

DRAFT

# DONNER SUMMIT

## PUBLIC USE, TRAILS AND RECREATION FACILITIES PLAN

AUGUST 2021



## SUMMIT SUMMIT III

Public Use, Trails and Recreation  
Facilities Plan

### Introducing The Summit's Plan

Chris Parker

- **Draft** – We want your feedback!
- Initiated in 2019
- Peek Visitation Challenges





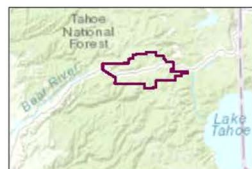
# SUMMIT SUMMIT III

Public Use, Trails and Recreation  
Facilities Plan

## The Plan Study Boundary



Donner Memorial State Park Road and Trail Management Plan, Environmental Draft, January 2021, California State Parks.



### Legend

- Study Boundary
- Land Ownership
  - Ski Area
  - California State Parks
  - Truckee Donner Land Trust
  - US Forest Service

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane  
California II FIPS 9402 Feet

Figure No.  
7.0

### Study Areas

Prepared  
Donner Summit Public Use, Trails  
and Recreation Facilities Plan



- West – Red Mountain
- East – Summit Canyon
- South – Point Mariah
- North – Hole in the Ground

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

### 1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The Plan development process entailed several steps to yield a recreation-specific needs and priorities assessment for the Summit.

#### Review Past Data and Seek Stakeholder Input

- **Step 1:** Define the study boundary, compile, and synthesize existing data and documentation, and seek stakeholder input to form the foundation of this recreation planning effort, as described in this Section 1.
- **Step 2:** Review existing local land use plans to facilitate consistency with recreation goals, as summarized in Section 2 of this document.

#### Inventory and Data Collection

- **Step 3:** Assess user groups to understand who, where, and when recreation is occurring on the Summit, as described in Section 3 of this document.
- **Step 4:** Perform a recreation facility and trail resource inventory as described in Section 4 of this document, to inform the assessment of whether recreation needs are adequately being met under current conditions.

#### Analyze Data and Summarize Results

- **Step 5:** Identify planned projects to determine the capacity to which such planned projects may meet existing needs, as described in Section 4 of this document.
- **Step 6:** Synthesize data to develop a recreation facility and trail needs assessment and inform future recreation development concepts for the Summit, as described in Section 6 of this report.

#### Recommendations

- **Step 7:** Prioritize the recreation facilities and trail projects in Section 7, based on Stakeholder input and existing conditions assessments (Steps 1-6).
- **Step 8:** Review and Define Design Guidelines based on federal, state, and local standards and specification.
- **Step 9:** Assess operation and maintenance needs for existing and potential future projects, as described in Section 9.
- **Step 10:** Develop a roadmap for project implementation and identify funding sources, as described in Section 10.



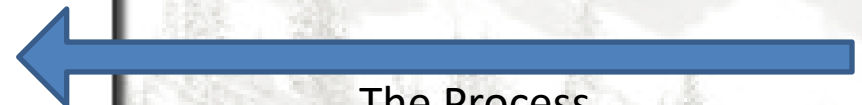
FIGURE 1.2. PLANNING PROCESS



## SUMMIT SUMMIT III

### Public Use, Trails and Recreation Facilities Plan

- **Goal 1: Develop a multi-use trail system that promotes tourism, manages recreation uses and protects the environment through signage and wayfinding.**
- **Goal 2: Provide supporting recreational facilities**
- **Goal 3: Develop a well-connected trail system that provides opportunities for a range of users and abilities**
- **Goal 4: Develop a sustainable and maintainable trail system**
- **Goal 5: Maximize funding strategy to promote recreation facility development**



The Process



### BACKCOUNTRY SKIING

Backcountry skiing is available on USFS-managed lands in many locations. The backcountry hut system, including Peter Grubb hut and the Benson hut, on Donner Summit provides ski or snowshoe access to lodging options. Parking, including overnight parking, for backcountry skiing can be limited due to accumulated snow. Backcountry routes from Donner Summit to Donner Lake are quite popular creating parking-associated neighborhood conflict challenges.

### SLEDDING

Sledding access and public demand on Donner Summit has become a significant issue. Designated sledding opportunities are lacking and the one designated Sno-Park off of Interstate 80 gets so overused that the facilities are not able to be maintained. The lack of designated snow play areas, limited parking, and private parking conflicts have caused traffic safety concerns along Interstate 80 and Donner Pass Road from impromptu visitors pulling over to sled. Sledding and snow play on and accessed via private property has also caused significant issues and conflicts on lands where public access is not allowed



FIGURE 3.5, SUGAR BOWL  
Source: [www.visitcalifornia.com/juk/attraction/sugar-bowl/](http://www.visitcalifornia.com/juk/attraction/sugar-bowl/)



FIGURE 3.6, ROADSIDE PARKING FOR SLEDDERS, Source: Skantec



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Public Use, Trails and Recreation  
Facilities Plan

### User Groups

- Summer
  - Hikers
  - Climbing
  - Equestrian
  - OHV
  - MTB
  - Road Biking
  - Camping
  - Picnicing
- Winter
  - Snowplay
  - Backcountry
  - Nordic
  - Snowmobiles
  - Resort Visitors

## 4 | INVENTORY

Donner Summit Recreation Plan Area Region	Key Trailheads	Accessible Existing Trails (Systemized and Non-systemized)	Key Trail Connectivity Needs
	Soda Springs Road Key Crossing (Not an Official Trailhead)	Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail Soda Springs Connection	Trailhead and connectivity along Donner Pass Road to Soda Springs and Serene Lakes Additional east-west connection over Donner Summit
I-80 South/Loch Leven Region	Loch Leven Trailhead	Loch Leven Trail Salmon Lake Trail	Eastward Summit connectivity to the Serene Lakes/Royal Gorge/Bogus Basin Region
	Long Lake Trailhead	Long Lake Trail Palisades Creek Trails	Wayfinding Restrooms
I-80 North and Pines to Mines Region	Fordyce Trailhead	Signal Peak/Red Mountain Trail	Lacks connectivity east and west
	Cisco Grove RV Campground/Trailhead	Signal Peak/Red Mountain Trail	

TABLE 4.1C: EXISTING TRAILS SUMMARY AND CONNECTIVITY NEEDS

\* Refer to Figures 7.1-7.10 for site location of proposed trails

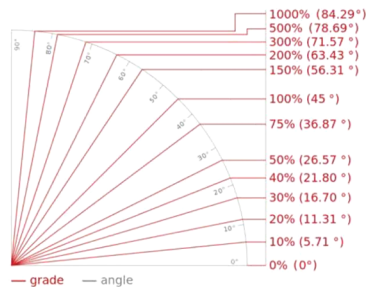


FIGURE 4.1, TRAIL GRADES,

Source: [trailsn.com/trail-grades/](https://trailsn.com/trail-grades/)

This and several figures to follow are not referenced in the text or explained anywhere.



# SUMMIT SUMMIT III

## Public Use, Trails and Recreation Facilities Plan

### Inventory

- Identify User-Generated Trails
  - Keep?
  - Eliminate?
  - Restore
  - Make Sustainable
- Match Trail Inventory to Need
  - Accessible Trails
  - Interpretive
  - Multi-Generation Use
  - Families
  - MTB
  - Runners
  - Hikers

## 5.0 PLANNED PROJECTS

The projects listed below are currently in various stages of planning processes and their implementation dates are not defined. These projects were considered as likely to be implemented, when assessing future recreation needs in this Plan (Section 6).

### LAMSON-CASHION DONNER SUMMIT HUB TRAILHEAD

The Donner Summit Association received a grant from Placer County to develop the Lamson-Cashion Donner Summit Hub trailhead. The trailhead will be located at the Pacific Crest Trail intersection of Donner Pass Road. This area is one of the most heavily used trailheads in the North Tahoe region and is greatly lacking information about trails and recreation facilities. Developing an official trailhead, which will include kiosks, paved road, delineation of parking, signage, and information for visitors aims to end confusion of the many user generated trails in the area.

### MEMORIAL OVERLAND EMIGRANT TRAIL

Placer County has built approximately three miles of the Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail and plans to extend the trail from DMSP over Schallenberger Ridge, Roller Pass at Sugar Bowl, along USFS Ridge, across Soda Springs Road, and through the Kidd Lake area to near Kingvale on Interstate 80 with plans of eventually connecting the trail to the western foothills.

### DONNER LAKE RIM TRAIL

The Truckee Donner Land Trust is designing and building the Donner Lake Rim Trail. The trail will circumnavigate Donner Lake and is currently in progress, with sections north of Donner Lake already



FIGURE 5.1, LAMSON-CASHION DONNER SUMMIT HUB TRAILHEAD RENDERING

Source: JK Architecture



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## Planned Projects

- List Projects-in-Progress
  - Lamson-Cashion Hub
  - Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail
  - Donner Lake Rim Trail
  - Pines-to-Mines
  - Hole-in-the Ground Reroute
  - Donner Pass Road FLAP
  - Van Norden Restoration
  - Tubing Parks
  - Indian Springs Campground





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## Public Use, Trails and Recreation Facilities Plan

DONNER SUMMIT ASSOCIATION

- Warning signs for natural hazards, such as wildlife, landslides, or flooding shall be consistent throughout a recreation area, and shall comply with any local requirements

### CAMPING

- Camping entrances shall be well designated with the current name of the recreation site and a site map
- Individual camping units shall be consistently marked with camping unit identification markers, and shall be retroreflective for enhanced nighttime visibility
- Camping host units shall be well designated

\*Refer to *Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service* for sign design and placement standards

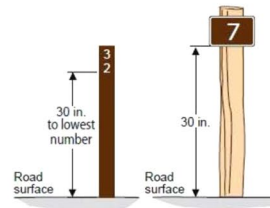


FIGURE 8.22, EXAMPLE USFS CAMPING UNIT MARKER

Source: [www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3810021.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3810021.pdf)

### ADVENTURE BADGES

- 'Adventure Badges' may be developed for existing and proposed recreation facilities
- These badges will be placed at key recreational destinations or cultural interest locations
- The intent is to establish a modern, cohesive wayfinding network throughout the Donner Summit region
- Refer to *Signage and Wayfinding Standards Exploration*, developed by DSA, for more information



FIGURE 8.23, ADVENTURE BADGES, Source: Donner Summit Graphic Standards

### INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

- Interpretive signage shall be used to engage visitors at recreation sites by providing valuable knowledge about the local history or ecology
- The information shall be accurate, detailed, and regionally contextual
- The intended audience should be considered when selecting the appropriate sign
- Durable sign materials shall be carefully selected to withstand the region's winter and summer weather conditions

## Needs Analysis

- Strengths
- Challenges
- Needs
- Gap Analysis

## 7.0 PRIORITY PROJECTS

Priority projects were identified using the filter of the stakeholder survey (Section 1), local planning efforts to date (Section 2), user group interests (Section 3), the recreation resource inventory (Section 4) and adding the currently planned projects (Section 5) to derive the needs assessment (Section 6), and resultant priority projects (this section). The following priority projects are generally listed in order of priority; however, if funding becomes available for a specific project type, then projects that fall within that funding category would be prioritized. Therefore, the projects were identified using the data and filters from Sections 1 through 6 and the projects were ranked using the following key aspects, each weighted equally:

- ✓ Safety and security,
- ✓ Accessibility and diversity of accessibility,
- ✓ Economic development,
- ✓ Environmental stewardship and
- ✓ Stakeholder interests

The following top five priority projects were developed based on the Needs Analysis conducted for the study.

### 7.1 TOP PRIORITY PROJECTS

#### WAYFINDING SIGNS

Wayfinding is an essential component of recreational activities and it is considered a priority project type because it meets all five screening criteria.

- ✓ **Increase Safety and Security:** Wayfinding is an integral aspect of user safety. Wayfinding is used to safely plan for, get to, and return from a recreation experience on the Summit. The majority of existing trails, with the exception of many Truckee Donner Land Trust trails, lack and need wayfinding information (Table 4.1).
- ✓ **Improve Accessibility:** Wayfinding will help educate potential recreationalists regarding the ease or difficulty of a particular recreation experience allowing the user to choose the specific level of difficulty and avoid recreating in areas beyond their skill level.
- ✓ **Add Economic Vitality:** Wayfinding to and around the Summit will enable users to be more efficient with their time and make informed decisions about places to stay (near a trail or ski resorts for example), places to eat, places to purchase goods. As such, wayfinding is identified as a key component of economic development.
- ✓ **Promote Environmental Stewardship:** Way finding will keep people on trails and reduce user-generated trails or unauthorized access. Wayfinding, therefore, can steer recreationalists toward established trails and recreational facilities and away from sensitive resources.
- ✓ **Align with Stakeholder Interests:** Over 80% of surveyed stakeholders identified Wayfinding as the highest priority on Donner Summit (Figure 1.5).

Given wayfinding improvements for the planning area meet all five screening criteria, they are a priority project type. As such, the assessments in Sections 4, 5 and 6 of this report yielded the following specific



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### Priority Projects

- Safety and Security
- Accessibility and Diversity of Accessibility
- Economic Development
- Environmental Stewardship
- Stakeholder Interest



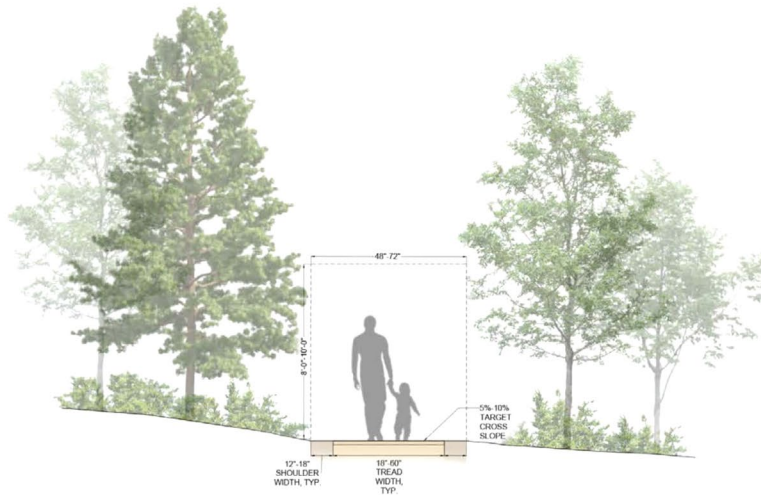


FIGURE 8.7, CLASS 4 MULTI-USE TRAIL ELEVATION

### ACCESSIBILITY

The proposed trail system and recreation areas as shown in this Plan shall be available and accessible to a range of user groups. The proposed updates will include Class 4 Multi-Use Accessible trails at select trailheads. Any significant feature or environmental experience shall comply with local and federal accessibility requirements to ensure universal access to all users, including those with physical and cognitive impairments.

Below are the US Access Board definitions for recreation elements ("Trails"):

**Trail** – A route that is designed, designated, or constructed for recreational pedestrian use or provided as a pedestrian alternative to vehicular routes within a transportation system.

**Accessible trails**- include those newly constructed and altered trails that meet all of the provisions of section 16.2 of United States Access Board (USAB) Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas

**Outdoor Recreation Access Routes (ORARs)** - A continuous unobstructed path designated for pedestrian use that connects accessible elements within a picnic area, camping area, or designated trailhead.

Table 8-2A and 8-2B include design guidelines for Trails and Outdoor Recreation Access Routes as adapted from the USAB Standards. A trail shall be labeled accessible only if it meets agency policies and guidelines.



## Design Guidelines

- Wayfinding
- Trailhead Components
- Restrooms
- Organization of Parking
- Information Kiosks
- Accessibility
- Trails...

## 9.0 OPERATION & MAINTENANCE

It is the responsibility of the landowner and management organizations to maintain the trails, recreation features, and site amenities that fall within their operational boundaries. Once final locations of the priority projects are established, the owners shall define maintenance roles and responsibilities amongst the various management organizations.

### 9.1 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE OVERVIEW

The following is a list of annual maintenance activities to be considered for the proposed projects, all of which must be conducted in a fire safe manner:

- A. **Vegetation Removal** – Trim branches, brush, and remove vegetative obstructions within trail clear zone. Remove any fallen trees and hazardous trees or tree limbs.
- B. **Signage** – Signs and signposts will stay intact all year round, and, therefore, sign and post materials should be selected to withstand the winter conditions. Permanent kiosks, trailhead signs, map signs, and trail wayfinding are essential year round. Sign posts shall be mounted into metal sleeves that are cemented into the ground. Non-removable signs shall be cleaned and stained each spring.
- C. **Trail Repair** – Assess and repair any damage at climbing turns, switchbacks, roadway crossings, and fords. Necessary repairs shall be made prior to trail opening each spring.
- D. **Erosion Control** – Assess damage and slope erosion at grade reversals, knicks, rolling dips, and waterbars to ensure the erosion control features function according to their intended use. Trail inspections should be performed throughout snow melt and an effort should be made to keep trails clear from excessive snow melt.
- E. **Structure Maintenance and Repair** – Built structures, including bridges, kiosks, restrooms, benches, picnic tables, and boardwalks, shall be assessed for structural damage each spring and necessary repairs shall be made. This includes removing movable elements for the winter months and replacing them in the spring to prevent water/flood damage.
- F. **Restroom Maintenance** – Portable restrooms shall be cleaned and serviced weekly at a minimum, or according to usage. All permanent restroom facilities shall be serviced weekly including cleaning, trash disposal, and restocking. Permanent restrooms shall be assessed for damage each spring and throughout the summer months, and necessary repairs shall be made.
- G. **Waste** – Trash receptacles and pet waste stations shall be emptied twice a week during summer months. Receptacles should be removed in winter to prevent seasonal damage.
- H. **Snow Park** – Maintenance shall include restroom maintenance, signage repair, and snow-clearing on roads and within parking lot. The land manager is responsible for operations and maintenance within the snow-park.
- I. **Fire Risk** – With the increasing fire risk in California, it is necessary that all land is properly managed to prevent the spread of wildfire. This includes, but is not limited to closure and locking of campground fire rings as required during peak fire season, brush clearing, vegetation removal around powerlines, and continued monitoring of vegetative conditions and potential fire hazards. For more information, refer to Bureau of Land Management “Routine Operations and Maintenance To Reduce Fire Risk On Utility Rights-Of-Way.” It is imperative to determine who will be responsible for such activities on a case-by-case project development basis.



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### Operations & Maintenance

- US Forest Service
- Volunteers
- Land Trust

## 10 | IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING

- Lamson-Cashion Donner Summit Hub Trailhead development
- Trail wayfinding signage
- Summit Hub Trailhead restroom installation
- Long Lake Trailhead development and restroom installation
- Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail - Forest Service Ridge Segment from Soda Springs Road to Mt Disney with a connection to the River Loop Trail
- Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail - Sugar Bowl/Roller Pass Segment through Sugar Bowl to near Donner Peak (with a new undefined connection to the Sugar Bowl Road)
- Donner Lake Rim Trail extension from I-80 to Donner Pass Road/Sugar Bowl/Memorial Emigrant Trail
- Royal Gorge Rim Trail erosion reroute at Nose Dive / Alan's Pass section
- Braiding Restoration on Palisades Creek Trail from the trailhead to Long Lake
- Systemize Pine Marten Trail

### LONG TERM (5-15 YEARS)

The recommended Long Term projects include:

- Additional Motorist Wayfinding Signage
- Additional Trailhead Signage
- Soda Springs and Serene Lake Trail Connection
- Van Norden Meadow boardwalk and perimeter trail
- Sheep Pens Trailhead development and roadway upgrades
- Castle Peak Trailhead development and restroom installation
- PCT alternative trail in the Donner Pass Road to I80 Planning Area and decommissioning of user defined trails
- Walkable Soda Springs – addition of a pedestrian trail and designated bike path
- Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail - Schallenberger Ridge Segment from near Donner Peak to Donner Lake
- Donner Lake Rim Trail extension from I-80 to Donner Pass Road/Sugar Bowl/Memorial Emigrant Trail
- Lytton Lake Lodge to the PCT Trail (new trail)
- Bridge on existing abutments on the Summit Canyon Trail
- Black Wall campground development
- Van Norden Meadow campground development including USFS-required studies and Native American tribal coordination to assess and verify avoidance and protection of biological and cultural resources
- Five Creeks Trail Development

### PRIORITIZATION

Prioritization has been established based on current public need, safety, accessibility, environmental stewardship, sustainability, economic development, and stakeholder input and an inventory assessment of need (Section 7). Once funding sources and budgets are finalized, the landowner and operational organizations shall develop a detailed prioritization plan.



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## Implementation & Funding

- Short Term
- Medium Term
- Prioritization

We need your help...

- Review the Plan
- Feedback
- Focus:
  - Inventory
  - Prioritization

DSA Thanks You!