



# Toms Place to Lower Rock Creek Connector Trail Proposal

Submitted by Mono County Sustainable Outdoors and Recreation and funded by Mono County to: United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, White Mountain Ranger District

**Proposal Date:** May 2024

**Proponent Name:** Mono County  
(CSA1 funded)

**Ranger District:** White Mountain

**County:** Mono

**Requested Action:** Future agency project list

**General Location:** Toms Place

## Purpose, Background:

Mono County Sustainable Outdoors and Recreation and Mono County, at the recommendation of its County Service Area 1 (CSA1) advisory board, wish to support and increase new non-motorized multi-use trails in South Mono County. One short-term goal is to legalize historic trails. The Toms Place to Lower Rock Creek informal or non-system trail has no trail head, signage, or facilities. This trail receives significant use and no maintenance. A second goal is to utilize existing public facilities (parks, campgrounds, parking areas) as access / exit nodes, and to build new trails to connect these facilities and access our local communities.



The Toms Place to Lower Rock Creek Connector is an existing trail approximately 1.3 to 1.6 miles in length depending on route. Options to legalize this route include approximately 1.34 miles of Forest Service Roads, 2.03 miles of user created routes, and/or to re-route .86 miles for better management and sustainability of a steep section of user created trail. These routes and segments are shown on Map 1 and the map key is attachment 2.

### Implementation:

Implementation of this trail project includes:

1. Legalize approximately .96 miles of existing high-use trails to tread width in compliance with agency best management practices shown in blue, green & orange.
2. Decommission .06 miles or 332 feet of a steep user created trail down to section 1 of Lower Rock Creek Trail shown in blue.
3. Re-route the steep downhill trail at approximately .3 miles to tread width in compliance with agency best management practices shown in purple.
4. New uphill travel route out of Lower Rock Creek Canyon approximately .56 miles to tread width in compliance with agency best management practices. This segment might give southbound cyclists a non-US 395 route down to Lower Rock Creek Road shown in yellow.
5. New prescribed/approved regulatory and wayfinding signage providing information such as location of trail, allowable uses, and trail etiquette.
6. This project is anticipated to occur in two general phases: Environmental Review, and pending the environmental findings, the Implementation phase for construction and on-going maintenance. Any NEPA/CEQA studies required to support Forest Service decisions, trail construction, signage, and on-going maintenance to be funded by Mono County utilizing funds in the County's restricted CSA1 account, as part of the total committed amount of \$75,000. Additional approval for expending funds on the implementation, construction and on-going maintenance will be a separate decision that will be brought to the Board at a future meeting.

Converting non-system trails to system trails involves bringing these sections of trail up to Forest Service multi-use non-motorized trail design standards which includes Best Management Practices and providing regular maintenance. Mono County and Inyo National Forest have formal agreements with seasonal trail maintenance program(s) in place.



Looking east before SCE substation & FS sewer plant

### Environmental/Heritage:

Any necessary surveys and reports will be paid for by Mono County (via CSA1 funds and as described above) as part of any necessary NEPA/CEQA review, inclusive of and not to exceed the \$75,000 total limit offered. The CSA1 funding would provide for the Federal lead agencies to complete their required review under NEPA and CEQA, and, if the project is ultimately approved, the County would expect that the lead agencies would assume legal liability, including defense and indemnification, in the event of a legal challenge. Mono County is aware of the need to research impacts to Sage Grouse habitat and is in the process of investigating potential overlaps of the trail

alignment and habitat and subsequent mitigation strategies. Alternative alignments will hopefully be discussed if there is habitat overlap.

### Other Benefits and Goals

While this trail connects to a very high-use trail in the area, it also creates additional opportunities in the future for dispersing trail users and use of existing facilities.

- At the eastern side of Rock Creek Road and Crowley Lake Drive intersection, there is parking along the old highway. The paved width is approximately 36 feet and is currently used for parallel parking in both winter and summer (goal to use existing infrastructure),
- The upper access point on Crowley Lake Drive is about 900' east of Toms Place Resort which has lodging, food, water, trash, and restrooms (goal connecting to businesses),
- This trail provides access to Sunny Slopes residents via the US 395 undercrossing and Owens Gorge Road (goal to connect communities),
- It has already been stated, but this trail exists now as a high-use social trail, and yes, some reroutes are needed to prevent additional erosion and create better uphill access. The trail is under and over utilities easements for a portion of the route, and other sections are on Forest System Roads (including 4S120 & 120D, 4S120K & 120L).
- Project is consistent with Mono County General Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and the Sustainable Outdoors and Recreation Overall Work Plan.
- Finally, as described above, Mono County will pay (using restricted funds from its CSA1 account up to \$75,000 plus in-kind contributions) for trail studies, construction, and regular on-going maintenance.



FS Rd 4S120L looking west – Birch Fire scar  
2002 and old highway mixing table

**Concurrent efforts:**

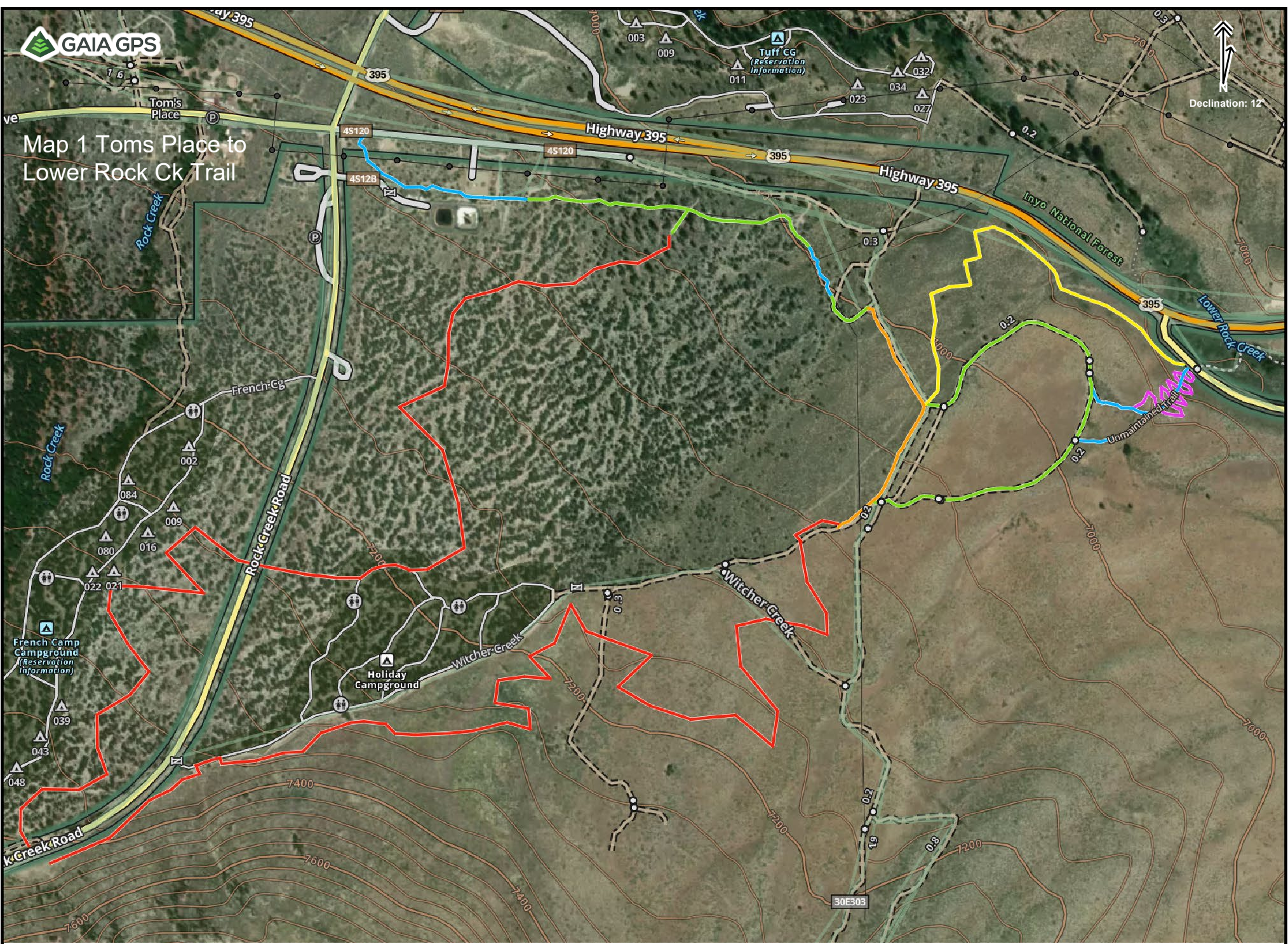
**Concurrent projects - not a part of this proposal:** As presented in a separate, additional proposal to the INF, Mono County is also pursuing another trail connector from Hilton Creek to the BLM campground, working with the BLM and INF.

**Future efforts:**

**Projects in the next 2-5 years - not a part of this proposal:** The trail in red (future concept) could connect both French Camp and Holiday campgrounds where families and users could ride from their campsite. Water, restrooms, and trash facilities are available. Part of this trail could utilize the Birch Fire scare of 2002. About 900' above the Holiday Campground entrance, there is an informal parking area.

*Please see map on following page; legend is on the page after the map.*

# Map 1 Toms Place to Lower Rock Ck Trail



<b>Toms Place Lower Rock Ck - Mono Co/CSA1</b>		
<b>Route and color</b>		<b>distance miles</b>
Lower Rock Creek Connector - existing FS roads - <b>green</b>		1.08
Lower Rock Creek Connector - user created some under utility easements - <b>blue</b>		0.71
Lower Rock Creek Connector / user created over a fiber optic easement - <b>orange</b>		0.31
Decommission steep user created downhill trail - <b>blue</b>		-0.06
<b>New</b> Re-route steep downhill trail - <b>purple</b>		0.3
<b>New</b> uphill route out of Lower Rock Creek trail - <b>yellow</b>		0.56
<b>subtotal</b> - legalize user created <b>blue</b> & <b>orange</b>		0.96
<b>subtotal</b> - re-route and new uphill trail <b>purple</b> & <b>yellow</b>		0.86
	<b>Total new trails</b>	<b>1.82</b>
<i>Future campground loop / 2–5-year timeframe - red</i>		3.28
Map key - attachment 2		