

Bike trail expansion in Angora, Fallen Leaf region

By Jessie Marchesseau

Summertime in Tahoe is starting to become synonymous with the Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association building and upgrading yet another recreational bike trail in the basin.

Last year it was the Kingsbury Stinger Trail, the year before that it was the Bijou Bike Park, and before that, perhaps their best known project to date, the Corral Trail. This year's project, however, could turn out to be their most notable undertaking yet: the Fallen Leaf Lake/Angora Ridge trails project.

"It's not just a single trail like TAMBA has taken on in the past," said Ben Fish, president of TAMBA, "this is really a trail system."



There will soon be more mountain bike opportunities at Fallen Leaf Lake. Photo/Chris McNamara

This summer, TAMBA, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, plans to construct about six rideable miles of trails in the Angora Ridge, Angora Lakes and Fallen Leaf Lake areas. This is roughly half of the planned and approved trails for the area. The rest will be on next year's agenda.

Fish said it just seemed logical to take on this project right now. With 2017 being the 10th anniversary of the Angora Fire, it felt like an appropriate time to restore and reinvigorate the scarred landscape. Plus, its proximity to residential neighborhoods, camping, lakes and other activities creates potential for a highly used recreational area.

Once completed, this new trail system will give users access to spectacular views at the top of Angora Ridge, a trail to hike or bike to Angora Lakes from Tahoe Mountain, the ability to bike around Fallen Leaf Lake, and eventually, a connection to the highest used bike trail in the basin, the paved trail along Highway 89 connecting Pope and Baldwin beaches.

Fish described the new trails as more of a low-elevation rolling trail system, and as such, they will be conducive to riders of a variety of skill levels.

“There are just those days where you’re like: ‘Do I really want to climb 4,000 feet today?’” he said.

These will be the trails for that kind of day. Mike Gabor, forest engineer for the USFS, said he can see this becoming a trail people ride to unwind after a long day at work, taking in the views of Lake Tahoe, Fallen Leaf Lake and the surrounding ridgelines.

The trails system will also provide access to areas which have previously been inaccessible by hiking or biking paths. There is a handful of what the USFS calls “social trails” in this area, trails formed simply by people walking on them. They often start as wildlife trails and then get used more and more, but they are not maintained or sustainably built, often causing erosion issues and impacting wildlife. Some of these trails run parallel to each other and don’t always make logical connections. This summer’s plan involves rebuilding and improving some of those trails, decommissioning others and building new, sustainably-planned ones.

“You couldn’t even describe to people how to hike around Fallen Leaf Lake, because it was such a spaghetti bowl of trails,” Jacob Quinn, USFS trails engineer, told Lake Tahoe News.

Quinn has worked closely with TAMBA on nearly all its recent projects, including the Fallen Leaf Lake/Angora Ridge trails.

He explained how the Forest Service develops trail ideas, creates the plans and takes them through the necessary environmental approvals, but often lacks funding and manpower to make them happen. This is where the partnership with TAMBA has really paid off. Through their fundraising efforts and volunteer workers, TAMBA has been instrumental in bringing the Forest Services' trail visions to life.

Last summer, TAMBA set a fundraising goal of \$55,000 to make this trail project happen. They kicked off fundraising efforts in July and have since exceeded their goal, raising more than \$60,000. The extra funds mean TAMBA might be able to hire a paid trail builder to work on the trail consistently all summer, and it also opens the door to working on trails which weren't slated for construction until next year, like a bikeable trail to Lily Lake.

Even though this year's goal has been met, more funds mean more trails, so there are still more fundraising events on the horizon, like the TAMBA spring party next month. Training workshops are in April and May for crew leaders, sawyers and more. Construction on the trails is scheduled to begin in June with TAMBA hosting volunteer weekends throughout the summer.

"I'd like to stress how great this project is because of all the partnerships created to make it happen," Fish told Lake Tahoe News. "It'd be just lines on paper waiting to be built if it wasn't for the willingness of the USFS to work with partners like TAMBA and the community stepping up to help build and fund the construction."

For more information on workshops or becoming a volunteer, go **online**. Here is a map of the project area.