

# Eastern Sierra Community Bank eyes Bishop branch

Regional VP says area's newest bank offers more personalized and localized services

By Rebecca Stow  
News Staff

The bank saved Bridgeport, then brought their local attitude to Mammoth and now a Bishop branch is on the horizon.

Eastern Sierra Community Bank hopes to offer these communities a more personal service compared to the large banks in the area said Regional Vice-President Doug Angelo.

Eastern Sierra, a division of Oak Valley Community Bank, has a tradition of opening their banks on the 28th day of the month. On Sept. 28, 2000, they opened their doors to Bridgeport. Just this past month, they began serving the community of Mammoth. Unfortunately May 28 fell on Memorial Day this year, so Mammoth opened its doors on the 29th.

"The town of Bridgeport is elated," Angelo said of the bank there.

Currently it is the only bank in Bridgeport. The town searched frantically for a bank to replace Bank of America when it decided to pull out of town. Residents consider the new bank the saving grace of the town.

Even though Mammoth already has existing banks, it is a matter of wanting a different mentality, Angelo said. Eastern Sierra has more flexibility and managers have more authority. He said that in the larger banks the managers hands are often tied.

Eastern Sierra offers local lending, a key element in their

local attitude. That means customers can work with someone who knows the area and the makeup of the community. Where the big bank philosophy is square holes and square pegs, said Angelo, Eastern Sierra's goal is to make it work, even with a round hole and square peg. The loan officers will know the community which will help them make decisions on a personal basis.

The bank also offers local construction lending, a key to serving the community. Since many larger banks do not understand the obstacles of a small business owner, Eastern Sierra wants to fill that need.

Angelo is currently looking for land to lease, or even an already existing building, for the bank in Bishop. They hope to open their doors within a year.

Eastern Sierra has five branches in Northern California. The branches not on this side of the Sierra, in Oakdale, Sonora and Modesto, are Oak Valley Community Banks. The bank changed the name in order to identify more with the area it is serving.

The new name was chosen through a majority vote of mail-in entry forms. One couple in Mammoth won \$5,000 when their names were drawn from those entry forms.

Besides Bishop, Eastern Sierra may look into opening a branch in Minden or Gardnerville. If there was a need, and the community could support it, Eastern Sierra would look into going further south of Bishop.

Angelo who just bought a house in Bishop, said that he is "looking forward to the Bishop branch" which should be the largest of the three.

"It's nice to have a local bank," he concluded.