

## **Recreational Trails Concept in south Mono County sponsored by Community Service Area 1 (CSA 1)**

### **Goals:**

- 1) Support and advance new multi-use trails for all non-motorized users.
- 2) Build 50 miles of new multi-use trails within CSA 1 Boundaries.
- 3) Utilize existing public facilities (parks, campgrounds, parking areas) as access nodes and tie trails into these facilities.

### **Project Description:**

Community trail concepts for CSA 1 residents and area visitors. Concept is for a multi-use trail following the 7,600' contour from Sherwin Creek Campground to Tom's Place represented by the yellow line on the map (approximately 24 miles). Trail will follow this contour to Convict Lake, McGee Creek Campground, and over to Hilton Lakes Trailhead. From the Crowley Lake community to Aspen Springs, Crowley Lake Drive would be used until east of Aspen Springs before re-entering public land around Fobes 40 to Tom's Place. From Tom's Place there is an existing use trail to the Lower Rock Creek Trail. There are four maps attached from west to east.

The concept also includes a loop system on 1) Convict moraine, 2) a loop system on the McGee Creek and 3) Hilton Creek moraines (trails shown in different colors). Future links and route planning is needed to Whitmore Recreation Area, from Crowley Lake to Tom's Place, and access points to French Camp, Holiday, and Tuff Campgrounds.

**Fiscal Implications:** Any project(s) within Community Service Area 1 (CSA 1) boundaries will be funded by CSA 1. This includes but is not limited to, staff time, community outreach, environmental work, design, construction, and ongoing maintenance in CSA 1 boundaries. Grants and other local, state, and federal funding opportunities will also be an option.

**Environmental Compliance:** Any future construction project(s) are subject to both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Projects are subject to NEPA because most of the proposed project is on Federal Lands, and CEQA is required because local funds will be used for project development and implementation. It is preferable to conduct NEPA / CEQA as a joint effort and eliminate duplication.

**Discussion:** CSA 1 has been working on trail concepts for the past 5 years plus. In the CSA 1 community survey, multi-use trails have ranked 1st in priority for community residents. This will be a decades long effort, but there are a few existing trails not in the Forest Service system that might provide some easier NEPA/CEQA review and approvals.

Any multi-use trails under consideration will require community involvement and outreach, environmental review, before any FS approvals. Community outreach can be conducted jointly. Any new multi-use trails will be designed and built to FS or other acceptable standards.

There are numerous trailheads, campgrounds, restrooms, parks, and parking areas along this route and it is the intent of the project to utilize existing facilities for access and exit points. The trail incorporates campgrounds so that visitors and families can access the trail without additional driving. While the main trail follows the 7,600' contour, loop systems are also an option on the Convict, McGee Creek, and Hilton Creek moraines. There are possible loop trails from the Crowley Lake Ballfield. Any trail concepts around Tom's Place should incorporate connections to French Camp, Holiday, and Tuff Campgrounds.

**Key access & exit points along the route w/elevations:**

Sherwin Creek Campground - 7,600'  
Convict Lake - 7,600'  
Whitmore Recreation area (future) - 7,020'  
McGee Creek Campground - 7,600'  
Hilton Creek Trailhead - 7,220'  
BLM Crowley Lake Campground - 6,990'  
Crowley Lake Ballfield - 6,900'  
Tom's Place Resort - 7,100'  
French Camp (future) - 7,200' to 7,500'  
Holiday Campground (future) - 7,200'  
Tuff Campground (future) - 6,940'  
Lower Rock Creek Trail section 1 - 6,880'

It would be CSA 1's desire to start any new project(s) close to Tom's Place as there is an existing use trail to Lower Rock Creek and or in the Crowley Lake area since that is adjacent to the community without much private development. It is CSA 1 residents who are requesting new multi-use trails so it makes sense to start there. To our knowledge, no group has proposed any new multi-use trails within the last 10 years or more on the White Mountain Ranger District.

**Existing Mono County Planning Document consistency (some examples):**

- 1) Proposed concept is consistent with Mono County General Plan Long Valley policies. **Policy 23.A.4. Coordinate closely with County Service Area 1 in programming capital improvements and facilitating community input.**

Action 23.A.4.a. Participate in the development of the County Service Area 1 10-year plan via the Long Valley RPAC (Regional Planning Advisory Committee).

Action 23.A.4.b. Periodically review and assist in updating and implementing the County Service Area 1 10-year plan.

**Policy 23.E.3. Maintain and increase recreational uses and activities in all seasons.**

Action 23.E.3.a. Support increased all-season recreational use of Long Valley.

Action 23.E.3.b. Consider feasibility and desirability of a regional trail network, including a multi-use trail from Long Valley to Mammoth Lakes and around Crowley Lake.

Action 23.E.3.c. Explore and identify potential missing links between existing trails within and outside each community to connect points of interest.

Action 23.E.3.e. Assist in planning for public recreational uses and amenities identified as priorities in the 2013 Long Valley Community Survey, including hiking trails, picnic areas, and cross country ski/snowshoe trails.

**Objective 23.F. Promote complementary and compatible uses of adjoining BLM, USFS, and LADWP lands.**

- 2) Proposed concept is consistent with Mono County Regional Transportation Plan Long Valley policies:

**GOAL 27. Provide and maintain a safe and efficient circulation system in Long Valley while retaining the rural qualities of the area.**

**Objective 27.A. Provide a coordinated trail system for use by bicyclists, pedestrians, or equestrians.**

**Policy 27.A.1. Pursue feasibility and local support for development of the following regional trail connections:**

- Long Valley to the Convict Lake Road to enable non-motorized travel off US 395;
- Around Crowley Lake on Benton Crossing Road;
- Long Valley to Mammoth Lakes, possibly with a spur to the future Hot Creek Visitor Center; and
- Tom's Place to Lower Rock Creek Road.

- 3) Proposed concept is consistent with the Mono County Trails and Bike Plan.

Issue, Opportunities, and Constraints identified in Trails Plan:

**LONG VALLEY**

1. Crowley Lake Drive provides access to several recreational areas in nearby Sierra Nevada canyons and is also a popular recreational route itself. Pedestrians and bicyclists use it for local rides or as a portion of longer tours. Pedestrian safety is a concern of local residents, particularly along Crowley Lake Drive and South Landing Road.
2. Benton Crossing Road is popular for pedestrian use as well as bicycling. Shoulders on the road have been improved for bicycling and running use.
3. Concepts have been discussed to develop a hiking, cycling, and equestrian trail around Crowley Lake if demand warranted such a trail. Various roads and trails, which could be linked to provide access, now exist most of the way around the lake. Since the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power owns much of the land around the lake, a trail system would require its cooperation.
4. Opportunities exist for other regional trails in the long valley area, including a trail connecting the Mammoth area with Long Valley via use of existing roads. Better signage and completion of a small portion of trail near Tobacco Flat would be necessary. Currently, an unofficial parking area exists at the northern end of Crowley Lake Drive and US 395. This area could be improved to provide better access for all trail users.

5. Additional trails between Long Valley and Tri-Valley provide access along Benton Crossing Road to the glass Mountains, Casa Diablo hills, volcanic tablelands, and the Owens Gorge.

- 4) Towns to Trails - this project/concept will complement the Towns to Trails planning effort by providing additional connections and loops.

From the website <https://www.townstotrails.org/about>

The Trails Plan will build upon existing trail and soft-surface infrastructure in the region and will take advantage of existing priorities for trail connectivity already developed by federal land managers along with stakeholder ideas generated through the “Recreation Stakeholders” track of the Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative (SRTI).















