



April 7, 2017

Garrett Villanueva
Regional Trail Program Manager

Sent via email: gvillanueva@fs.fed.us

Dear Mr. Villanueva,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on priority trails work for the Southwest Region. Friends of the Inyo has 30 years of experience working directly on the ground to steward public lands in the Eastern Sierra and has built a strong constituency of people caring for their public lands through volunteerism. Each year we grow our volunteer program and work with the Inyo National Forest to make the forest a better place to recreate while at the same time improving forest health. The Inyo National Forest is a recreational forest, which receives the highest visitor use of any National Forest in the country. This use grows every year in the backcountry and wilderness areas where many trails are in need of care and attention. Friends of the Inyo strongly supports increased funding for trail maintenance on the wilderness trail system of the Inyo National Forest.

Since 2005, Friends of the Inyo has been a National Forest Foundation (NFF) grant recipient beginning with the Wilderness Stewardship Challenge (WSC) and was the first recipient in California to participate in the Matching Awards Program (MAP). Between 2006-2007 Friends of the Inyo ran the Eastern Sierra Wilderness Stewardship Corps, working on USFS trails within wilderness. Between 2008-2015 we completed trail maintenance as part of the WSC program. In 2010, in partnership with Mammoth Mountain Resorts, we began the Mammoth Summer of Stewardship program maintaining trails in the Mammoth Lakes area. The Summer of Stewardship volunteer days continue to this day in partnership with Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. NFF funding through MAP continues to support Friends of the Inyo trails work each summer in other areas of the Inyo National Forest that receive high recreational use.

Mono County has funded Friends of the Inyo to do professional trails work and led volunteer stewardship days within the County for the last eight years. The volunteer component of trail maintenance is a major player in keeping up with maintenance needs on the Inyo National Forest and trail volunteer programs are poised for continued growth. Although individuals, the outdoor industry and non-profit organizations have built revenue to continue trail work on the Inyo National Forest, we believe the Region should continue to contribute funding through recreation dollars for trail maintenance and construction.

Based on our knowledge of trails and feedback from our members who recreate and/or work on trails within the Inyo National Forest, we make the following recommendations on priority trails for maintenance:

- The Pacific Crest Trail/John Muir Trail and feeder trails to it
- Gable Lakes Trail
- Meysan Lake Trail
- Baxter Pass Trail
- Lower Cottonwood Creek trail
- Trails in the Golden Trout Wilderness
- French Canyon (west of Pine Creek pass)
- Haiwee Pass Trail (washed out in 2009, requires roughly 2 miles of new trail construction)
- Wildrose/Honeybee Trails

In conclusion, Friends of the Inyo fully supports the region's work to implement increased trail maintenance efforts through partnerships, and we remain a willing and able partner on collaborative efforts to improve forest health and recreational infrastructure.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jora Fogg
Preservation Manager
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