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WHITE PASS EXPANSION MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Record of Decision



Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests,
and Gifford Pinchot National Forest



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Master Development Plan Proposal

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Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests, and
Gifford Pinchot National Forest

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White Pass Expansion

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Gifford Pinchot National Forest
Forest Plan Amendment No. 19

Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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June 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents our decision to authorize Modified Alternative 4 for implementation as described in the *White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan Proposal Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS). Various local, state, and other federal decisions and/or permits are also required for the implementation of this project (see to FEIS Section 1.7). Therefore, this is one of several decisions required to implement this project.

White Pass Ski Area (White Pass) is situated in the Cascade Mountain range of Washington State, approximately 55 miles west of Yakima, Washington and 20 miles east of Packwood, Washington. Located in both the Naches Ranger District of the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests (OWNF)

and the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (GPNF), White Pass operates under a Special Use Permit (SUP) issued by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

2.0 DECISION AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This ROD documents our decision to approve Modified Alternative 4 (the Selected Alternative), which replaces the previous White Pass Master Plan (White Pass Company 1979). This ROD also documents an amendment to the White Pass SUP to authorize site-specific implementation of the new Master Development Plan (MDP), including adding approximately 767 additional acres to the SUP area based on Modified Alternative 4 in the FEIS. These actions will occur within or adjacent to the existing SUP area boundary of White Pass. The existing SUP area is allocated to Administratively Withdrawn/RE-1 - Developed Recreation under the *Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (WNF Forest Plan) and Administratively Withdrawn/2L - Developed Recreation under the GPNF Forest Plan, while the expansion area is entirely within the GPNF and allocated entirely to Administratively Withdrawn/2L - Developed Recreation.

Our decision also includes Amendment 19 to the 1990 GPNF Forest Plan, a non-significant amendment that applies only to the existing and selected SUP expansion area. This amendment will modify the riparian area Standards and Guidelines for recreation (Item 2 under Planning and Inventory on page IV-70 of the GPNF Forest Plan) to allow for downhill ski trails and other ski area infrastructure to cross riparian influence areas (RIAs) within the GPNF portion of the White Pass SUP area. Amendment 19 pertains only to the GPNF Forest Plan and includes no revisions to the OWNF Forest Plan or the Northwest Forest Plan ROD (USDA and USDI 1994).

2.1 Summary of Selected Alternative

We have decided that the White Pass Master Plan (White Pass Company 1979) will be replaced with the Selected Alternative, to include the White Pass lift and trail network as described in the FEIS (see Section 2.3.4, page 2-34), summarized below, and presented in Table 1 (see Figures ROD-1 and ROD-2).

Our selection of Modified Alternative 4 will result in an expansion of the White Pass Ski Area into 767 acres of Hogback Basin, adjacent to and west of the existing White Pass SUP area (see FEIS Volume 2, Figure 2-4). Two new chairlifts, C-5 (*Basin*) and C-6 (*Hogback Express*), will be constructed. Our decision will add approximately 90 acres of terrain on 18 new trails, with revegetation of 5.4 acres of existing terrain, for a net increase of approximately 85 acres of terrain. The trail network under our Selected Alternative will increase from the existing 37 named trails on approximately 212 acres to 55 trails on approximately 298 acres (see FEIS Table 2.3.4-2). In addition to the new terrain associated with the *Hogback Express* and *Basin* chairlifts, a new trail will be developed in the *Paradise* pod to provide more low intermediate and intermediate terrain, providing additional opportunities for round-trip skiing in this area and reducing pressure on other ski trails. Additionally, portions of the trails along the existing

Cascade lift will be revegetated to provide better separation of skiers of differing abilities, more aesthetic ski terrain and improved safety conditions on the lower mountain.¹

Construction of Trail 4-18 (see FEIS Table 3.3-10 and Figure 3-16) will require the installation of 11 culverts across perennial streams in the project area. Additionally, one new bridge will be constructed on an intermittent stream for Trail 4-16 (associated with the *Hogback Express* chairlift) (see FEIS Table 2.3.1-2 and Figures 2-4 and 3-16). Mitigation Measure MM5 will be implemented during bridge construction, limiting the crossing to a single span and placing the footings above the bankfull channel width to minimize the amount of in-channel disturbance (see ROD Table A1).

New facilities will include a 2000-square foot, two-story mid-mountain lodge within the expansion area. During the ski season, this lodge will provide limited food service, 150 seats, and restroom facilities with composting toilets. A 400-square foot wooden ticket booth with composting toilet will be constructed adjacent to the Yakima Ski Club building, as well as a new 7-acre parking lot.

The parking lot will be located in the northeast corner of the current SUP area, adjacent to the existing drainfield, and will be constructed by clearing vegetation, creating an access onto US 12, leveling the parking area, establishing a gravel surface, and installing stormwater management facilities (see FEIS Appendix M). The parking lot will be screened from US 12 by existing vegetation. Our decision also addresses the phasing of the parking lot construction. Specifically, at the time of construction of the lifts and trails in Pigtail and Hogback Basins, sufficient parking in the new lot must be developed to provide for the additional ski area capacity and to remove parking along US 12. The parking lot may be phased over a period of years provided that capacity increases are phased. Upon completion of the lifts and trails in the expansion area, the 7-acre parking lot will be complete and only overflow parking will be allowed along US 12 on days where visitation exceeds the Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC) of 3,800.

Utilities will be trenched into the ski trail clearings, with aerial crossings over streams. The preferred water system is a water supply line from the existing water treatment facility to the mid-mountain lodge. In the event this proves to be infeasible at the time of construction, we would authorize the digging of a well upslope and within the 50-foot building envelope associated with construction of the mid-mountain lodge.

As a part of the implementation of this Decision, a Pedestrian Management Plan will be developed by White Pass prior to construction of the expansion area facilities and will address the process for ensuring that parking along US 12 will not be permitted unless the parking lots (including the new lot) are efficiently filled to capacity.

¹ For the purposes of this ROD, the terms “skiing” and “skier” refer to all snow sliding sports typically associated with ski area facilities, such as snowboarding, telemark skiing, cross-country, alpine skiing, etc.

Components of the Selected Alternative are summarized along with the existing conditions in Table 1. Table 2.6-1 of the FEIS presents the project components under Alternatives 1, 2, Modified Alternative 4, 6 and 9. A Summary of the Environmental Consequences of the entire range of alternatives is presented in Table 2.6-2 of the FEIS (see FEIS page 2-67). See Figures 2-1, 2-2, 2-4, 2-6, and 2-8 depicting Alternatives 1 through 9 in Volume 2 of the FEIS.

**Table 1:
Comparison of Facilities**

Proposed Action Components	Existing	Selected Alternative
Alpine Ski Area Capacity (CCC) ^a	2,670	3,800
USFS SUP Area (acres)	805 ^b	1,572
Lifts		
Total Number of Lifts	5	7
Chairlift	4	6
Surface Tow	1	1
Trails		
Number of Trails	37	55
Formal Terrain (acres)	212.3	298
Beginner	0.5	0.5
Novice	1.4	22.7
Low Intermediate	67.7	94.6
Intermediate	80.9	59.7
Advanced Intermediate	10.0	68.5
Expert	51.7	51.7
Night Skiing		
Number of Trails	2	2
Available Terrain (acres)	26.5	26.5
Snowmaking		
Number of Trails	1	1
Terrain (acres)	7	7
Total Nordic Trail Network excluding Zig Zag Trail (km)	11.55	11.55
Zig Zag Nordic Trail	2.1 km trail not included in MDP. Trail operates under annual SUP.	Zig Zag trail not included in this MDP and USFS would no longer authorize after 2007, without adequate site-specific NEPA.
Snowshoe Trails	Trails not included in MDP. Trail operates under annual SUP.	Snowshoe trails not included in this MDP and USFS would no longer authorize after 2007, without adequate site-specific NEPA.

**Table 1:
Comparison of Facilities**

Proposed Action Components	Existing	Selected Alternative
Guest Services		
Ticket Booth Locations	1	2
Mid Mountain Restaurant	No	Yes
Restaurant Seats	1,168	1,318
Parking		
Number of Parking Areas	6	7
Parking Capacity (cars/busses)	1,100 / 9	2,046 / 9
Parking on US 12	Yes	Overflow only

^a CCC = Comfortable Carrying Capacity

^b The current SUP indicates that the permit area is 710 acres. However, GIS analysis indicates that the actual SUP area is approximately 805 acres. As a result of the NEPA process, of which this Decision is a part, the acreage has been re-calculated based on GIS data.

2.2 Forest Plan Amendment

We are amending the *1990 GPNF Land and Resource Management Plan* in accordance with the USFS planning regulations provided in 36 CFR 219.7 and 219.8. The Riparian Area Standards and Guidelines for Recreation currently specify that:

“Neither newly developed recreation sites nor expansions to existing sites will be located on the riparian influence area of Riparian Areas A, B, or C. Developed and dispersed recreation sites should be located at least 100 feet from the edges of lakes, streams, ponds, wet meadows, marshes and springs” (GPNF Plan 1990, page IV-70).

The amendment will modify the GPNF Plan Riparian Area Standards and Guidelines to allow for downhill ski facilities to cross RIAs within the existing and expanded White Pass SUP area only. The amended Standard and Guideline will read as follows:

“Neither newly developed recreation sites nor expansions to existing sites will be located on the riparian influence area of Riparian Areas A, B or C, with the exception of specified ski area developments within the existing and expanded permitted area for the White Pass Ski Area. Within this permitted area, ski trails, chairlifts, buildings, utilities, and associated infrastructure may be allowed where avoidance of these features proves infeasible. With the exception of the described ski area facilities, developed and dispersed recreation sites should be located at least 100 feet from the edges of lakes, streams, ponds...”

The amendment, Amendment 19, is a non-significant amendment that will allow for the development of recreation facilities at White Pass, including the re-routed portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic

Trail (PCNST). Amendment 19 pertains only to the GPNF Forest Plan and includes no revisions to the OWNF Forest Plan or the Northwest Forest Plan ROD (USDA and USDI 1994).

2.3 Rationale for Our Decision

We considered many factors when deciding on the Selected Alternative including issues raised during public scoping for the project, the ability to meet the Purpose and Need for the expansion; consistency with Forest Plan management direction, relevant laws, regulations, and policy directives; comments received from the public during the 45-day comment period for the DEIS, and environmental impacts. We believe the Selected Alternative achieves the best balance between meeting public expectations for quality alpine skiing and dispersed recreation at White Pass, while reducing or avoiding potential environmental impacts through environmentally sensitive planning, effective Mitigation Measures and monitoring requirements. Our detailed reasons for selecting Modified Alternative 4 (the Selected Alternative) are provided in the following sections.

2.3.1 Purpose and Need

We believe that the Selected Alternative will best meet the Purpose and Need as described in the FEIS. Modified Alternative 4 will improve the winter recreational opportunities at the White Pass Ski Area by 1) Improving the quality of terrain necessary for increased safety and more enjoyable skiing experience through improvements to parking, access, and circulation and dispersal of skiers on the slopes; 2) Increasing available novice and advanced intermediate terrain, and providing a terrain distribution that better matches industry standards; 3) Expanding facilities to accommodate the increasing number of skiers; and 4) Improving early season skiing opportunities. The Purpose of and Need for Action is described in detail in Section 1.1.2.2 (see FEIS page 1-12) in the FEIS. The needs described in the FEIS are presented below, along with our rationale for selecting Modified Alternative 4.

Purpose: There is a need for improved parking, pedestrian access and traffic flow on US 12.

The Selected Alternative provides an additional parking lot, which will be constructed in the northeast corner of the SUP area between US 12, existing ski trails, and the White Pass drainfields. The new parking lot will encompass 7 acres – allowing for all parking at White Pass to take place off US 12 on days in which visitation does not exceed the CCC of 3,800. We believe the Selected Alternative will decrease the occurrence of parked-out conditions on most busy days at White Pass. We also believe that by limiting parking along US 12, the Selected Alternative will substantially lower the risk of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts when compared to the other alternatives. Also, by limiting parking along US 12, traffic flow on the highway will be improved because skier vehicles will no longer crowd the roadway and pedestrian use along US 12 will be dramatically reduced.

The Selected Alternative includes a new ticket booth associated with the new parking lot. This ticket booth will act as a second portal into the ski area, reducing the pedestrian and skier congestion in the base area and along US 12.

Overall, we believe that the Selected Alternative most appropriately meets the Purpose and Need for improved parking, pedestrian access and traffic flow on US 12.

Purpose: There is a need for increased safety on the ski slopes.

Improved Circulation and Dispersal

The Selected Alternative increases safety on the ski slopes within the SUP area by addressing circulation issues and dispersal of skiers throughout the White Pass Ski Area. The existing terrain at White Pass is generally characterized as low intermediate to intermediate on both the lower mountain and the upper mountain. However, the middle mountain is bisected by a steep cliff band, which is passable to advanced skiers only. As a result, the cliff band separates the low to moderate level terrain, causing poor circulation for all but expert skiers who can negotiate the cliff band. The existing Cascade and Main Street trails provide cat tracks for intermediate and higher level skiers to descend from the upper mountain to the lower mountain. While these cat tracks allow non-expert skiers to negotiate the cliffline, the majority of skiers at White Pass (i.e., novice to intermediate skiers) are required to negotiate the long traverses over the cliffline, resulting in unacceptably high skier densities on these trails. In addition, expert trails such as Hourglass, Cascade Cliff and Waterfall cross over these cat tracks. At these intersections, skiers of all ability levels may be found in unacceptably high densities, particularly during the mid-day lunch time and afternoon closing time. This situation results in skier conflicts and potential safety concerns along these trails.

We believe that improved circulation and dispersal of skiers are achieved by the Selected Alternative because this alternative includes new terrain in the expansion area and improvements to the existing ski area. This alternative addresses the need for increased safety, improved circulation and also creates additional novice terrain through the proposed grading on the Holiday trail, enabling it to be classified as novice (as described in Appendix B of the FEIS).

The addition of a mid-mountain food service area will provide an alternative to eating in the base area, which will improve skier distribution at White Pass. The addition of a new parking lot and ticket booth will allow for skiers to choose an alternative portal during the morning arrival, which will also improve the circulation and dispersal of skiers.

The new terrain in Pigtail and Hogback Basins will offer new skiing opportunities at White Pass, providing a greater dispersal of skiers and reduced trail densities in general. We also believe that Modified Alternative 4 best addresses the concern that skiers leaving the expansion area in the afternoon could increase skier densities beyond acceptable levels. The Selected Alternative addresses skier density

during the afternoon egress period by lowering the capacity in Pigtail and Hogback Basin, as compared to the original Proposed Action (Alternative 2, see FEIS page 2-27). The reduced capacity provides for fewer total skiers leaving the expansion area at one time, which helps reduce skier density. The grading on the Holiday trail will allow lower level skiers to leave the expansion area by riding up the *Paradise* lift and skiing down Holiday, since the grading provides a more appropriate slope gradient. Lastly, the Selected Alternative provides an alternative egress trail – Trail 4-18 (see Figure ROD-1), allowing skiers to avoid the Lower Paradise trail – again reducing skier densities on Lower Paradise. We believe that the combination of expanded skiing terrain, coupled with the improvement to the existing SUP area, provide the best solution to the circulation and dispersal concerns related to ski density.

Purpose: There is a need for improvement of terrain, facilities, and the recreational experience of the White Pass skier in response to the increasing demand.

Match to Market Demand – Novice and Advanced Intermediate Terrain

The Selected Alternative will increase and improve terrain distribution within an expanded SUP area (see FEIS Illustration 3.11-5). White Pass currently operates five lifts accessing approximately 212 acres of formal terrain. When compared to industry standards, White Pass's terrain distribution reveals a surplus of low intermediate, intermediate and expert terrain and a deficit of novice and advanced intermediate terrain, as shown in Illustration 3.11-5 of the FEIS. The shortage of novice and advanced intermediate terrain compels skiers of this ability level to ski on terrain that is below their skill level, or to negotiate terrain that is too advanced for their skill level. This was a factor in our selection of Modified Alternative 4, which increases the proportion of both novice and advanced intermediate terrain at White Pass.

Expanded Facilities to Meet Increased Demand

Since 1998, annual visitation at White Pass has been increasing, as demonstrated by the ten-year average of 108,620 annual visits and a five-year average of 109,782 visits (see FEIS page 1-15). We recognize the steady growth in demand for alpine skiing at White Pass has resulted in larger crowds, longer lift line wait times, and more crowded slope conditions. With an existing CCC of 2,670, White Pass has observed an increase in the number of days at or near capacity, as shown in FEIS Illustration 1-3.

With national visitation on the rise after a relatively flat period during the 1990s, and with the Pacific Northwest meeting or exceeding visitation records in the early 2000s, we are convinced that continued growth in demand for skiing at White Pass is expected in the future. Because the current ski area facilities have become overcrowded on peak days (i.e., weekends and holidays), we agree that White Pass has a need for additional facilities to better serve the current and anticipated growth in demand.

We believe the Selected Alternative addresses this need. Specifically, a two-story mid-mountain lodge will be constructed within the expanded SUP area that will provide limited food service, seating, and restroom facilities during the ski season. A ticket booth with composting toilet will also be constructed

adjacent to the Yakima Ski Club building. Both of these facilities will provide White Pass skiers with an alternative to the existing facilities, which not only improves skier dispersal, as described above, but also provides additional facilities to accommodate the projected growth in skier visits.

Finally, we feel the Selected Alternative best balances the needed expansion of facilities with the effects on the Hogback Basin environment, through design measures and mitigation that reduce the extent of tree removal and other impacts to sensitive riparian areas (see FEIS Sections 3.3.3.3, 3.6.3.1 and 2.4).

Improved early season skiing

From mid-November through mid-January, snow cover on the key novice to advanced terrain within the existing SUP area at White Pass is often limited, particularly below 5,000 feet elevation, and at all elevations in low snow years. The inability to provide adequate, skiable access to base area facilities during the early portion of the ski season limits the ability of White Pass to open during times when the upper mountain has sufficient snow, typically by Thanksgiving. When the lower terrain does open, snow cover remains comparatively low, which reduces the recreational experience of the White Pass skier.

We believe the Selected Alternative addresses the need for improved early season skiing by providing additional, high elevation terrain that will provide for quality skiing at times when the base area trails are marginal or not skiable. This benefit could not be realized without expansion into the Hogback Basin, based on our review of the analysis in the FEIS.

Purpose: There is a need for full integration of current Nordic and snowshoe operations into the MDP and SUP.

In 1984, the White Pass SUP was amended to include Nordic operations based on a conceptual, hand-drawn map. In 1999, the *Zig Zag* Nordic trail was constructed, but not included in the SUP. The field-fit trails have been located with Global Positioning System equipment and the current SUP was updated in 2004 to include the location of all previously-authorized Nordic trails (see FEIS Figure 1-3). The current SUP and Master Plan do not include the *Zig Zag* trail.

Based upon our review of the approval process for the Nordic trail system, we have found that the trail system was previously analyzed sufficiently under NEPA, with the exception of the *Zig Zag* trail (see FEIS Figure 1-3). While the DEIS considered inclusion of *Zig Zag* into the trail network, we are not convinced that sufficient need exists for the trail. This trail was constructed by White Pass staff without authorization from White Pass management or the USFS. The record shows that NEPA was never completed for the *Zig Zag* trail. On this basis, it is our Decision not to authorize continued use of the *Zig Zag* trail and it will not be included as part of the Nordic trail network in the White Pass MDP, SUP or operating plans. This does not, however, preclude future authorization through a separate NEPA analysis. Our Decision does incorporate the remaining Nordic trails, as mapped using Global Positioning System, into the MDP and SUP (see FEIS Figure 1-3).

Beginning in the year 2000, White Pass offered a system of snowshoe trails in the vicinity of the Nordic trail system. The snowshoe trails consist of tree markers with minimal disturbance to vegetation or soils. The current SUP and Master Plan do not include the snowshoe trail system. Similarly, the snowshoe trail system has not been sufficiently planned or analyzed under NEPA, nor has it been included in this MDP NEPA process. Therefore, our Decision does not include the snowshoe trail system and continued use will not be authorized unless additional NEPA analysis is conducted in the future.

2.3.2 How Environmental Issues and Other Resources Were Considered

In making our decision, we carefully considered the issues brought forward through public scoping (see DEIS and FEIS Section 1.5.1 – Scoping Process and Public Participation) and DEIS comment process (see FEIS Volume 3 - Response to Comments) for this project. The following section presents the significant issues identified in the EIS and explains the rationale for the selection of Modified Alternative 4 in terms of these issues. Those issues that were given particular weight in our decision are identified below as “Decision Factors” (see FEIS Section 1.5, page 1-29).

Terrain Distribution

***Issue:** The terrain in the proposed expansion area includes low intermediate level terrain to advanced-intermediate level terrain, while low intermediate terrain is already in abundance at White Pass. The proposed development has the potential to increase the amount of low-intermediate terrain.*

In our review of this issue we have determined that the Selected Alternative will best resolve the balance of terrain at White Pass. The Selected Alternative will include the development of two lifts and associated trails in the expansion area, for a net increase of approximately 85 acres of terrain. As shown in FEIS Illustration 3.11-5, the Selected Alternative will increase the proportion of novice terrain from 1 percent to 14 percent, which is only 1 percent below the market demand and is an improvement. Low intermediate terrain will *decrease* from 47 percent to 44 percent - still providing an abundance of terrain at this level. Advanced intermediate terrain will increase from 3 percent to 10 percent, which is 1 percent higher than market demand. The proportion of expert terrain will decrease from 8 percent to 5 percent to more closely match the market demand. Although low intermediate terrain remains in abundance, we find that the increase in novice and advanced intermediate terrain best suits the needs of White Pass (see ROD Section 2.3.1). None of the Action Alternatives are able to reduce low intermediate terrain to the market demand.

Soil Compaction

***Issue:** The operation of heavy machinery for the construction of chairlifts, trails, the lodge, and associated infrastructure has the potential to compact soils, particularly with no roads proposed for equipment travelways.*

We believe the Selected Alternative is the most appropriate option with respect to soil compaction. The 7-acre parking lot accounts for the majority of soil disturbance under the Selected Alternative (see FEIS Table 3.2-3, page 3-25). However, this parking lot will substantially lower the risk of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts by eliminating parking along US 12 most of the time. We find that the increase in safety along the highway is an acceptable tradeoff to the impacts to soils in this area, particularly considering that the total area of detrimental soil conditions within the White Pass Study Area will continue to be below the GPNF Forest Plan and WNF Forest Plan standard of 20 percent (USDA 1990a, 1990b; USDA and USDI 1994) (see FEIS page 3-25). Furthermore, the use of the construction techniques listed in Table 2.4-1 of the FEIS, the creation of a Travel Route Plan as specified in Mitigation Measure MM11 (see ROD Table A1), and Other Management Provisions OMP1 and OMP4 in the Selected Alternative (see ROD Table A3), will reduce soil compaction, erosion, and overall loss of soil productivity.

Water and Watershed Resources (Decision Factor)

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to affect the amount and function of Riparian Reserves within the existing and proposed SUP areas.

The Riparian Reserves within the existing SUP area have been influenced by natural processes (e.g., fire) and altered by management activities (e.g., ski area development). Other than areas permanently altered through ski area development, most riparian areas in the existing SUP area are recovering their natural function (see FEIS Section 3.3.2.3).

The Selected Alternative will result in additional disturbance to Riparian Reserves from the clearing needed for the parking lot, the expansion into Pigtail and Hogback Basins, and improvements in the existing SUP area. Many public comments on the DEIS suggested that the loss of riparian function in mature forest along the proposed Alternative 9 PCT pod is an acceptable tradeoff to confining expansion to the existing SUP area. While we appreciate the spirit of the public comments, we are concerned with the extent of tree removal, grading, and bridge construction in mature forest (particularly in northern spotted owl habitat) and along the deeply incised, perennial streams that would be required under Alternative 9 (see FEIS Section 3.5.3.1, page 3-169, and Appendix G). In contrast, the design of the Selected Alternative focuses on utilization of open glades, tree island removal, and clearing of some vegetation along ephemeral/intermittent streams. Additionally, implementation of Mitigation Measures MM3 and MM10 will reduce the indirect impacts within Riparian Reserves (see Table A1) to a more acceptable level.

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to impact wetland, stream channel and floodplain characteristics, as well as water yield and quality in a Tier II Key Watershed.

All the Action Alternatives have the potential to impact wetland, stream channel and floodplain characteristics (as well as water yield and quality in a Tier II Key Watershed). We believe, however, that

the Selected Alternative adequately balances the concern for potential impacts to wetland, stream channel and floodplain characteristics with the recreational goals of the expansion.

Within the existing ski area, many of the streams and wetlands have been altered due to past ski area construction and operations. In the proposed expansion area, the network of streams and wetlands are functioning under natural processes (see FEIS Section 3.3.2.1, page 3-50). We realize that the length of streams with potentially unstable banks in the White Pass Study Area will increase from approximately 1.5 miles under existing conditions to approximately 2.0 miles under the Selected Alternative. This represents approximately 13 percent of the total stream length in the White Pass Study Area (see FEIS Table 3.3-12). Potential sediment yields from mass wasting events that reach streams will be greater than in Alternative 2, due to the construction of egress trails 4-16 and 4-18. We believe, however that these potential impacts will be reduced through the implementation of Mitigation Measure MM11, Management Requirements MR1 and MR4, and Other Management Provisions OMP1, OMP2 (see FEIS Tables 2.4-2, 2.4-3, and 2.4-4 and ROD Tables A1, A2 and A3), which would require erosion control measures to prevent sediment from reaching streams. We also believe that the benefits of the egress trail, as we described earlier under the safety issue, outweigh the potential impact of increased sediment yield in the high elevation streams.

Lastly, our findings regarding watershed concerns apply to the riparian resources themselves. The design of the Selected Alternative incorporates reduced ski trail clearing in Riparian Reserves compared to Alternative 2, as well as the key recreation/safety improvements of Alternative 9. We are willing to accept reasonable impacts to riparian resources in order to provide for greater safety and an improved experience at White Pass, as described in the Purpose and Need (see ROD Section 2.3.1).

Heritage

***Issue:** The proposed development has the potential to affect heritage resources, including the Cascade Crest Trail, Traditional Cultural Properties and treaty rights and resources.*

We are sensitive to the fact that the Yakama Nation has expressed concern with the potential impact of ski area expansion in the White Pass area to cultural and spiritual values that are important to their people. Because of this concern, USFS officials and staff have met with Yakama Nation representatives on a number of occasions to discuss the proposed expansion plans. Hogback and Pigtail Basins are at the western edge of the lands ceded to the government by the Treaty with the Yakima of 1855. It is also within the traditional territory of the Taidnapam, or upper Cowlitz tribes. Use of the Goat Rocks area by the Taidnapam has been documented (see FEIS Appendix J), and American Indian use of the area for religious and root gathering activities may continue today.

Construction of the Selected Alternative will enter the Hogback Basin; however, we have attempted to avoid or reduce, through project design and mitigation, direct and indirect effects to resources and values

of concern to the Yakama Nation and Cowlitz Tribe to the greatest extent practical (see FEIS Section 3.9.5.2, page 3-346). We will continue to ensure that tribal access to the area remains available.

The Selected Alternative will have no effect on historic properties because none have been identified in the White Pass Study Area (see FEIS Section 3.9.5.2, page 3-346). Archaeological monitoring will be required (see FEIS Section 3.9.5.2, page 3-346) to mitigate potential impacts to as of yet unidentified heritage resources.

Recreation (Decision Factor)

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to negatively affect the existing dispersed recreation use in Hogback and Pigtail Basins and to increase the cumulative loss of backcountry recreation terrain in the southern Cascades of Washington State.

Under the Selected Alternative, White Pass Company will develop two chairlifts, associated ski trails and a mid-mountain lodge in Pigtail/Hogback Basins, which currently provide lift-served and hike-to backcountry skiing opportunities (see Section 3.11.2.2, page 3-382). The FEIS clearly displays that this Alternative would eliminate the wilderness-like experience in the expansion area (see FEIS Section 3.11.3.5, page 3-399; Section 3.17.4.5, page 3-500; Section 3.15.3, page 3-474). While we acknowledge the growth of dispersed recreation in general, we believe that the primary management of the area should be consistent with its allocation in the GPNF Plan – in this case, 2L – Developed Recreation. We are aware that the FEIS analysis and public comments suggest that development of Hogback Basin for alpine skiing will eliminate the potential for certain types of dispersed recreation or solitude. We are also aware of the cumulative loss of backcountry skiing to alpine ski area development that will occur (see FEIS Section 3.11.3.5, page 3-399). This loss was an outcome accepted by Congress when Hogback Basin was removed from wilderness in 1984 for alpine ski area development, and was anticipated during the planning process for the GPNF Plan, with the allocation of the area to developed recreation, (see FEIS Section 1.1.1.1, page 1-2).

Issue: The proposed development has the potential to cause a break in experience for PCNST users due to the placement of lifts and trails near, or across the PCNST.

The PCNST traverses the proposed expansion area, which currently provides a quality, uninterrupted, backcountry experience to PCNST users. The addition of chairlifts and trails in Pigtail and Hogback Basins will introduce visual impacts in the immediate foreground, including a crossing of the PCNST (see FEIS Sections 3.11.3.6 and 3.15.3). During the NEPA process for the expansion project, the Pacific Crest Trail Association and other PCNST users voiced concerns to us over the break in experience that would result from a chairlift crossing over the PCNST. These trail users have indicated that they would prefer an expansion with no lift crossing over the trail, and with lift top terminals not readily apparent in the immediate foreground.

Under the Selected Alternative, the PCNST will be re-routed to the Wilderness boundary within the expansion area to avoid passing under the *Basin* chairlift. We are aware that the long distance views will be different along the rerouted section of the PCNST, with decreased views of Mount Rainier and increased views of the Miriam Basin. The re-routed trail will be sited along the ridge, however, to maintain the continuity of the experience and to minimize views of the ski area structures and facilities. The portions of the original trail within view of the proposed reroute will be disguised and the remaining trail will be allowed to naturally revegetate (see FEIS page 2-41).

Issue: The Proposed Action could provide easier access to un-patrolled areas with a higher avalanche potential than Hogback or Pigtail Basins.

Hogback Basin is an area of low avalanche hazard (see FEIS Section 3.1.2.1, page 3-15). The current use of Hogback Basin for Nordic and backcountry skiing will be altered by the operations of groomers and alpine ski facilities (see FEIS Section 3.11.3.4). We realize that ski area expansion could displace current users of Hogback Basin to areas such as Miriam Basin, where the avalanche hazard is higher. With increased use, the potential for skier-released avalanches in Miriam Basin will be increased, as compared to Alternatives 1 and 9.

In arriving at our decision, we weighed this increased risk against the safety concerns with skier circulation and congestion in the existing SUP area. Dispersed users would not be prevented from using undeveloped portions of Hogback Basin under the Selected Alternative. The choice to recreate in more dangerous terrain would be discouraged through the implementation of Mitigation Measure MM15 (see ROD Table A1), requiring that White Pass Company develop a Boundary Management Plan. This plan will include the designation of no more than two gated ski area exit points along the boundary between Pigtail Basin and Miriam Basin, and one gated ski area exit point downslope of the proposed expansion area (see FEIS page 3-400). It is our Decision that these exit points will be created using portable, non-permanent materials such as ski patrol rope and poles (e.g., bamboo or plastic poles) that will be installed over the snow and will be visually consistent with other similar ski patrol devices. The plan will also include signage indicating that the skier would be responsible for any potential search and rescue costs. We believe the limitation on exit points and the gravity of the search and rescue language will help to insure that only capable backcountry enthusiasts leave the ski area through the exit points, thereby reducing the potential need for search and rescue operations. As a component of this decision, we are requiring White Pass to develop this plan for our approval prior to any operation in the expansion area.

Visual Resources (Decision Factor)

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to affect the scenic quality of the White Pass area, including Hogback Basin, from key vantage points, including the PCNST and US 12.

The primary visual effects to the PCNST are related to the continuity of experience. Our rationale in this Decision as it relates to the PCNST is presented under the PCNST break in experience discussion, above. In addition, Mitigation Measure MM22 (see FEIS page 2-61 and ROD Table A1) will require that the replacement of existing facilities within the current SUP area (outside of this decision space) will be architecturally compatible with the new facilities authorized in the new MDP under this Decision. By addressing the requirements for replacement of existing facilities, we believe there will be an improvement to the visual quality of the existing ski area, as viewed from US 12 and the PCNST.

The construction of new ski area facilities in Pigtail and Hogback Basins will require removal of vegetation, installation of lifts, and construction of buildings in an otherwise natural area. These developments may be perceived by the visitor as changes in the form, line, color and texture of the forest background (see FEIS Section 3.15.3, page 3-474). However, under the Selected Alternative, development within Pigtail and Hogback Basins will continue to meet the prescribed VQO of Retention and the associated SIL of High from key vantage points (including the PCNST and US 12) (see FEIS Section 3.15.3, page 3-474).

Social and Economic Factors

Issue: The proposed ski area expansion must be an economically viable project that responds to public demand. (Decision Factor)

The Proposed Action has the potential to negatively affect the economics of nearby communities if the expansion is not financially successful.

The FEIS analysis showed that the break-even point under the Selected Alternative will be approximately 117,823 skier visits (see FEIS Section 3.10.3.4). As shown in FEIS Table 3.10-7, annual visitation under the Selected Alternative is projected to increase to 165,453 visits, roughly 48,000 visits (or 40 percent) higher than the break even point, as illustrated in FEIS Illustration 3.10-4. As a result, we are convinced that White Pass will be able to adequately fund the development of the Selected Alternative, and the ski area will remain economically viable.

The White Pass Ski Area affects visitor spending both at the ski area (e.g., lift tickets, food and beverage, rentals) and in nearby communities (e.g., food and beverage, gas, ski equipment and apparel, rentals). The ski area provides full and part-time, seasonal and non-seasonal employment to local residents. Numerous economic development strategies and other planning documents have been prepared, or are under preparation by other governmental agencies for Lewis County, Packwood, and US 12, that assume the presence of a viable ski area at White Pass (see FEIS Section 3.10.2.3, page 3-355).

The USFS received many public comments on the DEIS, suggesting that White Pass plays a large role in the economy of Packwood. During the development of the FEIS and Response to Comments, we requested data from the Packwood community. The USFS also conducted a meeting with Packwood

business representatives in an attempt to obtain data that would allow analysis of the Packwood economy as it relates to the White Pass operation. The FEIS displays the information that was gathered (see FEIS Section 3.10.2.3, page 3-355). The data from the Packwood businesses indicated that White Pass is not a primary economic driver in Packwood. While this finding is inconsistent with the many public comments to the contrary, there was not sufficient data to make the economy of Packwood (or other communities) a major factor in our Decision. Therefore, our Decision does not attempt to maximize capacity as in Alternative 2.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to affect the roadless character of the White Pass Inventoried Roadless Area.

The White Pass Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) has been the most contentious issue raised by the public in this NEPA process. The analysis in the FEIS demonstrates that development of ski facilities in Hogback Basin will substantially diminish the roadless character of the White Pass IRA, and will likely disqualify the White Pass IRA from placement on the Inventory of Potential Wilderness Areas in the future (see FEIS Section 3.14.3, page 3-449). When considering the benefits and detriments of allowing development in the White Pass IRA, we have also considered the history of the IRA (see FEIS Section 1.1.1.1, page 1-2). Specifically, upon its release from Wilderness by Congress in 1984, the area was inventoried as roadless and allocated to 2L - Developed Recreation in the 1990 GPNF Forest Plan. While there has been a great deal of discussion about the intent of Congress in removing the area from Wilderness, we have consistently considered the fact that the 2L allocation sets the goals and desired future condition for the area, while the inventory as roadless described its character as of the writing of the Forest Plan. Section 1.1.1.1 of the FEIS (see page 1-2) provides discussion about the intent of Congress, referring to a letter from the 1984 Washington Congressional Delegation that was provided to the Secretary of Agriculture on July 7, 2005. This letter makes it clear to us that the intent of the 1984 Washington Wilderness Bill in releasing the 800-acre Hogback Basin area from Wilderness was to allow for expansion of the ski area into Hogback Basin. Coupled with the land allocation, 2L – Developed Recreation, we find that a reduction in roadless character is an impact that is consistent with the management direction for this area.

Issue: The Proposed Action has the potential to affect use of Miriam Basin in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, adjacent to the White Pass Ski Area.

Development in Pigtail and Hogback Basins will displace the current dispersed recreation use in the area. In our discussion about dispersed recreation and avalanche danger above, we outlined our Decision relative to the displacement of skiers into the Wilderness. Mitigation Measure MM15 (see ROD Table A1) would require the development of a Boundary Management Plan, as described above. We are not convinced that the Wilderness encounter guidelines would be exceeded due to the development in

Pigtail/Hogback Basin. The location of the chairlift terminals away from the crest, in conjunction with the Boundary Management Plan, will help deter skiers from entering the Wilderness.

Issue: Standards and Guidelines in the 1990 GPNF Land and Resource Management Plan do not allow development of new, or expansion of existing “recreation sites” in the Riparian Influence Area (RIA), and the plan specifies that development of such facilities “should” be no closer than 100 feet from streams, ponds, wet meadows, marshes and springs. The Proposed Action would place ski lifts, trails and other ski area infrastructure within the RIA.

Because of the presence of RIAs within the White Pass Ski Area, these Standards and Guidelines would make it impossible to develop any new alpine or Nordic trails in the 2L Developed Recreation management allocation at White Pass. Under the GPNF Forest Plan, the goal of 2L is:

“Readily accessible, appropriately-designed facilities will provide for concentrated visitation by people seeking a convenient recreational experience” (GPNF Plan at IV-101).

We believe that amending the GPNF Plan to allow for consistency under Modified Alternative 4 will in no way reduce the protection given to riparian areas. This is particularly true given the fact that Amendment 19 remains consistent with the Riparian Reserve Standards and Guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan, and with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (see FEIS Section 3.7.2, page 3-226). Amendment 19 is necessary to provide for any new expansion of ski area facilities. Because several of the proposed recreational facilities in the White Pass Ski Area would be present within 100 feet of streams and wetlands, as well as over the RIA, our Decision to select any of the Action Alternatives would have included this amendment.

Overall, we find that even though the Selected Alternative incorporates more acreage in Riparian Reserves than the other Action Alternatives (see FEIS Table 3.3-15), the facility design within the expansion area provides better avoidance and/or minimization of Riparian Reserve impacts than Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action) or Alternative 9. Part of the reason for the higher comparative acreage of development in Riparian Reserves is the inclusion of key safety-oriented projects. These include the egress trails 4-16 and 4-18, grading along Holiday, and the 7-acre parking lot (see FEIS page 3-94). We believe that these features are necessary components of the White Pass MDP. We have also found that the effects to riparian areas associated with these project components occur along higher-elevation, smaller stream reaches that are close to existing development and do not provide the same riparian functions (e.g., wood routing and recruitment, habitat connectivity) as the undisturbed Riparian Reserves in the northeast portion of the SUP area (i.e., mature forest, perennial streams – see *PCT* chair and trails under Alternative 9). For this reason, we believe that the effects to Riparian Reserves under the

Selected Alternative are justified by the improvement in the safety and recreation experience that will occur under this Alternative.

Parking and Pedestrian Access (Decision Factor)

Issue: At peak times, parking at the White Pass Ski Area is congested and White Pass guests must walk along or across US 12 to access the ski area facilities. The Proposed Action has the potential to exceed the parking capacity at White Pass and to exacerbate the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and highway traffic on US 12.

Under the Selected Alternative, the combined parking areas (existing and proposed) will accommodate approximately 3,800 visitors on capacity days. This will decrease the occurrence of parked-out conditions during peak visitation periods (see FEIS Section 3.12.3.3, page 3-418). Guests who park in the new 7-acre parking lot will have improved access to the new ticket booth and the base area, and parking along US 12 will be eliminated on all but the busiest days at White Pass. Our rationale for deciding to authorize the Selected Alternative relative to pedestrians and parking is provided in Section 2.3.1 of this ROD (Purpose and Need).

Under the Selected Alternative, White Pass Company will develop a Pedestrian Management Plan to address the need for improved safety along US 12 and issues associated with pedestrian use of the highway. The plan will describe opportunities to improve the efficiency of parking operations at the existing and proposed parking lots, prioritization of parking to allow for all available parking lots to be filled prior to parking along the highway on days when visitation exceeds the CCC, designation of highway crossing areas and other management actions that will improve the safety for arriving and departing White Pass guests.

2.3.3 Aquatic Conservation Strategy Finding and Rationale

We have reviewed the relevant analysis in the FEIS that pertains to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives described in the Northwest Forest Plan ROD (USDA and USDI 1994) (see FEIS Section 3.7, page 3-225) and we have determined that this Decision meets these objectives. In developing our rationale for this determination, we followed the direction provided on page B-10 of the Northwest Forest Plan ROD (USDA and USDI 1994). Our rationale is provided below.

We reviewed the specialists' analysis of the existing condition, as provided in the Clear Fork Watershed Analysis (USDA 1998a) and the Upper Tieton Watershed Analysis (USDA 1998b) and other pertinent analysis prepared for the FEIS, such as:

- Appendix C – Wetland and Stream Report
- Appendix E – Flow Model Technical Report and Lakes and Ponds Memorandum

- Appendix F – Geology and Mass Wasting Memorandum and Soil Compaction Memorandum
- Appendix G – Vegetation Survey Report, Addendum to the Vegetation Survey Report, and Summary of Surveys
- Appendix H – Wildlife Technical Report and Biological Evaluation
- Appendix I – Fisheries Technical Report and Biological Evaluation
- Appendix M – Conceptual Stormwater Management Plan
- Appendix N – Biological Assessment
- Appendix O – BMPs for Invasives

Based on our evaluation of the range of natural variability of important physical and biological resources described in the watershed analyses (USDA 1998a, 1998b) and summarized in FEIS Tables 3.7-FEIS 1 and 3.7-FEIS 2 (see FEIS page 3-230) and Tables 3.7-1, -2 and-3 (see FEIS page 3-304), we are confident with our finding that this Decision “meets” the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives.

In making this finding, we paid particular attention to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives and Standards and Guidelines that pertain to riparian function. The analysis of Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives at the site and fifth field scales is provided in FEIS Tables 3.7-FEIS 1 and 3.7-FEIS 2 (see FEIS page 3-230). Riparian Reserve Standards and Guidelines are evaluated in Table 3.7-3 (see FEIS page 3-312).

We recognize that this Decision will have site scale impacts, including:

- The removal of 14.7 acres of vegetation in Riparian Reserves for the construction of ski trails and other facilities (see FEIS Table 3.3-14, page 3-89).
- Clearing and grading of 11.1 acres of soils in Riparian Reserves for the development of the parking lot and other developed facilities (see FEIS Table 3.3-14, page 3-89). The new parking lot would occupy 1.58 acres of Riparian Reserves and disturb another 0.48 acre during construction. In addition, the construction of a bridge over a perennial stream for Trail 4-16 would be among the largest impacts to Riparian Reserves (see FEIS Section 3.3.3.3, page 3-88).
- Alterations to the sediment regime at the site scale - The estimated long-term increase in soil detachment under the Selected Alternative would result in an increase of 10 percent in the portion of the Study Area located in the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz watershed and 0.2 percent in the portion of the Study Area located in the Upper Tieton watershed (see FEIS Table 3.3 FEIS 4)

without the application of BMPs. The relatively small projected increase in soil detachment described in the FEIS describes soil that could be moved through erosion. Only a portion of this sediment would actually be delivered to streams. With the application of best management practices, the delivery of sediment to streams would be reduced compared to soil detachment (see FEIS Section 3.3.3.4, page 3-101).

- Alterations to the flow regimes at the site scale - The estimated increase in two-year peak flow under the Selected Alternative would result in an increase by 0.4 percent in the portion of the Study Area located in the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz watershed and 0.5 percent in the portion of the Study Area located in the Upper Tieton watershed (see FEIS Table 3.3-18). The relatively small projected increase in two-year peak flow combined with the typical amount of instrumentation error associated with measuring discharge rates indicates that the estimated increase in stream flow would not be measurable at the mouth of the Flow Model Analysis Area with current monitoring technology (see FEIS Section 3.3.3.5, page 3-108).

As described in Section 3.7 (see FEIS page 3-225) and Section 3.3 of the FEIS (see FEIS page 3-49), the site-scale effects, when combined with the effects of cumulative actions in the fifth-field watersheds, will occupy only 1.82 percent of the Riparian Reserves in the Upper Tieton watershed and 1.21 percent of the Riparian Reserves in the Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz Watershed (see FEIS Tables 3.3-20 and 3.3-22). In addition, these effects to Riparian Reserves are widely distributed throughout the 5th field watersheds (see FEIS Tables 3.7-FEIS 1 and 3.7-FEIS 2, page 3-230). As a result, the site-scale effects resulting from implementation of our Decision are limited in geographic scope and environmental effect.

In addition to the spatial scope and distribution of effects in the analysis, we considered Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements and Other Management Provisions (see ROD Appendix A) in our finding regarding the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. Tables 3.7-1 through 3.7-3 in the FEIS describe construction techniques and other mitigations that are included in our Decision and that are intended to assist in meeting the Standards and Guidelines for Riparian Reserves and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Ski trail construction using primarily tree island removal in parkland to minimize effects on riparian functions such as wood recruitment and routing (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.6, page 2-16 and FEIS Illustrations 2.3-FEIS 3 and 2.3-FEIS 4, page 2-19).
- Ski trail and facility construction over the snow when possible and without the construction of new roads (see FEIS Table 2.4-1, page 2-53 and Table 2.4-2, page 2-58).
- Lop and scatter of trees removed in the parkland to maintain woody debris and to minimize ground disturbance associated with tree removal (see FEIS Table 2.4-1, page 2-53 and Table 2.4-2, page 2-58).

- Travel Management Plan to minimize soil compaction when equipment cannot operate over the snow (see ROD Appendix A, MM 11).
- Retention of vegetation 3 feet tall and shorter in riparian areas to provide riparian shading and to maintain stable streambanks (see ROD Appendix A, MM 9).
- The use of aerial utility crossings over streams and wetlands to avoid jurisdictional impacts to these areas (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.8 and Illustration 2.3-FEIS5, page 2-22).
- Implementation of a storm water management plan to capture flows and sediment from the new parking lot (see FEIS Appendix M).

In summary, the comparatively small, localized effects of the Selected Alternative, taken in space and time with the trends in the 5th field watersheds, support our findings that this Decision “meets” the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives.

3.0 OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

3.1 Alternatives Considered

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that the USFS develop, describe, and study reasonable Alternatives to proposed actions for use of National Forest System lands. We considered a range of reasonable alternatives in arriving at our Decision, including an Alternative that would not authorize White Pass to expand their ski area (the No Action Alternative). Following is a brief description of the Alternatives that we considered in detail. FEIS Table 2.6-1 provides a summary comparison of the ski area facilities for Alternatives 1, 2, Modified Alternative 4, Alternatives 6 and 9, while Table 2.6-2 provides a comparison of the environmental consequences.

3.1.1 Alternative 1: No Action

Description: As required by NEPA, a No Action Alternative is included in the FEIS as a benchmark against which the Action Alternatives can be compared (see FEIS Figure 2-1). The No Action Alternative also serves as a means of analyzing the effects of “no future development” within the Project Area. Under Alternative 1, there would be no additional development of new facilities.

White Pass would continue to operate five lifts on approximately 212 acres of formal terrain. White Pass’ CCC would remain at 2,670 skiers. Alternative 1 would not provide for any additional alpine skiing facilities or terrain within the present permit area, nor would it affect current conditions in the adjacent Pigtail and Hogback Basins (see FEIS Figure 2-1). Construction or modification in the existing SUP area would consist of normal maintenance items and upgrading as needed, when worn or inadequate facilities

are replaced. System upgrading would conform to the currently-approved, 1979 ski area MDP and all state and county specifications.

Under Alternative 1, White Pass would not meet industry standards for terrain distribution, and the trail system would continue to suffer from bottlenecks, congestion, and poor skier circulation at many trail intersections. Because of this, the quality of the recreation opportunities available at White Pass under Alternative 1 would not meet the expectations of visitors in numerous critical areas, including the needs identified in Section 2.3.1 of this ROD.

Decision: We did not select the No Action Alternative primarily because it would not meet the Purpose and Need (see Section 2.3.1 of this ROD). If the No Action Alternative were selected, the existing Master Plan from 1979 would continue to guide developments at White Pass. We believe that the current Master Plan is outdated and in many ways not applicable to the current operation. For instance, the plan includes lifts, trails and other infrastructure in Miriam Basin, which is currently designated Wilderness. This plan does not address the potential conflicts with parking along US 12, and pedestrian access to the ski area would remain unresolved. Congestion and associated safety issues on the slopes would not be alleviated. The match of skier terrain to market demand would remain out of balance, with surpluses in low intermediate, intermediate and expert terrain, and shortages in novice and advanced intermediate terrain. There would be no adjustments to accommodate the larger crowds now visiting the White Pass Ski Area, and congestion and lift line waits would only increase. It would no longer be possible to meet the goal of providing for “concentrated visitation by people” with readily accessible, appropriately-designed facilities” (GPNF Plan, page IV-101).

3.1.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Description: Under Alternative 2, White Pass would expand into Pigtail and Hogback Basins with the development of two chairlifts, associated trails and a mid-mountain lodge (see FEIS Figure 2-2). The CCC of White Pass would increase from 2,670 to 4,250 visitors, and the terrain at White Pass would increase from 37 trails on approximately 212 acres of formal terrain to 52 trails on approximately 282 acres. The SUP area would increase by 767 acres (within Hogback Basin), as in the Selected Alternative. White Pass would operate six chairlifts and one platter lift. At full build-out, all five of White Pass’ existing lifts would remain in their current state. Two new chairlifts, the C-6 (*Basin*) and C-7 (*Hogback Express*) would be constructed. Both chairlifts would access low intermediate to advanced intermediate level terrain.

Under Alternative 2, potable water usage at the mid-mountain lodge would total approximately 225 gallons per day. Water would be supplied by transporting water in sanitized tanks to a 500gallon sanitized storage tank at the mid-mountain lodge. A separate, 10,000-gallon water tank for fire protection would also be installed. Water for both storage tanks would be transported via snowcat from the base area, with snowcat supply trips of no more than one per day (see FEIS Section 3.13.3.2, page 3-430).

Alternative 2 would require an amendment of the GPNF Forest Plan to allow for the crossing of RIAs by ski trails and other recreation facilities (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.1, page 2-14).

Decision: We did not select Alternative 2 for several reasons. Expansion under Alternative 2 would result in unacceptably high skier densities on egress trails because of the comparatively higher capacity in the expansion area. There would also be a lack of improvements to the existing SUP area to address skier density (see FEIS Appendix B). The other Action Alternatives better address this concern.

The two-lift expansion proposed in Alternative 2 would include wider ski trails and more ski trail clearing in Riparian Reserves than Modified Alternative 4, the Selected Alternative. We recognize that the Selected Alternative includes an egress trail and a parking lot in Riparian Reserves; however, the Selected Alternative reduces the ski lift and trail-related riparian impacts in Pigtail and Hogback Basin as compared to Alternative 2.

With regard to terrain distribution, Alternative 2 would not address the need for novice and advanced intermediate terrain (see FEIS Appendix B) as well as the Selected Alternative or Alternative 9.

Since Alternative 2 does not include a parking lot, skiers would be forced to continue parking along US 12. The potential conflict between traffic and pedestrians along the highway is a significant issue in the FEIS (see ROD Section 2.3.2) which is not adequately addressed by Alternative 2.

While Alternative 2 includes a two-lift expansion, similar to the Selected Alternative, it does not provide for an egress route from the bottom terminal. We identified skier dispersal and circulation as a Need for the project (see ROD Section 2.3.1). We have found that the egress trail (see Trail 4-16 in Figure ROD-1) in the Selected Alternative addresses this need better than Alternative 2.

In considering the issue relating to the PCNST, we evaluated the impacts of Alternative 2 relative to the issues associated with the PCNST (see ROD Section 2.3.2). Alternative 2 includes a chairlift that crosses over the PCNST (see FEIS Figure 2-2), resulting in visual impacts to PCNST users, as well as a break in experience along this segment of the trail. With a re-route of the PCNST, the Selected Alternative addresses these issues, while Alternative 2 does not.

We are not convinced that the ski area operator can transport water to provide for consumption and fireflow using the snow cat transportation provided in Alternative 2. This approach to water supply appears to be less efficient than a well or pipe system, as provided in the Selected Alternative. In addition, we are not convinced that the hauling and transferring of a domestic water supply can be carried out while meeting drinking water quality standards and health codes. With provisions for a water system, the Selected Alternative addresses these concerns better than Alternative 2.

Finally, we did not select Alternative 2 because it does not include any improvements to the existing ski area, including the deficiencies that hinder skier circulation, dispersal, and density.

3.1.3 Alternative 6

Description: Alternative 6 was developed to address issues associated with riparian areas in Hogback Basin, terrain distribution, and the IRA. Alternative 6 would address the Purpose and Need by including the development of one lift, similar to the Chair 6 development in Alternative 2, and associated trails in the expansion area (see FEIS Figure 2-6). Under Alternative 6, the CCC at White Pass would increase from 2,670 to 3,640. Ski terrain at White Pass would increase from 37 trails on approximately 212 acres to 44 trails on approximately 241 acres. The SUP expansion area under Alternative 6 would total 282 acres. Under Alternative 6, White Pass would operate five chairlifts and one platter lift. At full build-out, all five of White Pass's existing lifts would remain in their current state. One new chairlift, C-6 (*Basin*) would be constructed with a lift alignment as described under Alternative 2. Under Alternative 6, however, the *Basin* chairlift would be a high-speed detachable quad.

A 2.5-acre parking lot would be constructed in the northeast corner of the SUP area, adjacent to the existing drainfield. This lot would accommodate approximately 340 cars.

Under the Alternative description in the FEIS, a new permanent road, approximately 0.25-mile in length, was proposed for construction from the existing Quail trail to the base of the *Basin* chairlift. This road was to also serve as the egress trail from the *Basin* pod. The permanent road would have been used during construction of the Chair 5 pod and for maintenance of the bottom terminal after construction. In order not to increase the mileage of roads in the Clear Fork Cowlitz Tier II Key Watershed, obliteration of 0.6 mile of Road 1284.016, an existing native surface road located approximately 1 mile northwest of White Pass, was planned. However, late in the publication stages of the FEIS, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California issued a clarifying order to its September 20, 2006 decision in the consolidated cases *California v. USDA* and *Wilderness Society v. USFS*. The September decision had reinstated the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule) and enjoined certain management activities. The Court's November order clarified the scope of this injunction as follows:

“[The USFS] is enjoined from taking any further action contrary to the Roadless Rule without first remedying the legal violations identified in the Court's opinion of September 20, 2006. Such further actions by the Forest Service include, but are not limited to, approving or authorizing any management activities in inventoried roadless areas that would be prohibited by the 2001 Roadless Rule (including the Tongass Amendment), and issuing or awarding leases or contracts for projects in inventoried roadless areas that would be prohibited by the 2001 Roadless Rule, including the Tongass Amendment. The effective date of this injunction is September 20, 2006.”

Because of this court order, the road segment proposed in Alternative 6 would be prohibited. Therefore, the construction techniques described in the other Action Alternatives (which do not require use of a road) would have been implemented if we had selected Alternative 6.

Alternative 6 would require an amendment of the GPNF Forest Plan to allow for the crossing of RIAs by ski trails and other ski area infrastructure (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.1, page 2-14).

Decision: We did not select Alternative 6 because this Alternative would continue to provide an overabundance of low intermediate terrain. As shown in FEIS Illustration 3.11-5 (see FEIS page 3-390), Alternative 6 does not provide any new novice or advanced intermediate terrain (i.e., those that are needed) and it increases low-intermediate terrain from the already high 47 percent to 56 percent (see FEIS Table 3.11-2). The Selected Alternative addresses the need for novice and advanced-intermediate terrain while providing the lowest increase in low-intermediate terrain among the Action Alternatives that expand into Hogback Basin.

Like Alternative 2, Alternative 6 would cross the PCNST, resulting in visual and experiential impacts along the trail. Our rationale for not selecting Alternative 6 is the same as Alternative 2 with regard to the PCNST.

The parking lot provided in Alternative 6 partially addresses the issue regarding parking and pedestrian access (see ROD Section 2.3.2). However, the parking lot included in Alternative 6 is not of sufficient size to eliminate parking on US 12, particularly on busy days (see FEIS Section 3.12.3.4, page 3-419). The Selected Alternative addresses this issue much better than Alternative 6.

Finally, we did not select Alternative 6 because it does not address the shortcomings in the existing ski area. Our rationale is the same as described for Alternative 2.

We recognize that Alternative 6 includes improvement to the current circulation and terrain conditions, and would affect fewer acres in the White Pass IRA. However, as noted above, Alternative 6 does not provide the desired mix of terrain and actually increases the already abundant low intermediate terrain. We therefore believe that Alternative 6 would not meet the need for increased terrain diversity as well as the Selected Alternative.

3.1.4 Alternative 9

Description: Alternative 9 was developed to address issues associated with dispersed recreation, terrain distribution, visual quality and the White Pass IRA. Alternative 9 would address the Purpose and Need by including the development of one new lift (the *PCT* lift) and five associated ski trails in the eastern portion of the existing SUP area, east of the Holiday trail (see FEIS Figure 2-8). The *PCT* chairlift would access beginner to advanced intermediate terrain, and would improve the skiing below the cliff band.

Under this Alternative, the CCC at White Pass would increase from 2,670 to 3,280. Ski terrain would increase from 37 trails on approximately 212 acres, to 44 trails on approximately 260 acres. No expansion of the SUP area boundary would take place. At full build-out, all five of White Pass' existing lifts would remain in their current state.

A two-story mountain-top lodge with a 3,000-square foot footprint would be constructed at the summit of Pigtail Peak, within the existing ski area permit boundary. A 2.5-acre parking lot would be constructed in the northeast corner of the SUP area, adjacent to the existing drainfield. White Pass Company would initiate a resort-wide shuttle service to the more distant, existing parking areas to reduce the need for additional parking lot construction closer to the lodge. Under Alternative 9, the PCNST would be re-aligned to avoid passing through a new ski trail. The trail re-alignment would result in the reconstruction of approximately 225 feet of trail.

Alternative 9 would require an amendment of the GPNF Plan to allow for the crossing of RIAs by newly developed ski trails and other ski area infrastructure (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.1, page 2-14).

Decision: Alternative 9 was developed to avoid expansion into Hogback Basin and the White Pass IRA, and to focus improvements within the existing SUP area. Among the Alternatives evaluated in the FEIS, Alternative 9 provided the best match to market demand for ski terrain by ability level (see FEIS Illustration 3.11-5 and FEIS Table 3.11-2). Many public comments on the DEIS cited terrain distribution as a primary reason that we should select Alternative 9. However, we have found that with Modified Alternative 4, which includes components of Alternative 9, the terrain distribution can be met almost as well, while addressing the many needs that Alternative 9 would not meet. Specifically, the Selected Alternative addresses the need for increased dispersal of skiers on the slopes by providing additional skiing in an area that is not directly connected to the existing ski area. The expansion area will allow skiers a much larger area for dispersal. In addition, the Selected Alternative better addresses the need for expanded facilities to meet increasing demand by providing two new lifts and 767 acres of additional SUP area. The need for higher elevation terrain addressed in the Selected Alternative is not addressed in Alternative 9, which adds terrain below 5,100 feet in the *PCT* pod (see FEIS Figure 2-8). In this regard, Alternative 9 would not address the need for improved, early-season or late-season skiing.

Similar to Alternative 6, the parking lot proposed in Alternative 9 partially addresses the issues relating to pedestrian access (see ROD Section 2.3.2), but the parking lot in Alternative 9 is not large enough to eliminate parking along US 12. Thus, our rationale for not selecting Alternative 9 is the same as Alternative 6 regarding parking.

With respect to the issues (see ROD Section 2.3.2), we believe that Alternative 9 would result in greater impacts to mature forest habitat and perennial streams than the Selected Alternative. Specifically, Alternative 9 would remove mature trees in Riparian Reserves along deeply incised perennial streams

(see FEIS Figures 3-17 and 3-38), while the Selected Alternative includes the removal of tree islands in parkland and within Riparian Reserves along ephemeral streams (see FEIS Figures 3-16 and 3-37). While the Selected Alternative includes a large parking lot in mature forest, the parking area would be located near the highway and ski area in an already fragmented portion of the mature stand (see FEIS Figure 3-37), whereas the *PCT* pod would fragment a contiguous block of mature forest (see FEIS Figure 3-38). These impacts to mature forest translate directly to impacts to spotted owl habitat (see FEIS Figures 3-41 and 3-42). During the public comment period for the DEIS, many commenters implored us to select Alternative 9 because they were more willing to “accept” these impacts compared to those of an expansion alternative. While we appreciate that Alternative 9 would retain the roadless character of the White Pass IRA (see FEIS Section 3.14.2), we cannot agree that a loss of spotted owl habitat and Riparian Reserve function along perennial streams is an acceptable trade-off to expansion into Hogback Basin. In consideration of these adverse effects to riparian areas, wildlife and mature forest, we did not select Alternative 9.

4.0 MITIGATION MEASURES, MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS, OTHER MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS AND MONITORING

4.1 Process for Incorporating Measures and Provisions

In order to insure that Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, Other Management Provisions, monitoring requirements, and conditions established by other agencies (see FEIS Section 2.4, page 2-53 and Appendix A of this ROD) are carried out during project implementation, we have specified the process that will be used for planning, permitting and constructing project components. It is our Decision that White Pass will be responsible for the preparation of plans, maps and other documents, described below. USFS staff reviews, approval, and coordination associated with implementation will be funded by White Pass.

4.1.1 Planning and Permitting

An Annual Construction Plan will be prepared by White Pass and approved by the USFS for each construction season or phase. Detailed construction plans will be developed for each facet of the project, including tree removal activities, lift and trail construction, utility installation and revegetation. A topographic base of the project site will be developed at an appropriate scale in order to create the construction plans. In addition, the wetlands and streams in the project area will be delineated and a confirmation will be obtained, if appropriate, from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to the start of construction. Sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands, streams, special status species locations) in the vicinity of the project site will be flagged in the field and surveyed, as necessary. In accordance with the Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements and Other Management Provisions (see ROD Appendix A), impacts to these sensitive areas from the Selected Alternative will be avoided and/or minimized to the greatest extent practicable during the planning and implementation phases.

In addition, construction will be scheduled to minimize impacts to biological and physical resources. Specifically, construction of facilities involving significant ground disturbance will take place during the dry season (generally summer and fall) to the greatest extent possible. Ski trail clearing and construction of other facilities will take place over the snow to the greatest extent possible (see FEIS Table 2.4-1, page 2-53). Once detailed construction documents are developed for the Selected Alternative or phase of the Selected Alternative, all necessary permits and approvals will be acquired from the regulatory agencies identified in Table 2. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared by White Pass to provide documentation for, and to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit for all of the activities in the construction plan, as required. The SWPPP will include the development of project-specific BMPs. Project-specific Mitigation Measures from ROD Table A1, Management Requirements from ROD Table A2, Other Management Provisions from ROD Table A3 (see ROD Appendix A), and permit conditions from all construction permits will be incorporated into construction documents and permit applications when judged necessary by the regulatory agencies. The SWPPP will be approved by the USFS. Planning and permitting will be conducted during a 6 to 12-month period prior to the construction season.

**Table 2:
Summary of Permits, Approvals, and Consultation for the White Pass Expansion**

Agency	Action/Regulation	Description of Permit/Action
Federal:		
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	USACE Permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (USC 1344)	Authorization for discharge of dredged/fill material into wetlands and other waters of the U.S.
Environmental Protection Agency	Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 USC Section 7410-762 (PL 95-604, PL 95-95) Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended by the Clean Water Act (USC 1344) Safe Drinking Water Act, 452 USC Section 300F-300J-10 (PL 93-523)	Provide review and comments on the federal action. Provide information and technical assistance in the environmental analysis.
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Section 7 Consultation and Biological Opinion	Protection of Threatened and Endangered Species.
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	USACE Section 404 Permit Consultation Section 7 Consultation and Biological Opinion	Consultation under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Protection of Threatened and Endangered Species.
State:		
Washington Department of Ecology	Water Quality Certification (Clean Water Act Section 401) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit. Permit to Withdraw or Divert Surface or Ground Water	State approval to USACE for discharge to surface waters Stormwater Permit for stormwater discharges at construction sites. Authorize withdrawal of surface or groundwater.

**Table 2:
Summary of Permits, Approvals, and Consultation for the White Pass Expansion**

Agency	Action/Regulation	Description of Permit/Action
Washington Department of Health	Permit to upgrade on-site sewage system under Chapter 90.48 RCW and 173-240 WAC requirements.	Authorize upgrade of on-site sewage system with design flows, at any common point, between 3,500 gallons per day and 14,500 gallons per day.
Washington State Department of Ecology	Notice of Intent	Notification of well drilling
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	Hydraulic Project Approval	Authorize development activities within waters of the U.S.
Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	Determination of effects to Cultural/ethnic resources.
Washington State Department of Transportation	Approval of Highway access.	Authorize the new access point along US 12 for the parking lot.
Local:		
Yakima/Lewis County Code Compliance	Building Permit	Authorize construction of buildings, wastewater treatment facilities.
Yakima/Lewis Health District Code Compliance	Public Water Supplies	Authorize public water supply use by local (or state) health officials.
Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority	Dust Control Plan approval (WSR 00-08-007)	Prevent and reduce fugitive dust emissions from construction activities.
Lewis County Department of Environmental Health	Water well Notice of Intent (as per WAC 173-160) and Drinking Water Operating Permits (as required by WAC 246-294)	Authorize construction of well and use of ground water as public water supply.
Benton REA	Power Supply Capacity	Upgrades to Power Supply to provide additional capacity to support expanded facilities.

4.1.2 Annual Monitoring Plan

The Annual Monitoring Plan will be prepared by White Pass and approved by the USFS. This plan will include a summary of the project activities in the construction plan, a list of permit conditions and applicable Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, and Other Management Provisions (see ROD Appendix A) to be applied in each project, and guidelines for the site-scale monitoring to be performed. Annual monitoring will include all elements discussed in the Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, Other Management Practices, and any other elements as specified in the FEIS (see Section 2.4, page 2-53) and SWPPP. White Pass will complete the Annual Monitoring Plan

three to six months prior to the construction season. The Annual Monitoring Plan will be approved by the USFS prior to construction activities.

4.1.3 Construction Implementation and Monitoring

Once the necessary permits and approvals are obtained and the Construction Plan has been reviewed and approved by the USFS, construction will begin in accordance with the approved Annual Construction Plan, SWPPP, conditions outlined in agency permits, and the Annual Monitoring Plan.

Monitoring specified in the Annual Monitoring Plan will ensure that permit conditions are being followed properly for all work during the construction year. Erosion control water quality, and other monitoring will be performed according to the SWPPP and Monitoring Plan during the active construction phase and will be discontinued once the construction is complete and the sites have been declared stabilized by the USFS. Monitoring will be funded by White Pass Company and will be carried out by White Pass staff, USFS staff or outside monitoring consultants as specified in the Annual Monitoring Plan. All monitoring efforts will include oversight from the US Forest. If monitoring indicates that construction activities have exceeded thresholds or conditions established in the Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, Other Management Provisions or other permit requirements (see Appendix A), the USFS will issue a stop work order for those construction activities that have been deemed responsible for the exceedence. Additional BMPs or other remedial actions will be taken as described in the Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, Other Management Provisions or other permit requirements (see Appendix A), all of which will be included in the project-specific SWPPP. Upon approval of these remedial actions, White Pass will be allowed to continue construction activities that have been stopped. Monitoring efforts for all construction and restoration projects will be tracked in a database by White Pass Company to ensure that all monitoring requirements, permit conditions, Management Requirements, Other Management Provisions, and Mitigation Measures are implemented in an organized and efficient fashion (see FEIS Section 2.4, page 2-53).

4.1.4 Annual Monitoring Report

Subsequent to each construction season following the first phase of construction, the Annual Monitoring Report will be prepared by White Pass. This report will contain a summary of the results of the previous year's monitoring. Information from the Annual Monitoring Reports will be used by White Pass and/or the USFS to alter or supplement the current list of Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, and/or Other Management Provisions (see ROD Appendix A). Based on the results of the Annual Monitoring Report, the USFS may elect to withhold approval of subsequent construction phases until monitoring indicates that the effects have been reduced to an acceptable level. Similarly, other regulatory agencies may elect to halt onsite activities to insure that permit conditions are satisfactorily met (see FEIS Section 2.5, page 2-65).

4.1.5 Site Stabilization

The project site will be stabilized after completion of each project phase (e.g., clearing, grading, and lift construction). Inspection of the completed project site will be performed by the USFS to determine if the site is stable and that the Annual Monitoring Plan has been carried out to completion. If the project site has not been stabilized properly, the Annual Monitoring Plan will be considered active, and monitoring will continue until the site has been properly stabilized and approved by the USFS (see FEIS Section 2.5, page 2-65).

4.2 USFS Required Management Requirements, Constraints and Mitigation Measures

Table A1 in Appendix A lists all Mitigation Measures required by the USFS to avoid or minimize potential environmental harm associated with the implementation of the Selected Alternative on National Forest Service lands. Tables A2 and A3 in Appendix A list Management Requirements and Other Management Provisions that are to be included in the implementation of the Selected Alternative. These measures are described in Section 2.4 of the FEIS, and were included in the analysis of effects completed for each Action Alternative. White Pass Company, as the permittee, is responsible for their implementation. These measures are required if White Pass Company elects to initiate the construction and operation of any action authorized by this ROD.

4.2.1 Required Monitoring

Our Decision includes the incorporation of all monitoring requirements, as listed under the Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements and Other Management Provisions (see Appendix A) and the implementation process described in Section 4.1 of this ROD. The objectives are to monitor the implementation of BMPs and the effectiveness of mitigation. The plan requires monitoring at the project scale.

In addition to the monitoring requirements, the USFS will continue to conduct regular monitoring and administration of other aspects of the management and operation of the White Pass Ski Area as required under the terms and conditions of the SUP. Our decision to select Modified Alternative 4 (the Selected Alternative) for implementation is based on the site-specific analysis contained in the FEIS. We have determined that all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted. Approval of projects is contingent upon successful mitigation and monitoring results.

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In accordance with NEPA and USFS policy, public and other agency involvement was initiated early in the environmental analysis process and continued through the completion of the DEIS.

Scoping is an integral part of the environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the Proposed Action, identifying the interdisciplinary team and the preliminary issues and identifying and contacting interested and affected persons. The results of scoping are used to 1) identify public involvement methods; 2) refine the issues; and 3) explore alternatives to the Proposed Action and their potential effects.

The DEIS was developed with extensive public participation. The scoping process began with the publication of a revised Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on October 21, 2002. On November 10, 2003, the USFS sent a scoping letter to approximately 800 people on the USFS existing mailing lists. People who had participated in previous analyses for the ski area and those requesting to be included in the scoping process provided the basis for this list. News releases were published at this time, as well. Public meetings were held at the Naches Ranger Station on November 20, 2003, the Morton Community Center on November 25, 2003, and in Packwood on December 10, 2003. These meetings had three purposes: 1) provide information about the White Pass Expansion Proposal to the public, 2) brief the public on the process used to develop the White Pass Expansion Proposal, and 3) allow the public to ask questions and provide comments to the USFS regarding the White Pass Expansion Proposal and the environmental analysis process. At the close of the scoping period on January 5, 2004, 746 written responses had been received.

5.1 Response to Scoping Document and Public Meetings

There were 746 individual written comments received during the public scoping period for the Proposed Action. All issues identified through the scoping process were divided into two categories. The first category included significant issues that resulted in the formulation of alternatives to the Proposed Action, including those eliminated from detailed analysis (see FEIS Section 1.5). The second category included issues required by law, regulation, policy or that were of particular public concern, and that could be addressed in the general context of the analysis (i.e., effects disclosure, mitigation, and monitoring).

5.2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Public issues identified from the scoping process were used to guide the completion of the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan Proposal* (DEIS). The full DEIS or internet download instruction was distributed to over 1,250 individuals, organizations and other agencies on December 10, 2004. The Notice of Availability of the DEIS was published in the Federal Register on December 23, 2004 (Volume 69, Number 246) and initiated an extended 60-day public comment period that ended on February 22, 2005. There were 377 individual written letters received as a result of the DEIS comment period.

The USFS reviewed and analyzed all public comments received to determine whether we needed to: 1) modify existing alternatives; 2) develop new alternatives; 3) supplement, improve or modify the analysis; or 4) make factual corrections. All substantive comments that were received, and the USFS responses that

describe how the comments were addressed are included in Volume 3 – Response to Comments of the FEIS. Any changes or modifications to the DEIS resulting from public comments have been included in the FEIS.

5.3 Cooperating Agencies

Any agency that has jurisdiction or special expertise relative to a Proposed Action may be requested to participate as a cooperating agency. In addition, agencies can request to be included as a cooperating agency. The USFS did not make any such requests.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has participated in the White Pass process in their regulatory role under the Endangered Species Act.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

In accordance with CEQ regulations in 40 CFR Part 1505.2(b), we are required to identify the alternative or alternatives that could be considered environmentally preferable. The environmentally preferable alternative is defined by CEQ as the alternative that promotes national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA Section 101. The environmentally preferable alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented, but is ordinarily the alternative that causes the least damage to the physical and biological environment, and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.

In evaluating the range of alternatives analyzed in the FEIS, we have identified the No Action Alternative (see FEIS Section 2.3.2) as the environmentally preferable alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, no new facilities would be developed, whereas all of the Action Alternatives include tree removal, ground disturbance, and construction of new facilities.

Based on the review of the Action Alternatives, we have identified Alternative 6 to be the environmentally preferable Action Alternative. Alternative 6 provides the greatest avoidance and minimization of impacts to Riparian Reserves and RIAs in terms of new developments and conversion to a modified condition. Additionally, Alternative 6 best minimizes impacts to soil and vegetation communities of all Action Alternatives, and would leave a major portion of the White Pass IRA undeveloped.

Alternative 6 includes only one chairlift and associated trails in a reduced expansion area, as compared to Alternative 2 and Modified Alternative 4. As a result, the impacts are less than Alternative 2 or Modified Alternative 4. In addition, Alternative 6 includes tree removal in parkland habitat as opposed to mature forest, as in Alternative 9. Any disturbance to Riparian Reserves in Alternative 6 is primarily along

ephemeral streams or intermittent channels. In contrast, Alternative 9 would remove large wood along deeply incised, perennial streams.

Although Alternative 6 is the environmentally preferred Action Alternative, we believe that Modified Alternative 4 (the Selected Alternative) best balances the Purpose and Need for ski area expansion at White Pass with the necessary resource protection.

7.0 FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

7.1 National Forest Management Act

The ski area expansion activities under the Selected Alternative are within the Developed Recreation Management Prescription RE-1 and Management Area 2L, as described in the Forest Plans. All activities that will occur on NFSL, as described in this ROD, are in compliance with the relevant Management Requirements set forth in the National Forest Management Act.

7.1.1 Consistency with the Forest Plan, as Amended

Our decision to implement the Selected Alternative is consistent with the long-term goals and objectives of the *Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*, as amended, and the *Gifford Pinchot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*, as amended. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines for Management Prescription RE-1 – Developed Recreation (WNF) and Management Area 2L – Developed Recreation (GPNF). The goal of Management Prescription RE-1 is to “Provide developed recreation in an Urban to Semi-Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum setting. This prescription is applicable to existing and potential developed recreation sites within the full spectrum of Recreational Opportunity Spectrum settings” (USDA 1990b, IV-159). The Desired Future Condition for 2L is as follows: “Roads, buildings, ski lifts, tables, docks, and other physical facilities are evident, but design and construction will repeat the color, shapes and lines of the surroundings. Openings usually exist to accommodate facilities and provide scenic views; trees and other vegetation will vary widely in type and size” (USDA 1990a, IV-101).

Based on our review of the Forest Plan and the analysis disclosed in the FEIS, we believe our Decision to authorize Amendment 19 to the 1990 GPNF Plan is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan. This amendment will modify the GPNF Standards and Guidelines to allow for downhill ski trails, other ski area infrastructure to cross RIAs. By doing so, it establishes consistency between the planned facilities of the expanded White Pass Ski Area that are within the RIA and the riparian Standards and Guidelines for developed recreation sites (GPNF Plan, page IV-70). Amendment 19 makes it possible to upgrade or expand recreation infrastructure at White Pass, without degrading riparian values (see FEIS Section 2.3.1.1, page 2-14). This amendment does not adjust management area boundaries or prescriptions.

We have also determined that the Selected Alternative and Amendment 19 are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Riparian Reserves, as described in the Northwest Forest Plan ROD (USDA and USDI 1994) based on the analysis provided in Section 3.7 of the FEIS.

Required surveys for Survey and Manage species were conducted to existing protocols for the six terrestrial mollusk and amphibian species with habitat in the White Pass Study Area. The species status, habitat requirements, ecology, potential to occur in the White Pass Study Area, and nature of occurrence are listed in Table 3.6 FEIS1 of the FEIS. Detailed information regarding these species is also provided in the *Wildlife Technical Report and Biological Evaluation for the White Pass MDP* located in Appendix H of the FEIS. It was determined that Modified Alternative 4 (the Selected Alternative) may impact individuals but would not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing (see FEIS Section 3.6.3.3 and Table 3.6 FEIS1).

Surveys were also conducted to protocol for Survey and Manage plant species (see FEIS Section 3.5.2.3 and 3.5.3.2). None were found during the surveys. During an earlier analysis effort for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion, *Rhizomnium nudum* was considered a Survey and Manage species and was found within the expansion area. During the second annual review for Survey and Manage species in 2003, however, it was removed from the list because of its numerous occurrences in the Cascade Range and Olympic National Park in Washington State (see FEIS Section 3.5.2.3). Consequently, there will be no impacts to Survey and Manage plant species resulting from implementation of the Selected Alternative.

The FEIS also references, and incorporates information from, relevant watershed analyses, including the *Clear Fork* and *Upper Tieton River Watershed Analyses* (USDA 1998a, 1998b). These analyses indicate that short-term effects will result from the implementation of the project. Based on the analyses in these studies, we have determined that the Selected Alternative will not prevent or retard the attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives over the long-term, at the fifth field (Upper Clear Fork Cowlitz and Upper Tieton River) scale (see FEIS Section 3.7, page 3-225).

7.2 Endangered Species Act

Consultation on the Selected Alternative was conducted with the USFWS in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. A Biological Assessment (USFS and USFWS 2006a – FEIS Appendix N) was prepared to describe the effects of the Selected Alternative on the Endangered Species Act-listed wildlife species and submitted to the USFWS for formal consultation on September 8, 2006. On November 9, 2006, USFWS provided a Biological Opinion (USFWS 2006-F-W0310) stating that the White Pass Ski Area Expansion is “not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of northern spotted owl and is not likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat.” The USFWS concurred with the USFS determination that Selected Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect gray wolf, and that there will be no effect to Canada lynx, grizzly bear, bald eagle, or marbled murrelet (see FEIS Appendix N - Biological Assessment).

Surveys were conducted for Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive plant species in the White Pass Study Area between 1987 and 2004 (see FEIS Section 3.5.2.3). The list of species suspected to occur within the project area is available in Table 3.5-3 of the FEIS. None of these species were located during the numerous botanical surveys completed at White Pass. As a result, no impacts to known or previously documented Protected, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive plant species are expected to occur (see FEIS Section 3.5.3.2).

FEIS Appendix I contains a Revised Fisheries Technical Report and Biological Evaluation, which was prepared to supplement the analysis of fisheries resources for the FEIS. The analysis contained in the document was updated from the Fisheries Biological Evaluation that accompanied the Draft EIS. The Revised Fisheries Technical Report and Biological Evaluation assesses the impacts of the Action Alternatives on federal proposed, threatened, and endangered species under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, USFS sensitive species were included in the revised Biological Evaluation.

The determination for this project relative to bull trout is **No Effect** under all Action Alternatives. The project **will not jeopardize the continued existence** of redband/inland rainbow trout, and if it was listed the determination for this project would be **No Effect** under all Action Alternatives.

Steelhead and Essential Fish Habitat for Chinook and Coho salmon

The determination for Middle Columbia River steelhead and Essential Fish Habitat relative to all projects occurring in the Upper Tieton watershed is **No Effect** under all Action Alternatives, because steelhead passage to the Upper Tieton watershed is blocked by Rimrock dam. Predicted effects to water quality or fish habitat above the dam would have no effect downstream due to the buffering affects of the dam.

The effects determination for this project relative to Lower Columbia River steelhead and Chinook and coho salmon is **No Effect** under all Action Alternatives. Similarly this project will have **No Effect** on Essential Fish Habitat for Chinook and coho salmon under all Action Alternatives. Habitat occupied by anadromous fish is over 8 miles downstream of the project area. The permanent clearing of Riparian Reserves (on intermittent stream channels) will potentially increase some localized sediment movement downstream as discussed in the Sediment section. This potential effect would be buffered by Knuppenberg Lake, so downstream resident fish populations in Millridge Creek and the Clear Fork Cowlitz River would not be adversely affected.

Based on the effect determinations for fisheries resources, no formal consultation with the USFWS or NOAA Fisheries regarding fish was required for this analysis.

7.3 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule)

We took into consideration the requirements of the 2001 Roadless Rule and the delegation of authority criteria for decisions relative to activities occurring within IRAs that are provided in I.D. 1920-2006-1. As described in FEIS Section 3.14.3.1 (page 3-450), the portion of the Goat Rocks Adjacent IRA within the boundary of the current White Pass SUP area, has been substantially developed. The Selected Alternative would include additional tree removal in the Goat Rocks Adjacent IRA. Only those trees within the necessary clearing widths for chairlifts, ski trails and the mid-mountain lodge would be removed. This timber cutting would fall within the Roadless Rule exception at 36 CFR 294.13(b)(2): “The cutting, sale or removal of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited by this subpart.” Future timber cutting necessary for ski trail maintenance, lift reconstruction, or new trail development would be consistent with the Roadless Rule exceptions. No new activities are planned within the William O. Douglas IRA.

Although we have selected a design that would utilize, to the greatest extent possible, existing openings with clearing focused on tree islands rather than full vegetation removal, 21.5 acres of vegetation removal would be required within the White Pass IRA (see FEIS Section 3.14.4, page 3-452). Only those trees within the necessary clearing widths for chairlifts, ski trails and the mid-mountain lodge would be removed. This timber cutting would fall within the Roadless Rule exception at 36 CFR 294.13(b)(2): “The cutting, sale or removal of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited by this subpart.” Our Selected Alternative does not include road construction, and the planned ski area developments are not a prohibited activity under the Roadless Rule.

We have also determined that this ROD is within our decision authority under I.D. 1920-2006-1, since it falls within the delegated authority exception described in FSM 1925.04a2.b: “The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity and not otherwise prohibited under the land and resource management plan.” As described above, tree removal is incidental to ski area developments within the White Pass expansion area, and is consistent with the GPNF Forest Plan Management Prescription 2L, which specifically provides that “Trees may be removed to improve a ski area, provide a scenic view, or accomplish other recreational enhancements” (GPNF Plan, page IV-102).

7.4 Aquatic Conservation Strategy

Our findings relating to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy are provided in ROD Section 2.3.3 - Aquatic Conservation Strategy Finding and Rationale.

7.5 Other Relevant Laws and Regulations

We have considered all other relevant laws and regulations that this project may affect. This includes, but is not limited to, NEPA, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, the Clean Air Act of 1977 as amended, the Clean Water Act of 1972, Protection of Wetlands Executive Order 11990, Invasive Species Executive Order 13112, Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898, Protection of Migratory Birds Executive Order 13186, Protection of Floodplains Executive Order 11988, Indian Sacred Sites Executive Order 13007, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, and the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. Government-to-Government consultation has been carried out with the affected tribes (the Yakama Nation and the Cowlitz Tribe) (see FEIS Section 3.9.4, page 3-344). Archaeological surveys were also conducted in accordance with 36 CFR 800, the National Historic Preservation Act, and Forest Plan direction and policy. There were no National Register eligible, listed or potentially eligible cultural properties identified within the project area (see FEIS Section 3.9.2, page 3-342).

In addition, we have considered numerous documents incorporated by reference in the FEIS. We have also considered the environmental effects and consequences disclosed in the FEIS and comments received during the public involvement process. We have concluded that our decision to approve the Selected Alternative with the necessary Mitigation Measures, Management Requirements, Other Management Provisions and monitoring requirements meets all applicable laws, regulations, and land policies, and is in the public interest.

8.0 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

If no appeals are filed, this decision may be implemented no sooner than 45 days, plus 5 business days, after the date the legal notice of this decision appears in the newspapers of record: the *Wenatchee World* (Wenatchee, Washington) and *The Columbian* (Vancouver, Washington). If an appeal is received, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal decision. Implementation will be carried out as described in Section 4.1.

9.0 ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

This decision is subject to appeal only by individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period pursuant to USFS regulations at 36 CFR 215.6. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14 (Appeal Content). The notice of appeal must be postmarked, hand delivered, or faxed to the Regional Forester, ATTN: 1570 Appeals, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623, FAX, (503) 808-2255; or sent electronically to appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us within 45 days of the date of publication of this notice in *The Wenatchee World* and *The Columbian*. Hand deliveries may be made to

the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, 333 SW First Avenue, Portland, OR between 7:45 AM and 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. The publication date of the legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Electronic appeals must be submitted only to the email address shown above as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format or Adobe portable document format (pdf) only. E-mails in other formats or containing viruses cannot be accepted.

White Pass Company, the affected applicant, may alternatively appeal this decision pursuant to 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. Any written notice of appeal of this decision by the applicant under 36 CFR 251 must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.90, Content of Notice of Appeal. The notice of appeal must be postmarked, hand delivered, sent electronically, or faxed to the Appeal Reviewing Officer within 45 days of the date on the notice of the written decision being appealed. The Appeal Reviewing Officer for this project is: Regional Forester, ATTN: 1570 Appeals, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623, FAX, (503) 808-2255; email, appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

Simultaneously, a copy of the appeal should also be mailed to the Deciding Officers, Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Supervisor James Boynton and Gifford Pinchot Forest Supervisor Claire Lavendel, c/o Randy Shepard, 10237 Highway 12, Naches, WA 98937; Fax: (509) 653-2638; email: appeals-pacificnorthwest-okanogan-wenatchee@fs.fed.us.

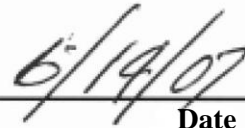
For Information, Contact:

Randy Shepard
Naches District Ranger
10237 US Highway 12
Naches, WA 98937-9254
(509) 653 1410

comments-pacificnorthwest-wenatchee-naches@fs.fed.us



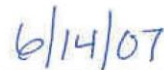
James Boynton
Forest Supervisor
Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests



Date



Claire Lavendel
Forest Supervisor
Gifford Pinchot National Forest



Date

10.0 REFERENCES

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- U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of the Interior. 1994. Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl
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- U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Biological Assessment for the White Pass Expansion Proposal.
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Appendix A

**Table A1:
Mitigation Measures for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Mitigation Measures identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. These plans will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.			
Mitigation ID	Water and Watershed Resources	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM1	All proposed stream and wetland crossings by utilities will use aerial crossing structures to prevent direct impacts to stream channels or wetlands. The crossing structures will include a rigid conduit over the jurisdictional limit of the stream and/or wetland and bracing to anchor the conduit in place. Project design will be modified to the extent that a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit will not be required from the Army Corps of Engineers.	High	Section 404 (b) (1) of the Clean Water Act guidelines for sequencing of impacts to Waters of the U. S. (avoidance)
MM2	Water quality monitoring for parameters (e.g., turbidity, pH, temperature.) before, during, and after completion of the project will be performed to ensure that the erosion control practices in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) are implemented, effective and trigger appropriate responses.	Moderate	Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System)
MM3	Riparian Reserves will be protected to the fullest extent practical by flagging the clearing limits and any trees to be removed in the field, which will be approved by the USFS prior to ground disturbance. Trees cleared will be felled towards stream channels and left on site to provide in-channel LWD and streambank stability. Ski trails crossing streams and Riparian Reserves will be narrowed to minimize future loss of LWD. Riparian understory vegetation adjacent to stream channels will be avoided where possible to maintain bank stability and channel shading. The exception will be the new parking lot where full clearing will occur.	Moderate	Logic dictates that leaving LWD in Riparian Reserves and stream channels would help to maintain CWD recruitment as compared to removing downed trees from these areas.
MM4	White Pass Company would develop a Spill Prevention and Response Plan, which would be included in the SWPPP as part of the construction documents. Petroleum products will not be discharged into drainages or bodies of water. No fuels or construction machinery will be stored within Riparian Reserves.	Moderate	Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System)
MM5	Bridge crossings installed over intermittent/perennial channels will be completed in a single span to minimize in-water work. All footings will be constructed above the bankfull channel width. Additional short and long-term erosion control measures (e.g., erosion blanket, straw bales, rip-rap.) and water quality monitoring (e.g., pH, turbidity) will be specified in the SWPPP for the bridge crossing projects.	Moderate	Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System)

**Table A1:
Mitigation Measures for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Mitigation Measures identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. These plans will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.			
MM6	Culverts will be designed to accommodate 100-year flows, and debris passage. This Mitigation Measure will occur in conjunction with MR2.	High	Follow USFS and WDFW Memorandum of understanding (USFS and WDFW 1997) for all projects in waters on Forest Service lands in the State of Washington.
MM7	Stormwater management facilities will be installed in all proposed parking areas.	Moderate	Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System)
MM8	Wetland impacts will be avoided by maintaining the existing contours and drainage patterns in wetlands that intersect proposed ski trails. Snow bridges will be utilized over the drainages and wetlands for the trail crossings. These conditions will be specified in the project-specific SWPPP.	Moderate	Section 404 (b) (1) of the Clean Water Act guidelines for sequencing of impacts to Waters of the U. S. (avoidance)
MM9	Where clearing is proposed in streams (RIAs) or wetlands, vegetation removal would be conducted by hand/chainsaw. No heavy equipment would operate in streams or wetlands. Trees may be felled away from streams or wetland areas and removed by heavy equipment operating from uplands, provided that no disturbance to streams or wetland soils occurs. Saplings and shrubs, where present, will be maintained at a height of 3 feet above ground to provide thermal shading.	Moderate	Section 404 (b) (1) of the Clean Water Act guidelines for sequencing of impacts to Waters of the U. S. (avoidance)
MM10	Since understory vegetation is naturally limited in closed canopy forests, native shrub and herbaceous species, where available, will be planted within the inner gorge of stream channels in areas where removal of closed canopy forests is proposed, to provide stream shading.	Low	No documentation available for the local area. Logic dictates that shading would be provided by shrubs.

**Table A1:
Mitigation Measures for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Mitigation Measures identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. These plans will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.			
Mitigation ID	Geology and Soil Resources	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM11	White Pass Company would create a Travel Route Plan (TRP) for the SWPPP to minimize compaction of soils by limiting equipment to designated travel ways and limiting the number of trips over any given travel corridor (with the exception of over the snow travel). Equipment mobilization will occur over the snow, slash, downed logs, or tree limbs to the extent possible to minimize soil compaction. Other equipment or materials will be flown into the construction site as necessary. Upon the completion of construction, the equipment will leave the construction area over the ground/slash. The SWPPP will specify conditions under which 'over-the-ground' access will be allowed, in the event of low snow cover or poor snow conditions.	Moderate	See Appendix F for a literature review of soil compaction.
Mitigation ID	Heritage Resources	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM12	Lift towers will be located below ridge high points to minimize potential disturbance of Yakama Tribe spiritual values.	Moderate	Logic dictates that reducing the visual impact to ridgelines would reduce the impact to tribal members viewing the ridgeline.
MM13	A qualified archaeologist will monitor high probability areas during construction activities that involve ground disturbance.	High	Documentation of previous discoveries (Beidl, pers. comm.)
MM14	Tribal members will be afforded an opportunity to monitor construction activities that involve ground disturbance.	Low	unverified
Mitigation ID	Recreation	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM15	White Pass Company would develop a Boundary Management Plan to manage use of Goat Rocks Wilderness and the area known as the "Grand Couloir" by White Pass skiers. The Boundary Management Plan will include designation of no more than two gated ski area exit points along the boundary between Pigtail Basin and Miriam Basin. The Boundary Management Plan will also include one gated ski area exit point downslope of the expansion area. The plan will also include signage indicating that skiers will be responsible for any potential search and rescue costs. A similar Boundary Management Plan has been successful at Mt. Baker Ski Area.	High	Boundary Management Plan monitoring for Mt. Baker Ski area (Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest data).

**Table A1:
Mitigation Measures for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Mitigation Measures identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. These plans will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.			
MM16	Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail users will be advised of where and when construction activities will be taking place.	Moderate	Naches Ranger District data concerning other trail construction projects and signage (USFS-Naches Ranger District 2004)
MM17	No construction-related helicopter flights will occur during high-use weekends and holidays.	High	National Visitor Use Monitoring data indicate high use periods (USFS 2002c)
MM18	Any danger tree, as defined by federal or state regulations, will be felled and retained onsite.	High	WAC 296-54-505 Federal OSHA, Logging Operations 1910.266
Mitigation ID	Visual Resources	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM19	Buildings, towers and terminals will be painted with a color blending with the area.	High	USDA 1995
MM20	Clearing, if necessary for ski trails adjacent to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, would be designed to reduce the visual impact by feathering the clearing limits, leaving clumps of vegetation to screen towers, cutting stumps flush to the ground, and not leaving large amounts of woody debris visible from the Trail.	High	USDA 1995
MM21	The expanded parking area will be designed to minimize the visual impact from US 12 by leaving existing vegetation along US 12.	High	USDA 1995 and Visual Simulation (Figure 3-45)
MM22	The replacement of existing facilities (not part of the proposed development), will be similar in character and architecturally compatible with the established landscape (USDA 1990b). Additionally as detailed in USDA 1990a, reconstruction of facilities would comply with the approved site development plan.	High	USDA 1990b and USDA 1990a

**Table A1:
Mitigation Measures for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Mitigation Measures identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. These plans will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.			
Mitigation ID	Vegetation	Effectiveness	Documentation
MM23	Relocating of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail would be done to avoid the removal of trees over 8 inches DBH wherever possible. The Trail would be constructed to pack and saddle standards (a 24-inch mineral soil tread and 6-foot corridor cleared of trees and woody shrubs).		

**Table A2:
Management Requirements for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Management Requirements identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate.	
Management ID	Water and Watershed Resources
MR1	Project-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) will include additional erosion protection (such as two rows of silt fence, straw bales and/or more permanent structures such as logs) to be provided between streams and construction areas close to stream channels.
MR2	Work will be performed in accordance with HPA specifications. All channel modification proposals will be reviewed and approved by the USFS prior to construction.
MR3	For construction of facilities (except utilities specified in MM1 in Table 2.4-2), if mechanical clearing, grading, excavation, or soil movement is to be performed within a jurisdictional stream or wetland, a Section 404 permit will be obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a qualified construction monitor will be onsite to ensure that all applicable Best Management Practices are followed as specified in the project-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) or permit conditions.
Management ID	Geology and Soil Resources
MR4	Forest clearing in areas susceptible to mass wasting will be minimized to the extent practical during trail layout and construction. The area of grading and soil compaction will be reduced by limiting access by construction equipment and drainage structures for stormwater and erosion control will not divert water into areas of mass wasting potential.
MR5	For projects proposed in Landslide and Talus landtypes and on slopes steeper than 60 percent within landtypes B and C, a qualified engineer or geologist will assist in the final design of ski area facilities to minimize the effects of unstable slopes.
Management ID	Vegetation
MR6	During construction, a USFS botanist, or equivalent specialist, would assist construction crews with layout of project components to avoid locations of threatened, endangered, sensitive, and survey and manage plants. If any new populations of special status plant species are encountered during the construction process, work would be suspended in that area until the USFS botanist is consulted and potential adverse impacts mitigated.
MR7	Provisions in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests Weed Management and Prevention Strategy, and Best Management Practices (USFS 2001) would be applied to prevent the establishment and spread of noxious weeds (see Appendix O).
Management ID	Wildlife
MR8	If the presence of any special status species is determined in the area affected by the Action Alternatives, the Forest Service Biologist, or equivalent specialist, would be immediately notified and management activities altered as appropriate. If any new populations of special status species are encountered during the construction process, work would be suspended in that area until the USFS Biologist is consulted and potential adverse impacts mitigated.
MR9	Evaluation of the requirement for surveys for special status species will be conducted in all areas where suitable habitat is determined by a Forest Service approved biologist. If the presence of these species is determined to be in an area affected by the Action Alternative, the Forest Service Biologist will be immediately notified and management activities altered as appropriate.

**Table A2:
Management Requirements for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Management Requirements identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate.	
MR10	If helicopters are planned for use, seasonal restrictions (March 1 – July 31) would be implemented during the Northern Spotted Owl nesting season if protocol surveys are not current. Seasonal restrictions would not apply if surveys are current and no owls are found.
Management ID	Recreation
MR11	Helicopter operation will be restricted to areas outside designated Wilderness areas.
Management ID	Visual Resources
MR12	Any new buildings will adhere to a Cascadian Architectural theme per the built image guide.
Management ID	Land Use
MR14	Control actions will be initiated when conditions that establish the physical, biological, or social character of the wilderness, as determined by the LAC, are exceeded.
Management ID	Air Quality
MR15	A Dust Control Plan will be obtained from the Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority to prevent and reduce fugitive dust emissions from construction, as per WSR 00-08-007.
Management ID	Soil Erosion and Sediment Control
MR16	Low pressure tires/tracks will be used by all construction equipment to reduce soil compaction.
MR17	No equipment will be allowed to travel over project area during wet conditions as specified in the SWPPP.

**Table A3:
Other Management Provisions for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**

The Other Management Provisions (OMP) identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. All OMPs will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.	
Provision ID	Geology and Soil Resources
OMP1	During construction, potential effects from soil erosion and sedimentation will be minimized by seeding, spreading straw, and/or the use of erosion control blankets on all disturbed areas as soon as possible. Erosion control specifications will be contained in project specific construction plans and the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP will be reviewed and approved by the USFS prior to construction.
OMP2	In graded areas, topsoil will be removed and stockpiled for replacement onto the graded area after construction is completed. During construction, topsoil will be stored using approved erosion and sediment control methods, as described in the SWPPP in order to avoid erosion. Soil will be covered to prevent erosion during inclement weather.
OMP3	Dust abatement measures will be implemented should conditions warrant during construction. This will include periodic watering of dry, exposed soils using the existing White Pass water supply. These measures will be included in the Dust Control Plan described in MR15.
OMP4	If flooding or weather results in detrimental erosion or sedimentation, construction will stop until the conditions improve. These conditions will be specified in the construction plan (SWPPP).
Provision ID	Vegetation
OMP5	White Pass Company will develop Vegetation Management Guidelines in conjunction with the preparation of construction plans. These guidelines will address site stabilization after construction, revegetation procedures, danger tree removal, invasive species management, and vegetation maintenance within the ski area. All guidelines will be developed and approved in conjunction with the USFS.
Provision ID	Wildlife
OMP6	Snags that are identified as danger trees will be felled and retained onsite.
OMP7	Animal proof containers will be used for waste disposal to prevent habituation of wildlife to human food sources.
Provision ID	Watershed Resources
OMP8	No snow grooming will take place within riparian or key watershed areas unless there is a minimum of 3 feet of snow pack.
OMP9	Snow bridges will be utilized at ski trail stream crossings so that culverts and bridges will not be needed. If/when the snow melts a temporary corduroy crossing (felled tree debris) over ephemeral and intermittent streams will be utilized. Snow bridge construction will become an annual winter operation measure.
OMP10	Temporary corduroy crossings (felled tree debris) over intermittent and ephemeral streams will be utilized during construction and removed after the completion of the implementation phase (see Table 2.3.1-2 for assumptions). Approval for the technique (based on site specific conditions at the time of construction) will be obtained from the USFS, as specified in the project-specific SWPPP.





















**Table A3:
Other Management Provisions for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion**







The Other Management Provisions (OMP) identified below will be included in the site plans and construction plans, as appropriate. All OMPs will be approved by the USFS prior to authorization for construction.	
Provision ID	Recreation
OMP11	If skier densities on egress trails increase to unacceptable levels, as determined by the White Pass Mountain Manager or the White Pass Ski Patrol during routine operations or ski patrol activities, the Hogback Basin lifts will be closed earlier than the other lifts, to reduce crowding on the egress trails. The timing of these lift closures will be determined during operations to ensure that the objective of the staggered lift closure is met.

Figures

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

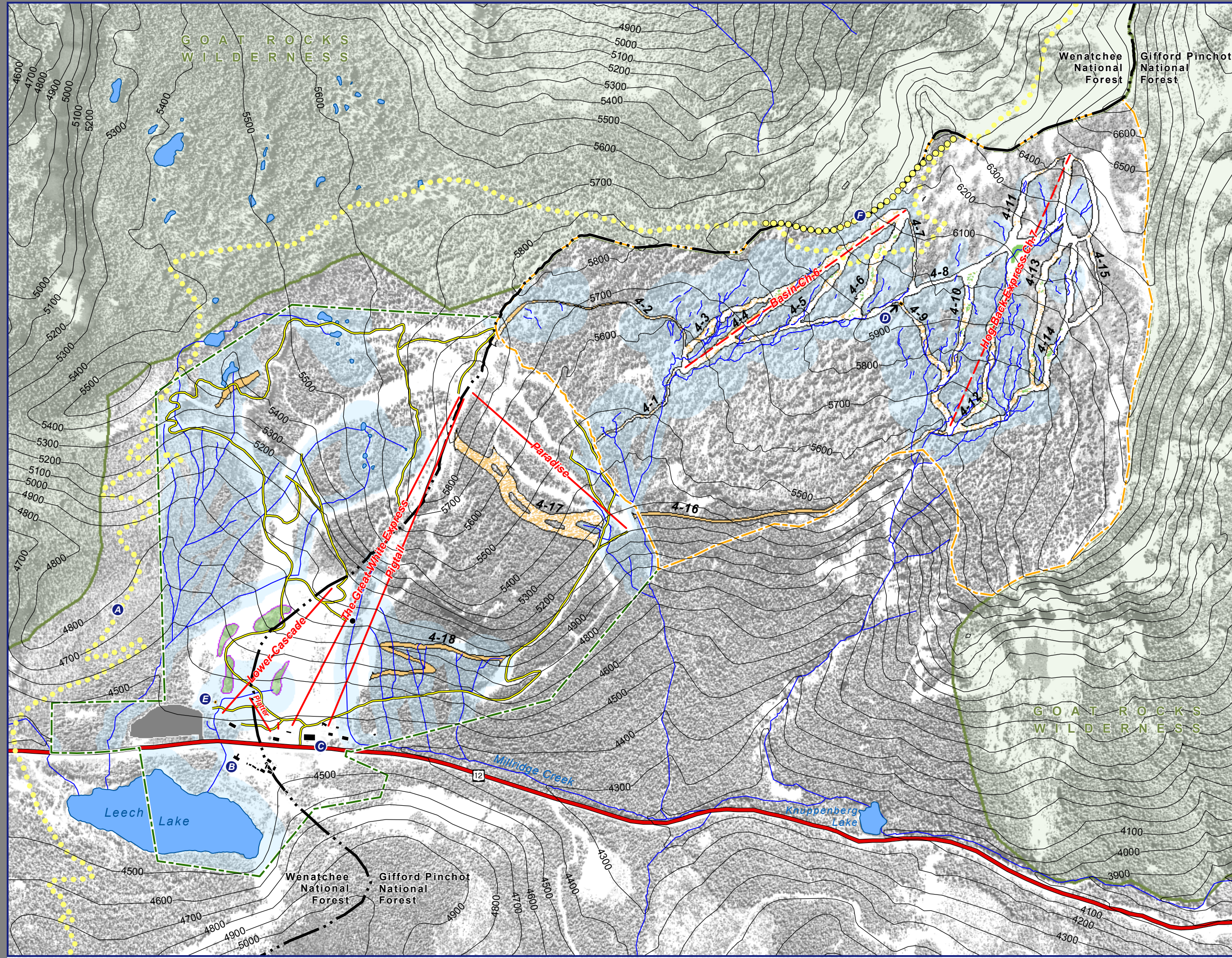
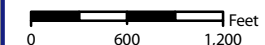
LEGEND

-  Existing Lifts
-  Proposed Lifts
-  Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
-  PCNST Re-Route
-  Existing Alpine Trails
-  Proposed Trail Numbers
-  Proposed Alpine Trails
-  Proposed Revegetation
-  Tree Islands
-  Tree Island Removal
-  Trail Grading
-  Existing Buildings
-  Proposed Buildings
-  Existing Roads
-  Proposed Parking Lot
-  Streams and Riparian Reserves
-  Wilderness Areas
-  National Forest Boundary
-  Existing Special Use Permit Boundary
-  Proposed Special Use Permit Expansion

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|
|  | Pacific Crest N.S.T. | Existing |
|  | Village Inn, Store, Gas Station | Existing |
|  | Day Lodge | Existing |
|  | Mid-Mountain Lodge | Proposed |
|  | PCNST Re-Route | Proposed |
|  | Ticket Booth | Proposed |



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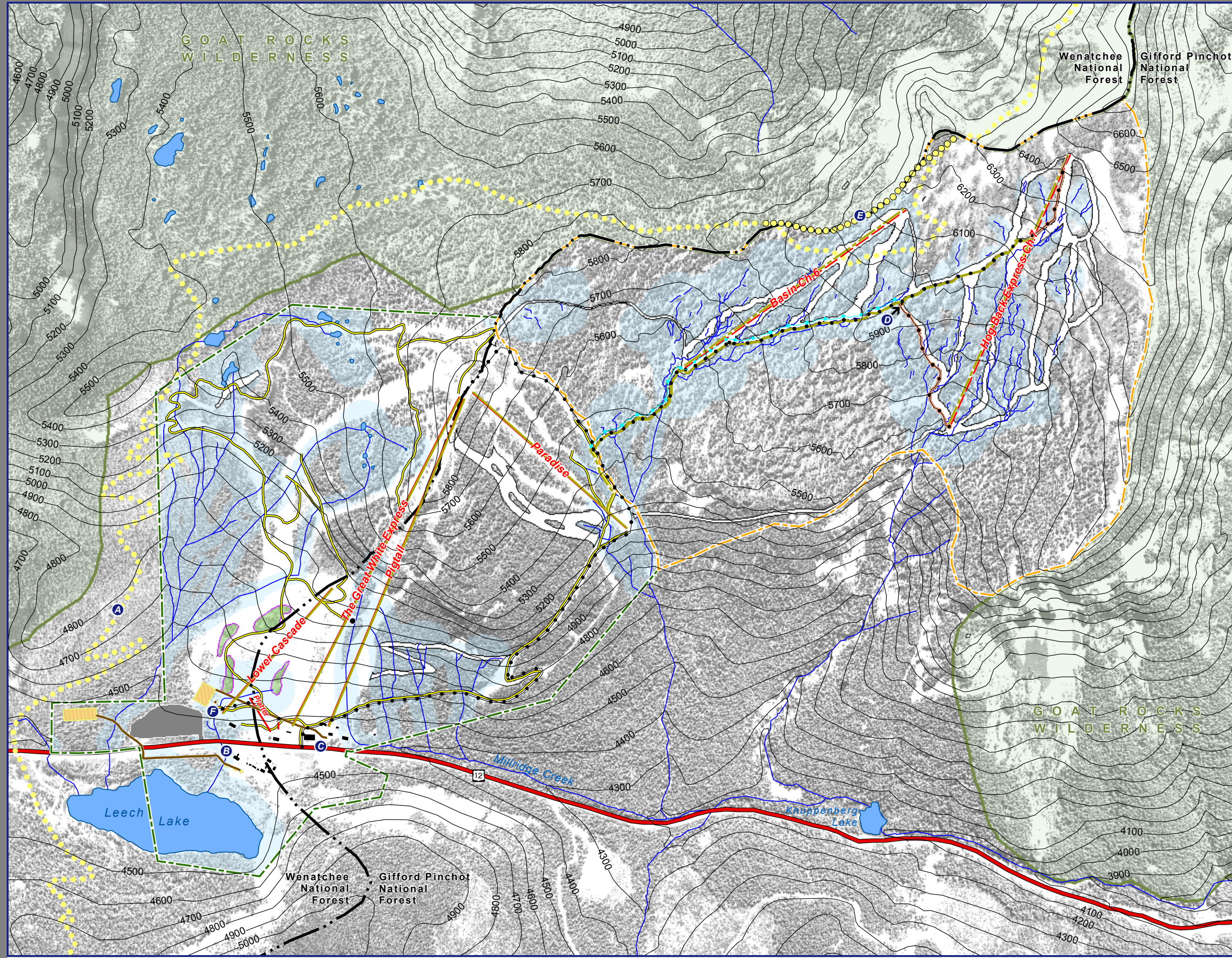


SELECTED ALTERNATIVE Utilities

LEGEND

- Existing Communication
- Proposed Communication Only
- Proposed Water
- Existing Power
- Proposed Power Only
- Proposed Power & Communication
- Existing Wastewater
- Existing Drainfields
- Existing Lifts
- Proposed Lifts
- Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
- PCNST Re-Route
- Existing Alpine Trails
- Proposed Alpine Trails
- Proposed Revegetation
- Existing Buildings
- Proposed Buildings
- Existing Roads
- Proposed Parking Lot
- Streams and Riparian Reserves
- Wilderness Areas
- National Forest Boundary
- Existing Special Use Permit Boundary
- Proposed Special Use Permit Expansion

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| A | Pacific Crest N.S.T. | Existing |
| B | Village Inn, Store, Gas Station | Existing |
| C | Day Lodge | Existing |
| D | Mid-Mountain Lodge | Proposed |
| E | PCNST Re-Route | Proposed |
| F | Ticket Booth | Proposed |



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