

# What is CAMP, anyway?

By Kim Stravers  
MLTPA Communications Manager

I've never lived in a place like this. I was born back East, and it's been a slow migration westward since age 15. I've done suburbs, beach towns and cities of millions... and in not one of those places have I ever had a clue about how people make their money. Since I moved here, though, and have gotten to know the people (and the businesses they're in), one thing's become crystal clear: In Mammoth Lakes, recreation is the engine that drives this economy.

Yeah, yeah, I know...putting fun stuff like skiing and hiking in the same category as cold, hard cash might seem, well, a little cold and hard, but it's the bottom line—literally and figuratively—and it's high time we as a community don't simply tolerate this maxim, but embrace it.

Here's the deal: Mammoth's entire raison d'être, as far as money is concerned, is providing access to, and amenities for, the spectacular outdoor recreation opportunities we have in our backyard, thanks to the Inyo National Forest. The domino effect is obvious: tourists (or locals) visit (or move to) Mammoth because of the killer things to do outside. Local sports shops profit by providing the gear these people need to do these things. Local hoteliers profit by providing accommodations so that these people can do these things for more than one day. Local

eateries and bars profit by providing food and well-deserved beverages to these people so they don't pass out after doing these things (or remember the rookie move they pulled while doing them). And so on. And so forth. Whether you're the employer or the employee of any business in town, recreation-based tourism is what keeps you fed and sheltered.

It follows, then, that in order to live comfortably in our slice of the Eastern Sierra, we need these people to come back—every season, every year. That's an easy concept to subscribe to, but how we ensure these repeat visits has little to do with our individual businesses. Put simply, we need to realize that even though we might serve the best damn steak in Mono County, that's not why visitors rush Mammoth like soccer hooligans at the World Cup. That doesn't mean we ought to fire our well-paid, Cordon Bleu-trained chef. It means that if we, as a mountain resort town almost completely dependent on visitors, are going to be truly successful and sustainable, we need to start investing not only in our own businesses, but also in the very reason why our guests make the trek here.

That's where "CAMP: Concept and Master Planning" comes in.

CAMP is the partnered effort by which the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will be pre-

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WINTER**

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Main Lodge, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area

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sented with a professional and objective update to some aging trails planning. Three sets of partners are involved: Funding Partners (Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, TOML and the Developers' Forum), Planning Partners (USFS, MMSA, the Town, and MLTPA), and Jurisdictional Partners (the United States Forest Service and the Town). These relationships are working in concert to provide the resources our trails planning consultant team—Alta Planning + Design (paved surfaces) and Trail Solutions (natural surfaces)—need to review, evaluate and re-imagine our system of trails and public access.

There's one critical resource that's missing—and that's you. It's MLTPA's task in this project to make sure that the consultants hear anything and everything you have to say about our trails and public access system. Many of you responded to our invitation by attending CAMP: SUMMER in November, providing thoughts and ideas about summer recreation in Mammoth. Now, to complete the loop, we're asking you to come out to Main Lodge and invest your time and energy helping our planners complete the winter piece of the big puzzle during CAMP: WINTER, February 7–12, 2008.

Here's how it all comes together: land within the Town's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)—basically, where all the concrete is—will be revamped via an actionable update to the Town's adopted trails plan from 1991. Land outside the UGB and within the Town Boundary, which is public land owned and managed by the USFS, will be considered conceptually, exploring opportunities for connectivity between the town and the surrounding public lands. The goal of this "outside" portion will be to generate something like a blueprint, which will set the stage for future planning efforts.

The final CAMP product will be a Draft Trails Master Plan, which will need to be adopted by Town Council before it can be implemented on the ground. The draft version will be offered first—we're aiming for late spring 2008—and you'll have the chance to review and provide public comment on it, much as you have for the General Plan Update and various EIRs. The consultants will consider your input carefully as they draw up the final Master Plan; it's our goal to produce a sound document that reflects exactly what Mammoth is all about.

Some of you may wonder why we need to do this at all. I mean, we've already got trails and staging areas and ways to get out there and play, not to mention paved pathways and natural footpaths in town that get us to work, shopping and school. Well, our current plan dates to 1999, and without an update that incorporates our multiple jurisdictions, the opportunity to build and experience a comprehensive, fully linked system of trails and public access isn't guaranteed. CAMP's goal is to ensure that no matter who owns or manages the lands that make up this community, not only will we be able to reach public lands from town, but those connections will be efficient, safe and enjoyable.

It really is a new day for Mammoth; the partnerships forged to create CAMP signify a renewed interest in this community to find strength in its numbers, and to discover each other's commonalities so that we can work together to really achieve a greater good. "Recognizing that recreation is our economic engine and the cornerstone of our quality of life in Mammoth, we're thrilled with the opportunity CAMP is providing us to engage our partners in planning for and improving our recreational infrastructure," says Danna Stroud, Director of the Tourism & Recreation Department. "I believe we are all beginning to see the value of collaboration, and CAMP is the perfect example of a public, private and nonprofit partnership identifying a necessary community need and then collectively pursuing the resources necessary to fulfill the need. We hope this type of effort becomes a model for future projects within Mammoth."

We couldn't agree more!

So what does a sparkly new trails and public access system get you, besides locals crying tears of joy? More tourism. What does more tourism get you? A better bottom line. That's the formula for a successful recreation economy, and by investing in CAMP—giving your time, your energy, your knowledge and your spirit of cooperation—you're helping to create the catalyst that will move us closer to a year-round sustainable economy. We—as in you, me and everyone else in town—are planning a trail system, people.

Play your part in the vision!

Call MLTPA at (760) 934-3154 or visit [www.mltpa.org](http://www.mltpa.org) to find out how you can participate in CAMP: WINTER.

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