sierra Nevada and the varied and collected interests of the general public.