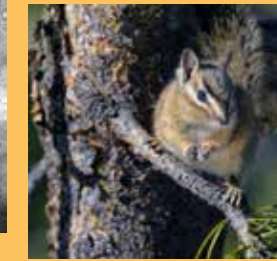


Donner Summit - Magnificent

The scenery is magnificent both in the close ups and the wide panoramas. Artists and photographers have been capturing the beauty ever since they were able to get here. There are world class recreation opportunities. The biological diversity (500 species of plants, 115 species of butterflies, 100+ species of birds, and dozens of species of mammals and amphibians) is amazing. And then there's the history. Donner Summit is perhaps the most significant historical square mile in California and maybe the entire Western United States. Native Americans crossed for thousand of years leaving behind petroglyphs and grinding rocks. The first wagon train to come to California with wagons came over Donner Summit. There followed the first transcontinental railroad, the first transcontinental highway, the fist transcontinental air route, and the first transcontinental telephone line. The hard part of all the magnificence is deciding which photographs to use.



2015-16

Despite the magnificence Donner Summit has been on a downhill slide for decades.

To counter the decline the Donner Summit Association has engaged in a number of initiatives to revitalize the economy. One accomplishment was the Soda Springs Area Plan that, among other things, opened up the zoning in "downtown" Soda Springs.

Then we applied to Placer County for a planning grant for a welcome monument. That was 2015. The next year we applied to Placer County for a grant to construct the monument in Nevada County. We received that grant too and were pleased that the counties worked together to allow the placement. The volunteer labor, "in-kind" contributions, and huge discounts were also gratifying. There's



still a little work to do but the monument is in place.

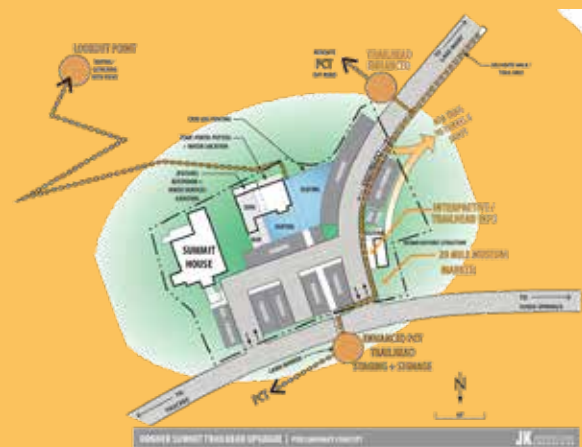


2017

In 2017 we applied again to Placer County, this time for two grants. One was for a study to determine whether a visitors' center on Donner Summit would be feasible. A visitors' center would provide direction and information for visitors, host educational activities, provide community meeting space, and provide public rest rooms. It would be a place from which to set off on adventures and a place to come back to afterwards to look for what's next. We received that grant and the Sierra Business Council undertook the study. A visitors' center is feasible. It is worth noting that the Nevada County Soda Springs Area Plan identifies a visitors' center as a critical need and Nevada County is providing the required 10% match for the Placer County grant.



The second grant was to develop a "trailhead of trailheads" on Donner Summit to end the confusion of the many official and "ad hoc" trails. The project will renovate the exterior of the shed here (above), pave the road, delineate parking, add signage, and provide information for visitors. The project is underway. The graphic below outlines the project.



2018

Knowing that the visitors center was not only needed but feasible, in 2018 we applied for phase II which would encompass the designing of the renovation of a building to serve as a visitors' center and applying for the permits to begin work. We received that grant and design has begun.

We also applied for a grant to develop a master plan for Donner Summit recreation and public use. We have two counties, the Truckee Donner Land Trust, ski areas, Clair Tappaan, and the U.S. Forest Service all of which have land on Donner Summit. We need a comprehensive plan to make the preserved open space usable. Our grant application says the plan will "guide the DSA, community members, stakeholders and agencies in implementing coordinated community development efforts. The Public Use and Recreation Master Plan will capture planning and project concepts in various stages of development" by those stakeholders. For example there are many "ad hoc" trails. We need to catalog them, sign them, improve some, and remove others. We need to develop plans for public restrooms and parking. We received this grant too.

It is worth noting that Placer County's grant requirements in 2018 included letters of support, which we received for both applications from: Truckee Donner Land Trust, Placer County Parks, South Yuba River Citizens' League, Truckee Trails, Sugar Bowl/Royal Gorge, Placer County Office of Economic Development and Nevada County.



Future

We are excited that both counties are not only paying attention to Donner Summit and the needs but are playing active roles in helping us move forward. We've won grants from Placer County that we've spent in Nevada County. Nevada County has provided the 10% match and has about half a million dollars allocated for a visitors' center on Donner Summit.

In the fall of 2019 we'll apply for a grant to cover Phase III for a visitors' center and that grant will be for the purchase and renovation of a building to serve as the visitors' center. We have the master plan to work on and once that's complete we'll be adding signage to trails to guide people. We're working on the renovation of the shed at the top of the pass and developing it into a "trailhead of trailheads" with seating, signage, and information.

This comes from our 2018 grant for the master plan: "the Master Plan will be used for public engagement, agency and organization meetings, and will be a foundational document used to help guide conversation, facilitate project planning and form the basis of future public-facing documentation guiding visitors through trails mapping, local/regional wayfinding and web-based visitor information."

Also from our grant application: "The improvement of the local economy is the big need on Donner Summit. A comprehensive use plan will help the local economy by improving visitors' experiences... It may seem counter intuitive but the experience for the "locals" is also lacking. Because most are second home owners they don't have intimate knowledge of the many unmarked trails on Donner Summit. A comprehensive plan identifying trails, signage, and destinations will help "locals" and renters as well as tourists. Locals are also desirous of snowplay areas and restrooms, if not to use themselves, then to organize what now often is chaos.

Donner Summit Association Initiatives

2019

