

Alpine County increasing network of trails

By Kathryn Reed

Building a trail from Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville to Grover Hot Springs seemed like a simple enough of an idea. Then the proponents hit the wall of bureaucracy.

“Basically we discovered that it was going to be a big ordeal or a lot of challenges to create the trail. There were some big expenses we were not prepared or able to cover,” Andy Lovell, president of the Alpine Trails Association, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, the Alpine Trails Association members have penetrated the bureaucratic wall and are on course to make their dream a reality. Memorandums of understandings are being worked on with landowners. It’s possible that trail will break ground in 2018, with completion in 2020.

The association formed in summer 2013 with the main desire of creating that one trail. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and California State Parks own the land where the trail would be built. Each has a process, criteria, rules, regulations and hoops to abide by or jump through. It’s not just taking a shovel to the ground, the trails group has learned.



Alpine County's trail
network is growing.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

The 47-member Alpine Trails Association has not been deterred. The group spent the better part of 2014 creating a 501(c)3 nonprofit, recruiting members, taking classes, reaching out to other established groups like the Tahoe Rim Trail Association and Carson Valley Trails Association, and building relationships with the land owners.

"We have become much more adept at what we are doing because of the lessons given by people in more knowledgeable associations," Lovell said. "It's good if all trails are made in the same way with the same expectations of the people who use them."

Now, trails the Alpine group hadn't thought about are getting built.

In talking with the BLM about trails, the group learned the federal agency had a shovel ready project – just no one to build it. This was the 1.1-mile interpretive loop around Curtz Lake in Markleeville. This trail was finished at the end of May. A couple signs still need to be installed.

The association wrote a proposal to the BLM earlier this year to expand the trail system in that area and into the Indian Creek Recreation Lands. BLM agreed to it and now the association is tasked with 11 miles of trail work. This is one reason why the Grover project has been pushed back a few years.

"The most important thing is to connect Turtle Rock to the interpretive trail. It is just over one mile," Lovell said. "It will tie in our entire trail system. Turtle Rock will become the hub. It will connect from there to all the Indian Creek Recreation Lands trails."

The Alpine group and BLM have agreements for the trail builders to work on an eight-mile loop that connects Indian Creek Reservoir, the East Fork of the Carson River, Curtz Lake and Summit Lake.

Lovell had high praise for BLM in regards to how easy the agency has been to work with as well as the ability to use their tools.

A \$10,000 grant that was awarded last week to the trails group by Alpine County will pay for a shed and tools. This in turn will mean the group can invite more people out on trail building days because there will be enough tools for volunteers.

This is the first grant the association has received. Members plan to keep writing more so the trail system in Alpine County continues to grow.

“We have other plans to expand that trail system on the Eastern Slope of the Sierra in Alpine County,” Lovell said. “We are hoping to connect with Woodfords and Markleeville.”

—

Notes:

- For more info about the Alpine Trails Association, email Andy Lovell at ata.andyl@gmail.com.
- The group also has a website.
- Workdays are in the spring and fall on Tuesday and Saturdays from 9am-2pm.