

Mountain bikers eager to test Heavenly's trails

By Kathryn Reed

Mountain biking. That could be what Heavenly Mountain Resort is known for in the future.

Maps with colorful squiggly lines filled the U.S. Forest Service conference room Wednesday night as people came and went during an informal information meeting about the South Shore resort's plans to turn the mountain into more of a summer playground.

And while rope courses, hiking trails, ziplines and canopy tours are part of the overall design, it is the biking opportunities that are generating the most buzz.



U.S. Forest Service recreation specialist Jonathan Cook-Fisher, center, talks Dec. 18 to people about Heavenly's proposed mountain bike trails. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Jonathan Cook-Fisher, USFS recreation special uses program manager, said mountain biking is also bringing in the most

comments on the scoping document.

(The deadline to comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement is Dec. 20. The Forest Service expects to release a draft environmental impact statement in August 2014 and a final EIS the following January. For more info, go online.)

“We have a TAMBA trail map and there is a black hole where Heavenly is,” Ben Fish told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That would change with what is mapped out.

The plan is people could ride from lake level up the mountain or take the gondola to access trails. Then the trails will connect with other established routes like the Tahoe Rim Trail. Heavenly’s trail system will be a connection that has long been missing.

Mountain bikers already use the public bus system to get to the Stagecoach area of Heavenly and then make their way down to Stateline or South Lake Tahoe. Some of those riders lament the fact BlueGo only allows two bikes per bus.

A group of cycling enthusiasts on Dec. 18 pointed out how Van Sickle Bi-state Park is likely to get more use, especially from people descending the mountain. They spoke of the need to put in signage so people understand the bike park boundaries and know when the trail becomes mixed use.

The Panorama Bike Trail could be what Ridge Run is to skiers – a route that offers sweeping views of Lake Tahoe, where photographs are a must. The difference between this bike trail and the Flume Trail is that it should be reasonable to stop to take a picture or two.

Right now a proposed trail goes under the mid-station of the gondola, but there is no connector to the deck area. With weddings and sightseeing being a draw to the mid-station, the

thought is cyclists would negatively impact those users and could stir up a lot of dust. But some people want the Forest Service to rethink putting in a connector.

The actual bike park and concentration of trails are in Nevada and outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. This means they are outside Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's jurisdictions.

"The mountain bike park will be smaller than Northstar's park. But Northstar doesn't connect to the national forest. It doesn't have a ride-through capability," Cook-Fisher told *Lake Tahoe News*.

There will be a mountain bike skill park outside the Tamarack Lodge.

Cycling advocate Kevin Joell sees the improvements as an economic driver for the area as well as another place for locals to play.

"What's been missing is an inclusive trail network for beginners to advanced," Joell told *Lake Tahoe News*.