

File Code: 1950; 2300

Date: November 8, 2020

Dear Interested Public,

This letter is to inform interested parties as to the current status of the “Lakes Basin and Sherwins Area Trail Enhancement Project” originally described in a scoping letter dated June 10, 2020. The proposed action included the construction of “approximately 15 miles of new natural surfaced, multi-use, non-motorized trails” connecting popular destination features within the Sherwins/Sherwin Creek Road, and Mammoth Lakes Basin area(s). The proposed trail segments occur within the Town of Mammoth Lakes’ jurisdictional boundary and are under management of Inyo National Forest (Attachment A).

The June 10th scoping letter requested that those interested in or affected by the proposal make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the responsible official. During the scoping period, numerous public comments were received by the Mammoth Ranger District both in support and opposition of implementing the proposed action.

Based on issues raised by the public, state agencies, and preliminary input provided by Inyo National Forest resource specialists, I have decided to alter the proposed action – effectively reducing its scope to include only those elements located directly within the Mammoth Lakes Basin developed recreation area(s). The area known as “Solitude Canyon” and its connecting trails to Coldwater Trailhead(s) and Lake Mary Road have been removed from consideration as part of the proposed action. I am therefore now considering only the proposed “Lakes Basin Connector Trails” as identified in Appendix B.

Issues raised by the public, state agencies, and U.S. Forest Service staff as part of the NEPA scoping process include: concerns that this project has the potential to affect important migration corridors relied upon by the Round Valley mule deer herd; that Solitude Canyon provides a greater value as a natural and informal dispersed use area; and that limited resources would be better spent improving existing system and user created trails. While there is a demand from both residents and the visiting public for expanded recreational use in the Mammoth Lakes area, and while I agree that the development of new multi-use non-motorized trails would help to meet this demand, the multiple concerns brought up in Solitude Canyon indicate that it may not be the appropriate place for expanding this type of use. I therefore look forward to working with the public, partners, and agencies to identify other areas where we could work together to develop high quality experiences to meet the rapidly increasing demand for recreation in the Mammoth Lakes area and Mammoth and Mono Ranger Districts.

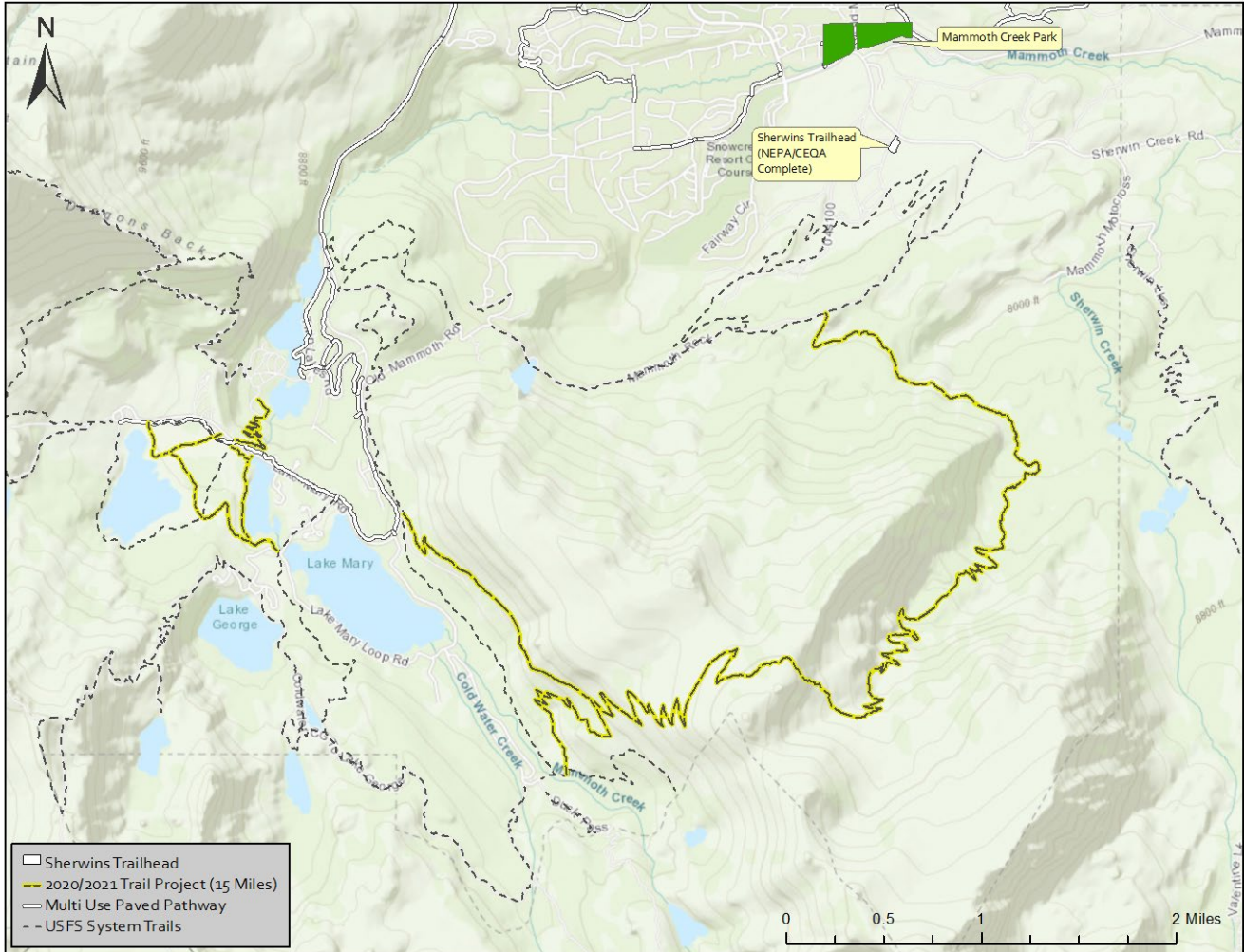
The proposed “Lakes Basin Connector Trails” portion of the proposed action is still being designed and developed based on input received during the scoping period and pursuant to the NEPA process. I expect that the revised project can be documented in a decision memo, since it fits well within the categorical exclusion for trail construction (36 CFR 220.6(e)(1)). Maps showing the remaining proposed action are included below. I recognize the importance of providing sustainable access to National Forest system-lands for the enjoyment of multiple user groups and look forward to implementing a project that benefits users of U.S. Forest Service system lands, the local community, and the natural environment. Thank you for your interest in the Inyo National Forest.

If you have questions regarding this project, you may contact Matthew Paruolo, Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Coordinator, phone number (760) 616-4054, or by email at; matthew.paruolo@usda.gov

Sincerely,

Gordon P. Martin
District Ranger

Attachment A: Existing and Proposed Trails as described in Scoping Letter dated June 10, 2020



Attachment B: Revised Proposed Action – “Lakes Basin Connector Trails”

