



Notice of Proposed Action

Opportunity to Comment Carson Ranger District Mt. Rose-Ski Tahoe Trail and Lift Improvement Projects

United States
Department
of Agriculture

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Carson Ranger District
Washoe County, Nevada

Forest Service

May 27, 2008

Comments Welcome

The Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on its proposal at Mt. Rose-Ski Tahoe (Mt. Rose) located on State Route 431 (Mt. Rose Highway), approximately 11 miles from Incline Village and 25 miles from Reno, in Washoe County, Nevada (Figure 1). The Mt. Rose ski resort is operated on a combination of National Forest System (NFS) and private lands. Mt. Rose currently operates under a Special Use Permit (SUP) from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The existing ski resort consists of the Slide facilities in the southeast portion and the Mt. Rose facilities in the northwest portion of the project area. Each side includes a lodge, parking, lifts, and ski trails. The Proposed Action entails two elements: (1) conducting spot grading, rock blasting, and installing snowmaking infrastructure on select trails on the Slide side of the ski area; and (2) replacing the Ponderosa and Galena chairlifts with one high-speed, detachable chairlift on the Mt. Rose side. Previous environmental documentation pertinent to the Proposed Action includes the 2003 Mt. Rose-Ski Tahoe Approved Master Development Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Facilities Improvements.

This proposal will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA). Written, facsimile, hand delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this proposal will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the 36 CFR 215 Notice of Proposed Action in the Reno Gazette Journal, published on May 22, 2008. For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the "Comment Process" section of this document on page 5.

Slide Side Trail Improvement Projects

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the projects at the Slide side of the resort is to provide a reliable and consistent skiing experience during early season and when there is less than average snow pack conditions. Currently Mt. Rose seeks to increase utilization of this portion of

the resort and create viable access to accommodate projected increases in skier/rider volume associated with the construction of a new base lodge and locker facility on private lands at the Slide base area. The Proposed Action is designed to enhance the existing condition of ski trails and provide the necessary linkage terrain during low snow conditions. This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Toiyabe Forest Plan (USFS 1986), and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan.

The Proposed Action

Projects being proposed on various existing trails for site-specific environmental review at the Slide side include: approximately 23.9 acres of spot grading; 3.0 acres of rock blasting; and snowmaking installation on the trail known as *Sunrise Bowl*. All proposed projects are situated on NFS land within Mt. Rose's Forest Service-issued SUP area (See Figure 2).

During the summer of 2006, US Forest Service and Mt. Rose personnel developed an alternative method to traditionally grading an entire trail called "spot" grading. The method entails using an excavator to re-contour irregularities, high and low spots, on existing trails. This alternative method minimizes the potential disturbance area while preserving islands of native vegetation and reducing potential visual and environmental impacts.

As noted, all of the proposed projects are located below the elevation for Tahoe draba and no other sensitive species would be affected by construction. The proposed project would not alter drainage within the area, or the rate and amount of surface runoff, nor would water quality in the area be impacted.

SPOT GRADING ON SLIDE BOWL

Spot grading would occur on approximately 13.8 acres in various sections of the area known as *Slide Bowl*. As previously approved in the Master Development Plan snowmaking would be installed at a later date to allow for better utilization of this area during the early season. The majority of this area is not visible from the adjacent communities and would not present an affect to the surrounding viewshed.

SPOT GRADING AND SNOWMAKING - SUNRISE BOWL

Spot grading and snowmaking installation would occur on approximately 4.1 acres of the *Sunrise Bowl* trail. The snowmaking pipeline would also be used for irrigation purposes during the summer to promote re-vegetation in the re-contoured areas.

SPOT GRADING LOWER BRUCE'S TRAIL

Spot grading would occur on approximately 2.2 acres of the *Lower Bruce's* trail from the intersection of the *Badlands* terrain park to the *Zephyr Return* traverse.

SPOT GRADING WASHOE ZEPHYR TRAIL

Spot grading would occur on approximately 3.8 acres of the *Washoe Zephyr* trail.

ROCK BLASTING OUTLAW TRAIL

Rock blasting would occur on approximately 3.0 acres of the *Outlaw* trail. Rock blasting includes drilling a hole into the rock and using explosive for dispersal. After blasting, the remaining rock debris is worked by hand into nearby low lying or depressed areas.

Mt. Rose Side Improvement Projects-Upgrade Ponderosa/Galena Chairlifts

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the projects at the Mt. Rose side of the resort is to improve skier access and circulation on existing beginner and lower intermediate terrain served by the Ponderosa and Galena lifts. These existing fixed-grip chairlifts would be replaced with a single high speed chairlift in order to improve the skiing experience and meet the demands and expectations of the recreating public. The Proposed Action is designed to streamline the teaching programs and enable guests to spend less time waiting in lines and more time on the snow. The detachable chairlift would also improve the safety of loading and unloading for less advanced guests. This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Toiyabe Forest Plan (USFS 1986), and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan.

The Proposed Action

The Ponderosa and Galena chairlifts, which service Mt. Rose's teaching, beginner, and low-intermediate terrain, would be replaced with a single high-speed, detachable chairlift approximately 5,343 feet in length and servicing approximately 590 vertical feet (See Figure 3). While both the Ponderosa and Galena lifts are currently located entirely on private land, the current proposal would extend the top terminal 300 feet uphill of the existing location onto NFS lands within Mt. Rose's SUP area. Shifting the location of the top terminal uphill provides adequate unloading and milling space for this higher capacity lift, which would also have a larger top terminal than the existing Galena fixed-grip lift. In addition, limited work would be performed to connect the proposed top terminal with the existing trail network and install snowmaking. The new lift alignment would essentially share the same corridor as the existing Ponderosa and Galena chairlifts.

Issues

Potential effects on the human and biological environment resulting from the Proposed Action will be documented in the forthcoming EA. Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the EA to reduce or avoid any potential significant issues.

Alternatives to Proposed Action

In addition to the Proposed Action, the Forest Service will address the No Action Alternative. No additional alternatives are expected unless a need develops during the course of the analysis.

No Action Alternative: proposed project would not take place.

Summary of Proposed Action Impacts

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action. In the EA, these impacts will be compared to those resulting from the alternatives.

Affected Resource	Summary of Impact
Watersheds	Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be employed to reduce sedimentation.
Vegetation	Existing vegetation will be protected. Native seed collection and top soil protection will be employed to revegetate disturbed sites.
Noxious and Invasive Weeds	BMP utilization will reduce risks for impacts from noxious and evasive weeds.
Sensitive Wildlife	Not expected. Surveys will be conducted. Impacts will be avoided with limited seasonal operations, if needed.
Sensitive Plants	Not expected. Surveys will be conducted. Impacts will be avoided with adjusting locations, if needed.
Neotropical Migratory Birds	Not expected. Surveys will be conducted. Impacts will be avoided with limited seasonal operations, if needed.
Heritage Resources	Not expected. Surveys will be conducted. Impacts will be avoided with adjusting locations, if needed.
Native American Religious Concerns	Not expected. Surveys will be conducted. Impacts will be avoided with adjusting locations, if needed.
Visual Resources	BMPs will be employed to reduce any potential impacts to visual resources.

Decision Framework

Based on the environmental analysis and disclosure documented in the EA, the Forest Supervisor will decide 1) whether to select the actions proposed or modified, or as described in an alternative; 2) what mitigation measures are needed; and 3) what monitoring is required.

Comment Process

The Forest Service encourages your comments on this proposal, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision. Only those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision.

Your comments will help us prepare the environmental assessment (EA). If there is no potential for significant impacts, that finding, along with the EA and the District Ranger's decision will be sent to those who commented. If the EA indicates the potential for significant impacts, the District Ranger would initiate additional environmental documentation prior to a decision.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the RenoGazette-Journal.

Comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Carson Ranger District, 1536 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701 or fax 775-884-8118. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

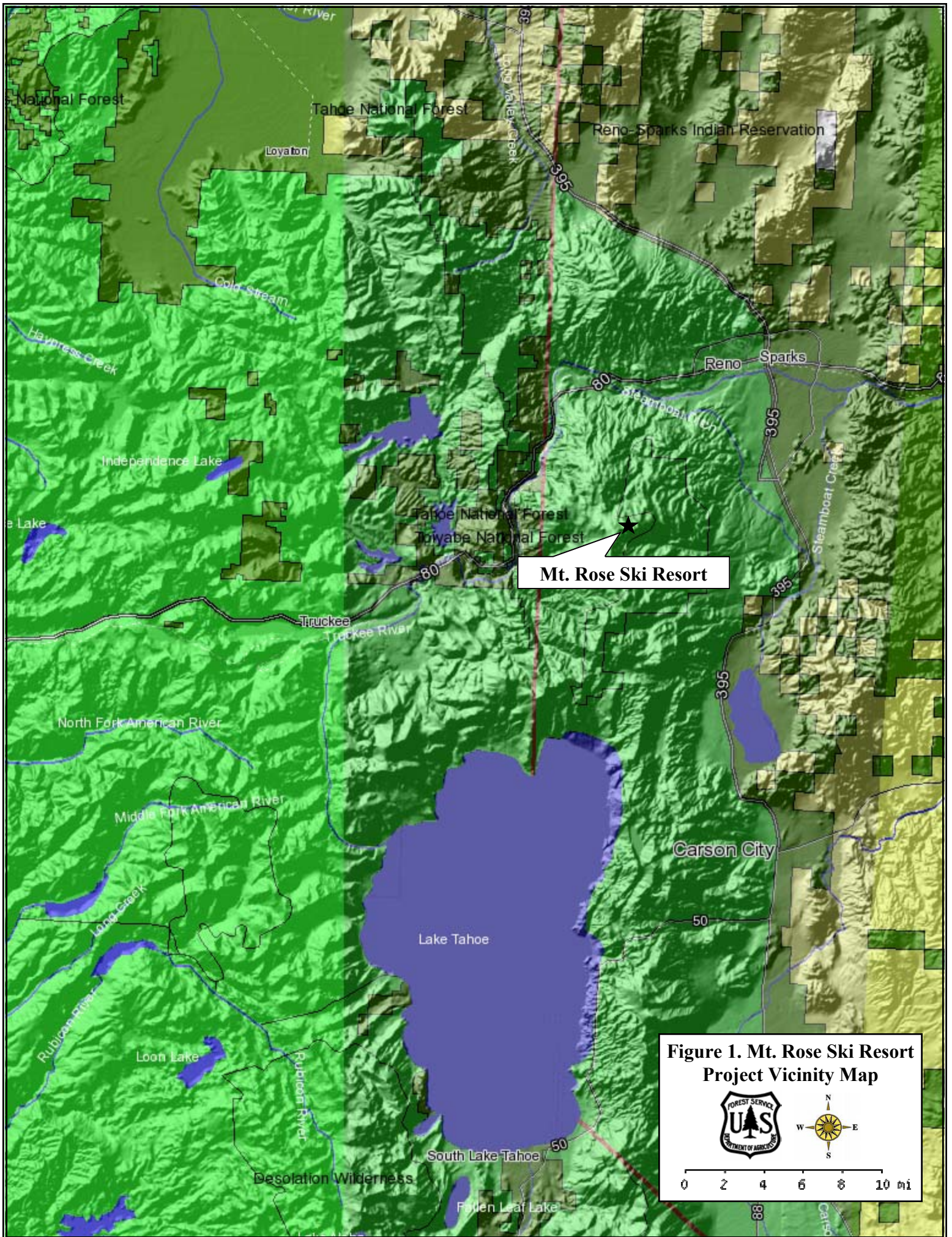
Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to *comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-carson@fs.fed.us*. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual, comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For further information contact Ed DeCarlo, Project Manager at 775-882-2766.



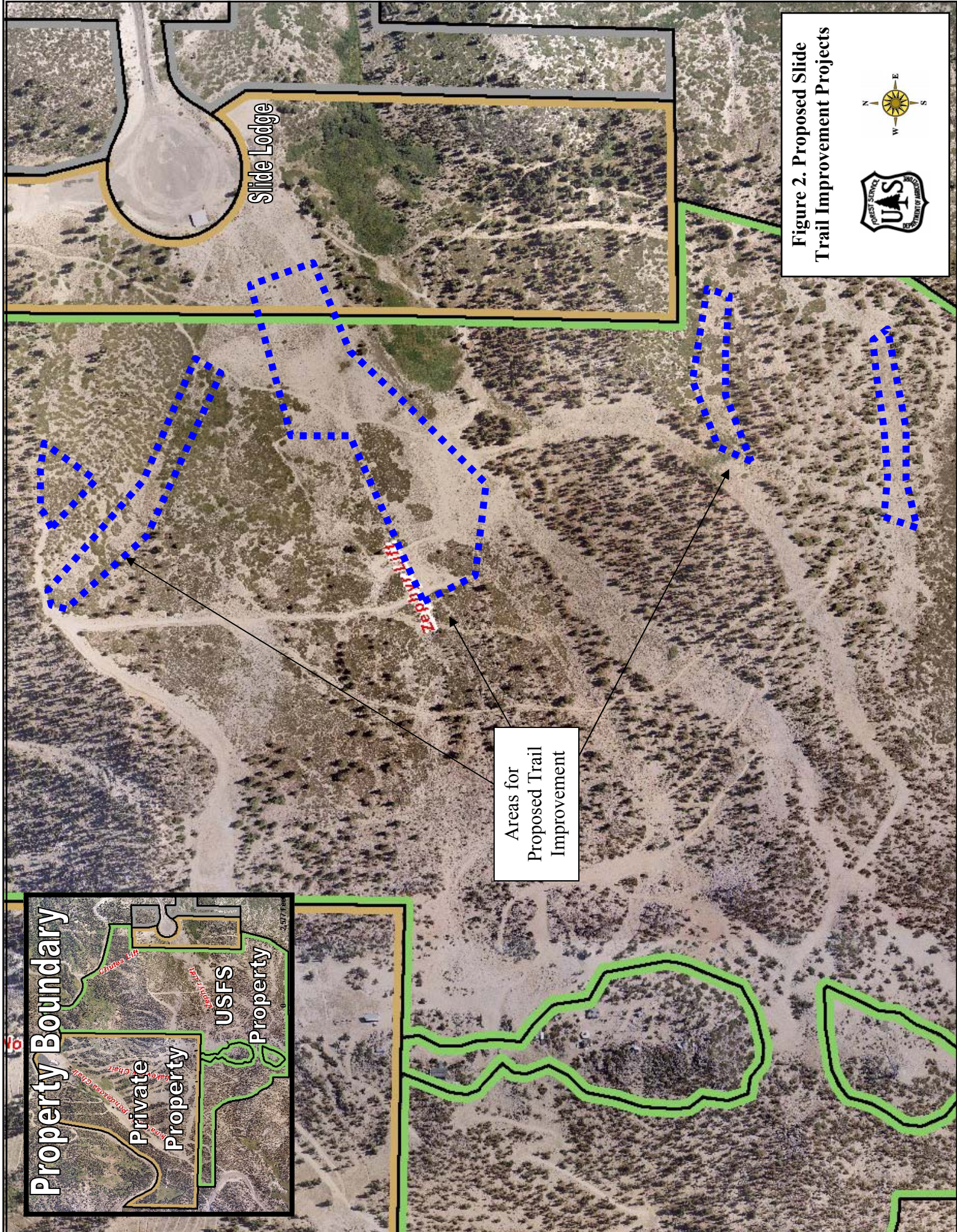
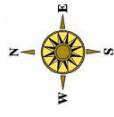


Figure 2. Proposed Slide Trail Improvement Projects



Areas for Proposed Trail Improvement

Property Boundary

Private Property

USFS Property

2,577 Feet

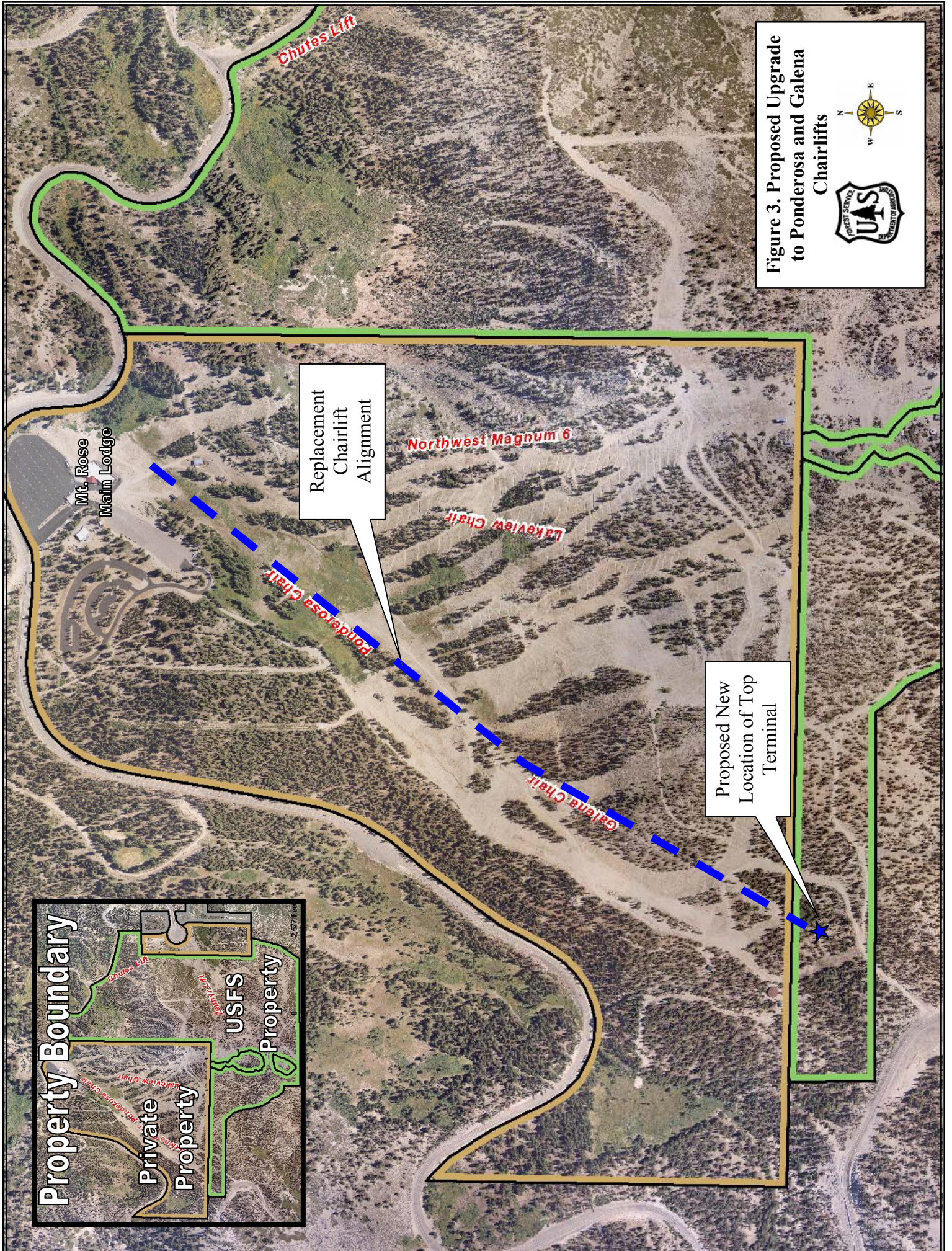


Figure 3. Proposed Upgrade to Ponderosa and Galena Chairlifts



Replacement Chairlift Alignment

Proposed New Location of Top Terminal

