



Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System and Jobs Creation

All 7 Counties

\$217,305

APPLICANT INFORMATION			
Applicant Name	Erin Murphy	County	Mono
Organization	MLTPA		
Phone Number	1-760-934-3154	Email	SJFAdmin@mltpa.org
Affiliated Organization Name and Description:			
MLTPA—the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA Foundation)—is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization incorporated in 2007 as a public benefit corporation in the State of California. Its mission is to create sustainable trail and recreation systems that support prosperous economies and healthy communities in Mammoth Lakes, the Eastern Sierra, and beyond. MLTPA will serve as the lead applicant for the Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System and Jobs Creation project. The Alpine Trails Association (ATA) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization of enthusiasts working in cooperation with County, State, and /or Federal agencies to improve non-motorized access to public lands in Alpine County, California. Budget shortfalls and limited staffing within government agencies have created a need for volunteer organizations to work with County, State, and Federal agencies to ensure that trail systems remain open. Recreational tourism is the base of Alpine County's economy. making it important to maintain access to public lands, which make up 96% of Alpine County. The Amador Trails Association (ATS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to offering outdoor recreation opportunities for individuals in Amador County and its surroundings. Their goal is to ensure access to and upkeep of multi-use trail systems that benefit the local community. ATS envisions a healthier lifestyle for the residents of Amador County and aims to welcome neighboring communities to explore their natural beauty while boosting local commerce. The organization's mission focuses on providing and improving equitable public access to outdoor activities while nurturing an inclusive community within and around Amador County. The Orogenesis project is building the longest mountain bike trail from Baja to British Columbia, through Pericu and Sylix land. Their mission focuses on 1) creating and maintaining a continuous singletrack trail in western North America, 2) educating users, and 3) supporting the vibrancy of communities and landscapes along the route. Sponsored by the non-profit organization Bikepacking Roots, the project promotes bikepacking, fosters a diverse community, and advocates for conservation of public lands. While not identified individually, local and regional tribes have important roles to play in this project, and funding has been provided in the project budget for their engagement. Appropriate federal and sovereign representatives will conduct formal nation-to-nation consultations on an as-needed basis. Advice and guidance for tribal engagement will be sought through the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Governing Council's "Tribal Round Table" and the Sierra Business Council's tribal liaison capacity.			
Applicant & Organization experience in the Region:			
For close to two decades, MLTPA has pioneered sustainable recreation efforts in rural eastern California, partnering with a full spectrum of local, state, federal, and tribal entities to produce tangible and measurable outcomes. Our multi-partner efforts include development and funding of the Mammoth Lakes Trail System			

(2006-Present); CALREC Vision and "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" for California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, the USFS Region 5 Partnership of the Year 2022 (2020-Present); convening, facilitation, and capacity support for the "Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership" (2018-Present); project management for all four tracks of the "Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative," including "Regional Recreation Stakeholder Engagement," "Climate Adaptation and Resilience Assessment," "Connection to the Eastern Sierra Visitor Audience," and "Project Development and Prioritization," funded by Proposition 68 and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (2019-2022); regional trail development through the "Towns to Trails Plan" (2023-Present); the "Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative (BIRPI)" to address resource impacts and plan for sustainable recreation in the Buttermilk region (2022-2023); regional campground restoration efforts with the USFS Washington Office's "Innovative Finance for National Forests" program and the Inyo National Forest (2020-Present); convening, facilitation, and capacity support for "Recreate Responsibly California" in partnership with REI (2020-Present); and the "Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative," whose "Citizen Suggested Desired Conditions" informed a new management plan for the Inyo National Forest (2014-2016).

PROJECT INFORMATION	
Description of proposed project or program seeking funding:	
MLTPA seeks funding to complete an Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System through a Westside Towns to Trails Plan ("Westside Trails Plan"), which will connect with an Eastside Towns to Trails Plan being finalized by the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG). The Westside Trails Plan will identify opportunities to connect four westside counties in the California Jobs First Eastern Sierra Region to each other, their communities, and their public lands, and then through northern Alpine County to three eastside counties via the completed Eastside Towns to Trails Plan. Opportunities exist to extend the Westside Trails Plan into the Central San Joaquin Valley Jobs First Region, which includes Tulare, Fresno, and Madera counties, as well as Yosemite National Park. Employing the same methodology as the Eastside Towns to Trails Plan, the Westside Trails Plan will focus on existing infrastructure to provide connectivity, assessing conditions, existing resources, needs, and opportunities by collecting data on the current trail and system road infrastructure, developing potential alignments, and identifying environmental planning needs. An Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System will support and promote recreation, tourism, and economic development in the Eastern Sierra Region by creating connections between gateway communities and public land recreation opportunities.	
Stage of Project or Program's readiness:	Last Mile
Per the Sierra Jobs First Catalyst Fund criteria, the Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System project qualifies as a "Ready-To-Go" project. The steps to develop a Westside Trails Plan, which will provide connectivity and regional trail experiences, are modeled on the successful Eastside Towns to Trails Plan and include initiating, convening, and facilitating community planning collaboratives; identifying inventoried trails through cartographic and publicly available land management spatial data research; field scouting these trails for viability; and creating conceptual map renderings. Many of these trails are at risk of disappearing from the landscape without visibility to contemporary visitors; however, they offer proven lifelines to economic recovery for rural towns along the Sierra slopes. Even so, obtaining funding for trail project planning and preparation is challenging for recreation-dependent communities in rural California. The Westside Trails Plan will produce a workable alignment that will connect to the trails alignment between South Lake Tahoe and Lone Pine, as identified through the Eastside Towns to Trails Plan. The Westside Trails Plan and the Eastside Towns to Trails Plan will complete the Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System, providing enhanced trail connectivity, recreation experiences, and economic opportunities in the California Jobs First Eastern Sierra Region.	
Description of Planned Beneficiaries:	

Trails are a significant economic driver throughout the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Region. Beneficiaries of improved trail facilities include local residents, California state residents, and local businesses providing groceries, gas, equipment, and meals to visitors from around the world, as well as local governmental entities reliant on tax revenue generated through recreational tourism. In addition, well-maintained trails reduce negative environmental impacts from users creating trails into sensitive areas while also highlighting historic and environmental narratives in the region, as many of the trails lost to time and contemporary cartography were built by Indigenous nations or early Californians. This project will benefit the seven counties in the California Jobs First Sierra Region and potentially the Central San Joaquin Valley Jobs First Region, which includes the disadvantaged counties of Tulare, Fresno, and Madera, including Yosemite National Park.

Priority Sector(s): Sustainable Rec & Tourism,

Foundational Elements: Physical Infrastructure, Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Describe priority Sector and/or Core issue impacted by the project:

This project will benefit the “Sustainable Recreation and Tourism” sector and address the following core issues identified as foundational elements in the “Sierra Jobs First Collaborative 2024 Strategic Plan.”

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: With hundreds of miles of trails in the Sierra Region, this project is part of a 10-year USFS effort to maintain and improve trail connectivity, maximizing potential benefits for the visiting public and local communities that depend on tourism. Trails are managed by numerous land managers, including federal and state land management agencies, who consistently require skilled employees. Cerro Coso Community College is currently working with the USFS and others to expand its “Natural Resources and Sustainable Recreation Management” degree program, which can provide a workforce to support regional trail needs.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: Recreation facilities such as trails are a significant component of the regional economic infrastructure, supporting activity and quality of life. Restoration of trails is necessary, as they have become progressively compromised or lost altogether.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION: The recognition of the historical aspects of trails and their connectivity will further educate locals and visitors alike about the intricate history of the Sierra, intertwining indigenous nations, environmentalism, and the sustainable outdoor recreation industry.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Total Award: \$217,305

Budget: See attached

This project has match funding: TRUE

PROJECT ALIGNMENT

Description of proposed project alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to impact

Explanation of how the proposed project will advance the regional strategy and any externalities or risks for implementation.

The Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System and Jobs Creation project aims to tackle the OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES/RISKS outlined in Chapter 4 (“Sustainable Recreation & Tourism”) of the “Sierra Jobs First Collaborative 2024 Strategic Plan.”

OPPORTUNITIES include:

- “Collaborative Support”: Enhanced through strengthened partnerships among community-based trail organizations on both the east and west sides of the Sierra to develop a regional trail system.

- “Economic Impact”: Enhanced by boosting employment through a regional trail system and increasing tourism revenue.
- “Guided Projects”: Enhanced by integrating ecosystem stewardship and sustainable trail design for economic advantages.
- “Natural Beauty”: Enhanced through improved trail access to national parks, forests, and public lands, showcasing their scenic beauty.
- “Sustainability Push”: Enhanced through initiatives that expand access to outdoor activities and support economic growth.
- “Varied Visitors”: Enhanced through additional visitors to national and state parks, forests, ski resorts, and historic small towns through a cohesive regional trail network.

CHALLENGES/RISKS include:

- "Climate Risks": Mitigate extreme weather events that hinder visitation via climate-conscious trail design.
- "Infrastructure and Environmental Impacts": Mitigate environmental damage through well-maintained trails.
- “Land Management Capacity”: Mitigate budget and resource limitations faced by federal agencies and public land managers through innovative collaboration and infrastructure solutions.
- "Land Tenure": Mitigate public access constraints to recreational sites on public lands through creative trail initiatives.
- "Limited Accessibility": Mitigate access constraints to improve previously inaccessible trails and hiking options by enhancing access through adaptive solutions.
- “Stagnant Jobs”: Mitigate by providing year-round trail system employment opportunities for skilled labor within the tourism and recreation sectors.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to economic impact

Explain the economic impact potential for the Sierra Jobs First region (i.e. jobs created or retained, capital attraction, local investment, events, etc). This section may include detailed analysis and quantifiable data supporting the projected economic benefits and enhanced resilience in the region (see exhibits).

According to the last report financed by the USFS / USGS for California federal forest visitation (1995), the southern US forest units of the Inyo, Sequoia, Stanislaus, Sierra, and Eldorado accounted for 61% of total visitation for the entire state of California. Visitation to National Forests has increased steadily since World War II, with the sharpest spike in users occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic of the early 2020s. While this sudden increase in users and the economic boon that came with it was largely positive, it also stressed a relatively small number of popular trails, largely due to a lack of consumer knowledge or the publication of alternative trail and recreation options in California. Addressing the need for research, communication, and collaborative maintenance across communities on the western slope of the Sierra is integral in resolving this overuse and underserved issue. Nonprofit advocacy and stewardship groups in these regions report a stark need for capacity building, which can be supported by MLTPA and the “Eastern Sierra Regional Trail System and Jobs Creation” project as a regional coalition builder, data resource, and jobs creator. The general public has embraced outdoor recreation, especially hiking and mountain biking, leading to the outdoor recreation industry contributing \$22.7 billion to California’s economy in 2023 (per the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis), supporting 545,448 direct jobs. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, California ranks #1 of all states in share of GDP created by the outdoor recreation industry, with a large percentage of that occurring on National Forest-managed public lands. Local investments in cataloging trails and identifying connectivity will provide a platform for job creation and retention, more routine and predictable tourism, and investments in a variety of tourism-dependent businesses.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First related to climate goals

Identify the proposed project's impact on sustainability, specifically a carbon neutral, climate-resilient economy that addresses the needs of the region's communities and the innovation ecosystem.

MLTPA managed the “Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative” (SRTI) on behalf of the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership, funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Proposition 68. The SRTI included a climate adaptation and resilience assessment of 17,000 square miles of California’s public landscape, with a specific focus on its sustainable recreation economy. This assessment encompassed three counties in the Eastern Sierra region, two regions, and two units of the U.S. Forest Service, along with the regional field office of the Bureau of Land Management, six units of the National Park Service, and several regional tribes. The final document—“A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California’s Eastern Sierra”—includes the climate adaptation and resilience assessment, conducted following the recommended process outlined in the California Adaptation Planning Guide (APG), which serves as the state’s guidance for how local communities should conduct climate adaptation planning efforts, including vulnerability assessments. The state’s APG and the Fourth Climate Change Assessment—including the Sierra Nevada Regional Report, the Summary Report from Tribal and Indigenous Communities within California, and the Climate Justice Summary Report—provided extensive information on climate-related exposures and vulnerabilities, in addition to federal reports such as the National Climate Assessment. “A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California’s Eastern Sierra” identifies trails for bicycles, hiking, and horseback riding as critical infrastructure assets for the region’s recreation-based tourism economy, highlighting their vulnerability to multiple threats from climate change. Trails within the following jurisdictions were analyzed for their vulnerability to climate change: cities and counties, California State Parks, Death Valley National Park, Devils Postpile National Monument, El Dorado National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Inyo National Forest, Kings Canyon-Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to equity and long-term sustainability

Explain how this project advances prosperity by creating living wage, benefitted jobs or career pathways for disinvested communities or a path to building wealth through entrepreneurship or related activities.

A regional trail system in the Eastern Sierra will advance several equity and sustainability objectives outlined by the California Jobs First initiative. Chapter 4 of the Sierra Jobs First Regional Plan states that “The strategic opportunity for the Sierra region is to manage the land under its jurisdiction, particularly its natural resources, to achieve long-term environmental sustainability while exploiting the economic potential of natural beauty and resources for collective prosperity.” The equity goals of California Jobs First state that “All residents of the State deserve equal protection from environmental degradation and climate change impacts, as well as equitable access to natural resources and recreational opportunities in a clean, healthy environment...” and “Making infrastructure investments in underserved areas enhances access to vital services, addresses disparities, and supports inclusive economic development.” Considering these goals, a regional trail system will generate jobs for construction and maintenance personnel, and a developed trail system will need technology expertise to establish and maintain communication and marketing efforts. Additionally, by providing apprenticeships and training programs, pathways into these careers can be created, and management roles within the regional trail system can present opportunities for advancement. Local or regional trail systems also draw visitors and drive recreation-based tourism economies. A regional trail system can create opportunities for existing small businesses and lead to the emergence of new ventures, such as guided experiences and transportation services, all of which will benefit from the increased visitor traffic. Continuous trail maintenance can lead to stable, year-round employment when combined with the seasonal work already available in the region. Educational institutions like Cerro Coso Community College can also help develop interpretive services and recreational outfitter and guiding programs to engage visitors on the trail system and educate them about the region’s ecology and history, thus creating additional employment opportunities.

Project team <i>Provide information on roles, responsibilities, and prior experience. For partnerships, provide evidence of commitment or MOU explain your long-term strategy for collaboration with local organizations and community stakeholders. Clearly define their scope of work, detailing their respective activities.</i>
Upon completion, the Westside Towns to Trails Plan will connect with the Eastside's Towns to Trails plan, which is funded and being finalized with Sierra Nevada Conservancy support through a grant to the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments. This will finalize the planning phase needed for a regional Eastern Sierra Trail System that will enhance recreational trail opportunities and community connectivity for all seven counties in the Eastern Sierra region. MLTPA will oversee project management and coordination using the team model established for the Eastside's Towns to Trails planning effort and will hire a third-party data consultant to help identify existing trail and road infrastructure suitable for the Westside Towns to Trails Plan. When combined, these two Towns to Trails Plans will establish the Eastern Sierra Trail System and establish a backbone or arterial network of recreational trails and alternative transportation links between the east and west sides of the Sierra and to communities in the Eastern Sierra Region. They will also provide critical connections to local and community-oriented trail systems currently existing and being further developed by partner organizations on the west side. Collaboration with local and regional tribes, the Alpine Trails Association, the Amador Trails Association, and the Orogenesis project will bring significant expertise and local knowledge, including outreach and engagement opportunities with westside communities. Funding for these organizations and for local and regional tribes related to their expected contributions to the project has been included in the project's proposed budget proposal. MLTPA will facilitate the collaborative planning efforts amongst the trail organizations and pertinent land management authorities, including sustainable recreation and economic development initiatives of member counties and federal land-management partners overseeing much of the planned project area. This will incorporate existing trail connectivity priorities established by federal land managers. Additionally, MLTPA will coordinate with local agencies to ensure consideration of adopted plans (open space/recreation/trail plans/economic development/transportation, etc.) in the affected counties during the planning effort, as these may influence the selection of the final alignment and its alternatives. The project's final deliverables will include an alignment connecting westside communities to each other, to public lands, to community-based and regional trail systems, and ultimately to the Eastside's Towns to Trails plan to articulate and define an Eastern Sierra Trail System.
Declaration of ability to meet expenditure deadline of September 2026 Based on several years of experience developing and working on analogous projects, as well as experience working productively with a variety of regional land management agencies and trail-based recreation stakeholders, MLTPA declares that it will be able to meet the expenditure deadline of September 2026.
Evidence of partnership from a "Disinvested Community" – See attached Letters of support from community members – See attached
This project has Tribal leadership or partnership: FALSE
This project has a Tribal letter of support: FALSE