

MAMMOTH LAKES TRAIL SYSTEM™

Trail Host Program Proposal for USFS

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INTRODUCTION

The Mammoth Lakes Trail System offers boundless recreation opportunities on more than 300 miles of trails. From granite crags to trout-stocked lakes, pine forests to alpine meadows, there's something for all seasons, interests and abilities, motorized and non-motorized alike. Managed jointly by the Town of Mammoth Lakes and the Inyo National Forest, the system includes connections to three wilderness areas, Devils Postpile National Monument, the Pacific Crest Trail and more. Many of these attractions are accessible right from the center of town!

1. MLTS Community Engagement Programs

The MLTS identified a need to create a community awareness and interest in the programs and offerings it has. The following live under the "MLTS Community Engagement Program".

1.1 Trail Host

The MLTS Trail Hosts are TOML staff helping trail users have fun and enjoy the MLTS. Please see below for further details of this program.

1.2 Adopt A Trail

The MLTS has a program for groups, organizations or individuals wishing to adopt a trail or a segment of a trail. They will perform light maintenance duties and litter pick up. Information on this program can be found at www.mammothlakesrecreation.org.

1.3 Trail Days

Dating back to 2009, the MLTS along with partners have spearheaded the efforts to maintain the soft surface trails of Mammoth Lakes and the nearby areas. Hosting several events annually, volunteers are treated to breakfast before receiving work assignments and a safety talk and rewarded with a delicious lunch for their efforts. Please contact the MLTS Trails Manager for more information on this program.

1.4 Interpretive Program

The best first resource for books, brochures, maps, permits and personalized information is the interagency [Welcome Center](#). In the field and on the trail, look for Mammoth Lakes Trail System signs with maps, photographs, and interpretive information specific to each location. Interpretive trails and sites include the Mammoth Consolidated Mine, the Sotcher Lake Nature Trail, Devils Postpile, Minaret Vista, and the Agnew Meadows Wildflower Trail. The interpretive center at the top of the Mammoth Mountain gondola features exhibits on geology, topography and weather.

1.5 Mammoth Trails Charter

Conceptualized in 2006 and adopted in 2008, Mammoth Trails is a confederation of user groups that "...effectively and inclusively create and enhance recreation for our community." If your club or organization is interested in signing the Mammoth Trails Charter, please contact TOML Trails Manager for details.

1.6 MLTS Website

Up to date information at Mammothtrails.org

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WHAT IS THE MLTS TRAIL HOST?

2.1 Philosophy

The philosophy/motto of the MLTS Trail Host is to “help users have fun”. Members actively seek to engage with other users to be a resource of information and assistance. The concept for the MLTS Trail Host grew out of the continued and rapid growth in use of the Mammoth Lakes Trail System (MLTS) by multiple user groups as seen in year-over-year data collection. A physical presence on the trails of representatives from the Eastern Sierra outdoor recreation community was determined as the best method to achieve the philosophy.

2.2 Goals and Objectives

As a physical presence on the trails, MLTS Trail Host members’ main goal is to help users have fun. Equally as important, members are tasked with providing standardized, accurate and current information to trail users, sharing their knowledge of local the geography, reporting maintenance issues to land managers, and offering basic first aid supplies.

STAFF

3.1 Qualities and Characteristics

MLTS Trail Host staff will be passionate about outdoor recreation in the Eastern Sierra and sharing knowledge to the public.

3.2 Expectations

Much of the MLTS is on USFS land, with parts operating on TOML and MMSA owned property. Staff are expected to be well versed on the policies of each land managing agency or entity. The MLTS operates several projects, including those belonging to the broad Community Engagement Program. Trail Host members will be familiar with all MLTS programs and current projects. Knowledge of past and future project efforts is a plus. The Trail Host needs to be well versed in current trail conditions and beta specific to the activity being engaged in. Program coordination will take place on a weekly basis. Awareness of local and regional events and activities is also expected to be known. Geographic knowledge, to include the local flora, fauna, history, culture, fire will be shared by Trail Host members to the public.

3.3 Requirements

Attendance and participation at all training events and activities must be met before a member may engage with the public. Training will consist of classroom sessions and practical scenarios. Trail Hosts are expected to have a personal cellular phone for use during shift and the ability to use GIS technology on MLTS iPad or personal smart phone.

3.4 Duties

Being part of the MLTS Trail Host is a great opportunity for staff to enjoy their favorite outdoor activities and the beautiful Eastern Sierra landscape while helping others do the same. There are certain duties that will be required of staff during a shift.

One of the best opportunities to interact with users is going to be by simply “hanging out” at a designated fixed station. These areas are popular trailheads and staging areas. We are hoping to catch users before they hit the trail and answer any questions or assist in clarifying any misinformation they may have. It is also a great opportunity to share local knowledge about the area or specific trails that can be accessed from where you are.

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Staff will carry pertinent maps and handouts to distribute to users. When stopping to engage with users, hosts will ask if they have a map or are interested in any of the materials they have to offer; it won't be assumed they are prepared!

Another great alternative to paper maps and handouts is to direct users to the MLTS website - www.mammothtrails.org for further information and to the QR codes that are on all of the soft-surface trail signs and many pieces of literature. The QR codes will directly link users to a page on mammothtrails.org with a map and information about where they are and what is nearby.

If a user does not know they are doing something wrong, we can't blame them. Trail Hosts will educate users on proper trail etiquette in a positive and non-threatening way.

A large part of this program is the data that will be collected by the Trail Host staff out on the ground each day. MLTS uses a GIS application called "Collector" to create robust databases and track many aspects of the system. Trail Hosts will use Collector on either your smartphone or an iPad Mini (provided by MLTS) to enter the appropriate data. Data will be collected on user interactions, maintenance issues, general trail conditions and assistance administered. The specifics of data collection will be covered in the mandatory training sessions each staff will attend. The procedures are also available for reference in the MLTS Trail Host Handbook.

Larger maintenance issues will be logged into Collector and reported to the Trails Manager, but Trail Host staff will "Stop and Fix" smaller issues that can be taken care of immediately. For example, if a small rock or branch is blocking the trail, staff should "Stop and Fix" the situation by moving the object off the trail. The same goes for litter pick up when appropriate. If feasible, Trail Hosts will pick up and remove litter and other nuisances as seen fit.

All Host staff will have successfully completed a Basic First Aid and CPR training course and be equipped with a first aid kit when out on the trail. When encountering a user who has a minor injury and needs first aid, the Trail Host will offer first aid supplies and offer to call for more definitive help. The user will administer their own first aid. Trail Hosts with current certification or license may provide care within their training as good Samaritans. If the injury is serious, the Trail Host will call for definitive care immediately and coordinate efforts of any agencies involved.

3.5 Code of Conduct

Interactions with users is not only encouraged, but mandatory. Staff will always be friendly and approachable. The overarching goal of this program is to help users have fun by providing a physical presence on the MLTS. If at a designated fixed station, the Trail Host will initiate contact and conversation with users. When travelling on trail, Trail Hosts will stop and engage with the user, always demonstrating proper trail use etiquette.

A cool-headed and diplomatic approach is necessary when interactions occur. Staff are "Gracious Host", not police officers or "Enforcers". When encountering prohibited activities, Trail Hosts will ensure their safety first then, if applicable, inform the user of their mistake and offer an alternative.

Staff will not engage in political discussions. Conversation will be redirected to a positive attribute of the MLTS or the activity engaged in.

When an unhappy or frustrated user is encountered, Trail Hosts will listen with empathy to their concerns and offer direction to sources of further information or alternatives.

Trail Host staff are not tour guides and will not offer guided tours to guests. Point to point guidance may be given if necessary. This assistance will be documented in the daily log by the Trail Host.

Staff are also prohibited from speaking with the media. Refer all media inquiries to Trails Manager.

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3.6 Uniforms

MLTS Trail Host staff will be required to wear a uniform while on shift. Staff will wear a vest that has the MLTS logo, “In partnership with Inyo National Forest”, the USFS shield and a name tag to identify themselves. Staff are responsible for maintaining the uniform in satisfactory condition and will be required to return the uniform when no longer a Trail Host.

Staff will wear the vest with personalized name tag over other appropriate outerwear for the particular activity being engaged in. Staff personal garments should be limited to subdued colors with minimal prints or other branding/logos.

A branded patch is available for members to attach to a pack, medical bag or other such appropriate item that is used while on shift.

MLTS Trail Host members are also required to wear all of the appropriate safety gear for intended activity (sunglasses, helmet, goggles, gloves, boots, etc.)