

# BEAR VALLEY MOUNTAIN RESORT

## PROPOSED ACTION

August 2008

### INTRODUCTION

Bear Valley Mountain Resort (BVMR) operates under Special Use Authorization from the Stanislaus National Forest to provide alpine winter sports opportunities on National Forest System Land. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS), in cooperation with BVMR, proposes to implement a series of projects designed to implement BVMR's Master Development Plan (MDP). MDP projects were analyzed and conceptually approved in the *Record of Decision - Bear Valley Ski Area Expansion* ('1995 ROD', USFS 1995). Specifically, BVMR proposes to construct the Village chairlift, Bear Top lodge, and associated infrastructure, improve customer service facilities, and open new terrain in the East Bowl area.

In addition, projects not previously analyzed in the ROD are proposed and designed to meet the current and future needs of skiers/boarders including expansion of existing parking lots, terrain modification on several ski trails to improve beginner capacity and open new terrain in the East Bowl area.

### LOCATION

The ski area is located approximately 1 mile north of the Town of Bear Valley, California on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, approximately 52 miles east of Angels Camp, California (see Figure 1). BVMR is accessed by heading east on Highway 4 and then turning north at the Highway 207 intersection. BVMR is located on the Calaveras Ranger District of Stanislaus National Forest (STF).

### PRIVATE LAND DEVELOPMENT

Subsequent to the 1995 ROD, Bear Valley Village I, LLC and Bear Valley Village II, LLC, are proposing a village master plan in the Town of Bear Valley based on the approved 1978 Master Plan for the town. This private land proposal (known as "The New Village at Bear Valley") includes residential and overnight lodging, restaurants, retail, skier services, parking, and related services within a portion of the village. A key component of this proposal on private land is the *Village Lift*. This lift will cross public, private, Alpine County and National Forest System lands through an established easement. That portion of the *Village Lift* located on National Forest land is part of the

Forest Service Proposed Action. Alpine County under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is analyzing that portion of the *Village Lift* to be located on private, public and Alpine County land. A separate Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is currently being prepared to address the village expansion and the *Village Lift* under CEQA.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Bear Valley Ski Area Expansion (USFS 1995) identified overcrowding and congestion of the parking lots, day lodge, and ski terrain. The proposed developments within the Town of Bear Valley potentially increase the number of skier/boarders. There is a need to improve ingress and egress from the Town of Bear Valley to the ski area. The objective of the Proposed Action is to implement projects that will meet the needs of skiers/boarders as identified and analyzed in the FEIS and to address subsequent needs identified since 1995. The proposed projects are designed to accommodate the expected increases in visitation and to provide a quality recreation experiences to all visitors.

The 1995 Bear Valley Ski Area Expansion FEIS identified elements supporting the need for expansion of BVMR (USFS 1995, p. I-6);

“...to meet current and future demand for beginner and intermediate skier terrain and skiing opportunities on the Stanislaus National Forest and at BVSA and to meet current demand for parking spaces and skier service facilities at BVSA.”

**There is a need to continue implementation of BVMR Master Development Plan.** The 1995 ROD has not been fully implemented. Subsequently the recreational experience at BVMR has not changed in proportion to the need. There is a need to provide more parking, a need to provide additional beginner terrain, and to construct additional facilities to accommodate crowds on peak days. Similarly, there are needs to improve the beginner terrain within the existing ski area. The replacement of *Hibernation* with the high speed detachable *Polar Express* has made the trails accessed by *Polar Express* more appealing to the beginner and low intermediate skier types. The increase in lower level skiers/boarders in this area has increased congestion and exacerbated an existing deficiency in providing beginner and low intermediate level trails back down to the day lodge from Bear Top. In addition, there is also a need to improve skier circulation throughout the ski area and begin utilizing the East Bowl area as approved in the 1995 ROD.

**There is a need to increase the efficiency of the existing parking areas and to provide additional parking capacity within the existing ski area parking lots.** Since 1995, BVMR has not grown at the anticipated rate at which the 1995 ROD assumed. As such, a 1,600-vehicle lot in East Bowl is not necessary at this time. BVMR currently provides approximately 14.3 acres of parking along the ski area access road. Based on counts during the 2005/06 and 2006/07 seasons (BVMR, 2007a), BVMR estimates that the parking lots provide for 1,750 cars, which translates to approximately 120 cars per acre (see Table 1). BVMR realizes an average vehicle occupancy (AVO) of 2.2 people per car based on the 2005/06 counts. Therefore, when the parking lots are full (i.e., 1,750 cars), 3,849 guests are accommodated. This is well below the optimum skiers/boarders-at-one-time (SAOT) of 4,400 as defined in the 1995 FEIS. However, it is anticipated that improvements at the ski area and within the Town of Bear Valley will result in an increase number of customers at BVMR requiring additional parking capacity.

**Table 1  
Existing Parking at BVMR**

<b>Lot #</b>	<b>Lot Name</b>	<b>Area (ac)</b>	<b>Car Capacity</b>	<b>Skier Capacity<sup>a</sup></b>
N/C	Bus Lot	1.7	130	286
1A	RV Lot	1.3	125	275
1B	Upper Rd.	4.2	376	827
1C	Lower Rd.	5.6	746	1,641
N/C	Preferred	1.5	240	528
Maint Lot	Overflow	0.8	133	292
<b>Total</b>		<b>14.3</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>3,849</b>

<sup>a</sup> Calculated as AVO x number of cars

The parking lots at the Bear Valley Mountain Resort primarily serve the day-skier population - those guests who have accommodations outside of the Town of Bear Valley. The ski area operates a shuttle bus service, the Bear Valley Shuttle, on an hourly basis (on the half hour during weekends) transporting residents and guests of the Town to the ski area. This shuttle helps to reduce the parking demands at the ski area coming from the skiers/boarders staying in the Town of Bear Valley.

On some peak skier days, parking capacity at the ski area is maximized. The closest location to accommodate the overflow parking needs is in public parking lots in the Town of Bear Valley. This overflow situation is problematic because it exacerbates a current parking shortage for the residents, guests and patrons of the Town

The *Village Lift* would allow visitors and residents of the Town of Bear Valley to access the ski area without having to drive and occupy parking spaces within the ski area that could otherwise be used by the day skier. Similarly, round-trip skiing on the *Village Lift* would provide all skiers/boarders and snowboarders with access to additional services and facilities within the town.

**There is a need to improve skier/boarder circulation within the existing ski area and to improve skier access between the ski area and the Town of Bear Valley.**

*Access/Egress for lower level skiers/boarders*

At present, BVMR has limited Beginner, Beginner and Intermediate terrain, as noted in the 1995 FEIS. Currently, three lifts provide access to Beginner terrain, *Panda Carpet*, *Super Cub*, and *Cub*. These lifts service approximately 35 acres of beginner terrain near the base area. Additionally, the *Kuma* and *Bear* chairlifts access intermediate to advanced terrain from Bear Top. Beginner and Intermediate skiers/boarders wishing to ride these lifts have a difficult time returning safely to the base area, as there are insufficient lower-level skier routes available from Bear Top. Tucks Run and Mokelumne West run, provide the main routes to the base area for these skiers/boarders..

*Mix of Skier Abilities*

Currently, the main base area houses the majority of skier services and facilities, with the exception of restrooms on Bear Top. Intermediate to Expert skiers/boarders utilizing the *Pooh Bear* and *Polar Express* pods returning to the base area must travel through the limited Beginner terrain to acquire services other than restrooms. On peak days, this skier traffic often intermixes on Beginner terrain increasing densities and potential conflicts between Beginner, Intermediate, and Expert skiers/boarders and detracting from the recreational experience.

*Access to/from Town of Bear Valley*

There is currently no convenient way for skiers/boarders to circulate between the ski area and the Town of Bear Valley. Skiers/boarders can currently access restaurants, lodging, and other facilities available in Town of Bear Valley by skiing Home Run or Lunch Run. Home Run and Lunch Run trails include intermediate and expert terrain that passes through narrow gaps in the forest, requires skiers/boarders to negotiate a steep stream crossing, and ends in a slight uphill skate/hike (Bear Valley Road) to access the Town of Bear Valley. However, the only means of returning to the ski area requires use of the shuttle system, which provides return trips to the ski area once per hour. These constraints limit and discourage skier/boarder use of facilities in the Town of Bear Valley as an alternative to those available at the ski area.

**There is a need to improve skier/boarder services. On peak days, BVMR customers experience long lines for food and other services.** Overcrowding in the existing day lodge is evident during stormy weather. BVMR needs additional customer services.

### **Identified Needs:**

- To provide additional egress from Bear Top for Beginner to Intermediate skiers/boarders.
- To provide improved skier access between the ski area and the Town of Bear Valley as described in the 1995 ROD.
- To improve beginner terrain and lift efficiency.
- Increase parking capacity within existing ski area parking lots.
- Construct chairlift between the ski area and Town of Bear Valley.
- To improve skier/boarder service facilities.
- To provide additional on-mountain food and skier services outside the current base area facilities as described in the 1995 ROD.

### ***The Proposed Action***

The Proposed Action, described in detail below, implements portions of the 1995 ROD and proposes additional projects not previously analyzed in the ROD. The Proposed Action is displayed in four subheadings: **Parking, Lifts, Trails, and Skier Services**. Actions are numbered to correspond with Proposed Action Map..

## **Parking**

### **Project # 1 Increase Parking Capacity within existing Ski Area lots by 174 spaces.**

The Proposed Action enlarges existing parking lots to accommodate the anticipated increase in skiers/boarders.. BVMR proposes to enlarge three existing parking areas by a total of 1.7 acres to accommodate 174 additional vehicles . Table 3 provides a breakdown of the proposed parking expansion. Parallel parking along the road would increase by widening 15 feet to accommodate diagonal parking in the Upper Road lot. Similarly, parallel parking in the vicinity of Snoopy's Hangar would be expanded to accommodate diagonal parking.

**Table 3  
Proposed Parking at BVMR**

<b>Lot #</b>	<b>Lot Name</b>	<b>Existing (acres)</b>	<b>Proposed (acres)</b>	<b>Proposed Car Capacity</b>	<b>Proposed Skier Capacity</b>
<b>Proposed BVMR Changes</b>					
N/C	Bus Lot	1.7	1.7	130	286
<b>1A</b>	<b>RV Lot</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>464</b>
<b>1B</b>	<b>Upper Rd.</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>884</b>
<b>1C</b>	<b>Lower Rd.</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1,850</b>
N/C	Preferred	1.5	1.5	240	528
Maint Lot	Overflow	0.8	0.8	100	220
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>14.3</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>1,924</b>	<b>4,232</b>

As shown in Table 3, the proposed parking expansion at BVMR would result in a parking capacity of 4,232 skiers/boarders, which approaches the resort optimum SAOT of 4,400. Development within the Town of Bear Valley was considered in development of the Proposed Action. It is unknown at this time to what extent the proposed private development would reduce the parking demand at the ski area or increase the parking demands on the Town of Bear Valley. These impacts are being analyzed in the Alpine County E.I.R.

## **Lifts**

### **Project # 2 Construct Village lift from Town of Bear Valley to BVMR**

#### *Village Lift*

The proposed *Village Lift* would access the ski area from the Town of Bear Valley (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action). The top terminal would be located adjacent to Koala Rocks (elevation 8,200 feet). The bottom terminal would be located on private land in Bear Valley Village (elevation 7,100 feet). Approximately 0.5 acres of ground would be disturbed to construct each terminal. Construction of the top terminal would require the removal of all trees within the 0.5-acre disturbance area. The lift would be 8,100 feet long with a vertical rise of 1,100 feet. Approximately 4,200 linear feet of the lift line would be on a National Forest System Land, while the remaining 3,900 linear feet would be on private land. The private land component of the lift is a connected action. This lift is proposed as a detachable high-speed quad. The chairlift would be run at a capacity that would be determined by the comfortable skier density on the re-graded Bono's Alley and Water Tank trails.

The *Village Lift* top terminal would require some material to be transported to the site to raise the area approximately six feet to meet the existing Bono's Alley grade. This would create an unloading and merging zone on Bono's Alley to minimize conflicts with skiers/boarders coming off the existing *Koala* lift. To accommodate the top terminal and lift unloading area, approximately 20 trees would be removed, in addition to those trees being removed for the *Village Lift* corridor. Most of the required material would be captured from the widening of Bono's Alley, described below. Additional material may come from other projects on the mountain or from a USFS approved site. There would be no need to disturb Koala Rocks themselves. The lift alignment has been sited to the west of these rocks and would not interfere with the required clearances from the top terminal.

The 1995 FEIS and ROD described a two-stage transportation lift to connect the village and BVMR. A two-stage lift, as described in the 1995 ROD, was considered, but not ultimately included because skier numbers do not justify construction of a parking lot in East Bowl at this time. The 1995 ROD authorizes the *Village Lift* to operate 2 hours per day to serve as a portal from the village to the ski area. Operation of the lift is now proposed to run during the entire operating day to provide transportation to and from the ski area, and to allow for roundtrip skiing on Home Run, Lunch Run, and the newly proposed runs in East Bowl.

### **Project # 3 Replace Super Cub Chair with High Speed Quad**

#### *Super Cub*

BVMR proposes to upgrade the existing Super Cub lift to a high-speed detachable quad. The proposed Super Cub quad would operate at a capacity of 2,400 people per hour, compared to existing capacity of 1,100 people per hour. The proposed lift would utilize the existing top terminal location. The bottom terminal of the quad would be relocated to the existing motor house for the Super Cub lift. The revised bottom terminal location would minimize the length of uphill walking to access the loading line compared to the existing situation. This revised alignment and upgraded lift would require additional tree clearing for the lift line to accommodate new towers. A 50-foot corridor will be required. The existing terminals and towers would be removed.

Re-contouring of the trail from the top of Super Cub to Ego Alley Run will provide access to Cub Meadow. To avoid impacts on the ½ Pipe, approximately 20 trees will be removed on the uphill slope (skiers left). On peak days, *Cub* lift will be available to operate as an additional lift for the general public or as a dedicated ski school lift.

## **Trails**

BVMR proposes to increase beginner terrain and access in association with the proposed lift installations. The *Village Lift* would require a beginner way down to the base area for skiers/boarders arriving from Bear Valley Village. Within the existing ski area, BVMR proposes to improve beginner access from Bear Top to the base area. Opening up new skier/boarder terrain in East Bowl will increase advanced and expert skiing opportunities.

### **Project # 4 Regrade/Widening of Spring Gap Trail**

#### *Spring Gap*

BVMR proposes to re-grade Spring Gap first and observe the use of the trail for one to two seasons. There are potential skier conflicts that could arise between beginning skiers/boarders on Spring Gap and intermediate to advanced skiers/boarders in Porridge Bowl. This proposal includes provisions to develop a skier safety management plan to address these conflicts. This plan would require the use of visible signage and baffle fencing to control skier movements within the crossing area. The proposed trail location takes advantage of an existing bench in the trail and was observed to be a frequent stopping area for intermediate skiers/boarders in Porridge Bowl. A detailed description of this project is discussed in the “The Preliminary Re-Grading/Widening Plan” displayed at the end of the Proposed Action.” (attachment 1)

### **Project # 5 Regrade/Widening of Mokelumne West**

#### *Mokelumne West*

The beginner egress trail off Mokelumne West would be divided into three sections (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action). The upper section would start at the top of the Mokelumne West and continue down the fall line to the trees on skiers/boarders left. The middle section contains the new trail area through the trees to Mokelumne Ridge. The lower section starts at the new trail junction on Skiers/boarders left of Mokelumne Ridge and continues 200 feet to the east and stops at the tree island on skiers/boarders right. In total, construction of the Mokelumne West beginner egress would result in 6.5 acres of disturbance. A detailed description of this project is discussed in “The Preliminary Re-Grading/Widening Plan” displayed at the end of the Proposed Action. (Attachment 2)

### **Project # 6 Regrade/Widening of Bono’s Alley/ Water Tank**

#### *Bono’s Alley/ Water Tank*

A beginner way from the top terminal of the proposed *Village Lift* top terminal to the BVMR base facilities would be provided by widening and re-grading two existing trails, Bono’s Alley and Water Tank (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action).



Bono's Alley, an existing Beginner level cat track, would be widened and re-graded to accommodate skiers/boarders exiting the proposed *Village Lift*. The existing trail would be widened to an average of 60 feet with a slope of 10 percent, over an area of approximately 2.1 acres. A detailed description of this project is discussed in "The Preliminary Re-Grading/Widening Plan" displayed at the end of the Proposed Action. (Attachment 3)

## **Project # 7 Village Skiway**

### *Village Skiway*

A beginner way back to the Town of Bear Valley would be constructed from Koala Top. The trail alignment would follow the existing summer work road to the maintenance shop and then follow along the existing sewer access road and sewer line easement to provide continuous fall line skiing. The summer work road would be widened and regraded from Koala Rocks to the maintenance shop to provide appropriate beginner terrain specifications. The existing sewer access road provides the right grade for beginner skiers/boarders and would subsequently require minor grading and tree removal to provide an adequate trail width. Minor tree removal would be required to transition the trail between the access road and sewer easement. It is anticipated that 30-40 trees would be removed to widen the trail in several locations. Skier access would divert onto an Open Space tract (locally known as the Thumb) at the special use permit boundary (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action). Alternative access from the ski area to the Town of Bear Valley would be provided by the existing shuttle system or by downloading the *Village Lift*. The lift would be designed to accommodate approximately 50 percent download capacity.

## **Project # 8 Schoolhouse Ridge/Applebonkers**

### *Schoolhouse Ridge/Applebonkers*

Currently Schoolhouse Ridge and Applebonkers are informal trails used by village residents to return to houses. Under the Proposed Action, these would become formal trails. BVMR proposes to create several new skiways that provide access back to town through the Areas in Common noted in the Village of Bear Valley Master Plan. In the past, concerns have been raised by the residents that skiers/boarders were trespassing on private property. The proposed skiways would funnel skiers/boarders to the designated Areas in Common and would reduce trespasses on private lands. Construction of the skiways would require thinning of the forest. Approximately 45 trees per acre would be removed to create the skiway. Targeted trees are primarily non-merchantable and size classes range from less than 12 inches diameter to 16 inches. In total, approximately 37 acres would be treated resulting in the removal of approximately 1,700 trees. The

thinning is proposed to serve an additional purpose in reducing fire fuels in the vicinity of the village. This fuel reduction would complement fuel reduction treatments carried out by BVRI.

## **Project # 9 Improvements on Home Run/Lunch Run**

### *Home Run/Lunch Run*

The existing Home Run and Lunch Run trails would be modified to provide improved skier access to the Town of Bear Valley. A new crossing structure would be placed over an intermittent stream at the trail crossing at elevation 7,500 feet, below the intersection of Home Run and Lunch Run (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action), in order to improve the quality of skiing on the trail. In addition, a total of 8.8 acres of selective tree removal would be implemented along the trails, including approximately 0.3 acre of grading.

## **Project # 10 Secure Easement for Snowshoe Traverse Ingress to Town of Bear Valley**

### *Snowshoe Traverse*

An alternative ingress trail would be created in the lower portion of Lunch Run where the trail transitions from NSF lands to private lands in order to provide a consistent downhill glide into the Town of Bear Valley via Snowshoe Rd. This would provide an alternative access to the Town of Bear Valley without the current need to negotiate an uphill area (Bear Valley Road). This will require an easement from the private landowner.

## **Project # 11 Improve East Bowl Tree Runs**

### *Upper East Bowl Runs*

This proposal would make new tree skiing terrain available in Upper East Bowl (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action). Approximately 114 acres of tree skiing would be created in Upper East Bowl between Koala Rocks and Schoolhouse Ridge. No tree removal is anticipated for this tree skiing area, as stem densities are currently low enough to support skiing. Re-contouring along the Koala Access Road and the sewer line leading from the ski area to the Town of Bear Valley is proposed to maintain an appropriate slope percentage for beginner skiers/boarders. The Village Skiway, Project # 7, (beginner village return trail to Town of Bear Valley), would serve as a catch trail and allow intermediate to expert skiers/boarders to utilize terrain in Upper East Bowl.

## Skier Services

### Project # 12 Construct Mountain Top Lodge

#### *Mountain Top Lodge*

BVMR would construct an approximately 12,500 square foot mountain-top lodge on Bear Top as described in the 1995 ROD (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action). The proposed lodge would have approximately 10,000 square feet, with a 2,500 square foot basement. The proposed lodge would provide food services, retail, and restrooms. The basement would provide storage areas and ski patrol facilities. Additionally, a 1,500 square foot deck would be constructed for outdoor seating. Construction of the deck amends the 1995 ROD. Once the proposed lodge is constructed, the existing restrooms on Bear Top would be decommissioned and removed from the site.

The proposed lodge would tie into existing power and communication lines located near the top terminal of the *Bear* and *Kuma* chairs. A water line would be trenched in Tuck's Traverse Road and tie into existing utility lines near the maintenance building. A new 6-inch sewer line would be installed to service the proposed lodge. The final location of the sewer line has not been determined at this time as BVMR is in the process of repairing and upgrading the existing sewer line from 4 inches to 6 inches in diameter. The sewer line would follow one of two alignments depending on the status of the upgrades. If the existing sewer line were upgraded to 6 inches by the time the lodge is built, the sewer line would be trenched in Tuck's Traverse road and tie into the maintenance shop. If the sewer upgrades are not completed, the sewer line would be trenched along the existing snowmaking supply line and tie into the main sewer line in the Town of Bear Valley.

## Management Concerns and Potential Management Considerations

Preliminary issues identified to date are based on input from several meetings between the USFS, BVMR, and BVASC LLC (see definitions). This list may be expanded or modified based on public scoping for the NEPA process.

- Consistency with the STF Land and Resource Management Plan
- Impacts to soils and watershed resources
- Impacts to Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive wildlife and plant species
- Impacts to Vegetation
- Impacts to Private Lands

The following preliminary management considerations are included in the Proposed Action. This list may be expanded or modified based on public scoping for the NEPA process.

MC1 – Sensitive Plant and Animal surveys are completed for the Area of Potential Impact.

MC2 – Biological Evaluation and Assessment will be completed.

MC3 - Safety Plans will be completed for new ski trails and improvements on existing trails and incorporated into BVMR Annual Operating Plan.

MC4 - Tree removal will be limited by the trail width necessary to accommodate lower level skiers/boarders. All trees to be removed will be marked by the Forest Service. Hazard tree removal will continue as needed to provide for public safety.

MC 5 - Project implementation will conform to BVMR Special Use Permit Clauses and Annual Operating Plan which includes requirements pertaining to public safety, fire management, erosion control, tree, slash and debris disposal, sanitation, hazardous substance, and re-vegetation

MC6 – All new trails into the village will be properly signed to funnel skiers/boarders into town by means of approved trails, thereby reducing/eliminating trespass through private property.

MC7 - Slash resulting from tree removal within the ski runs funneling skiers/boarders, Project #8, (AKA the Fingers) into town will be treated

by removing, burning or chipping within ¼ mile of boundary with the Town of Bear Valley.

MC8 – All best management practices (BMP) would be utilized during the design and construction phases of this project. The BMP's would address erosion, tree removal and avoidance of wetlands & riparian areas. No land disturbances would occur prior to July 15 and after October 15 to accommodate fawning

MC9 - Final Regrading/Widening Plans will be required for Forest Service review prior to implementation of slope modification projects.

MC10 - Engineered Plans for buildings must be submitted to the USFS and Alpine County for review and approval.

MC11 – Cleaning of all construction vehicles from off site locations will be required to reduce potential for introduction of noxious weeds.

MC12 – A stand of trees approximately 100 feet by 600 feet will remain between the existing Mokelumne West Run and the proposed area to be widened and re-graded. This will provide physical and visual separation, improve traffic flow and reduce skier/boarder densities. This will also maintain a segment of the existing wildlife habitat and provide cover, forage and travel corridor for resident wildlife species.

## Connected Actions

The proposed Bear Valley Village I and II, LLCs developments within the Town of Bear Valley are connected actions to the above-described Proposed Action. The *Village Lift*, beginner village ski way in East Bowl, Home Run/Lunch Run trail improvements, and the Schoolhouse Ridge/Applebonkers trail improvements serve to connect the ski area and village developments. It is anticipated that this proposed development will increase visitation to the Town of Bear Valley and the ski area. Parking will be provided under each new building for the residents, guests and visitors of the commercial uses of the *New Village at Bear Valley* development. No day skier parking for the Bear Valley Mountain Resort will be provided in the Town.

The *Village Lift* will be the primary source of transportation to the ski area for the majority of current and future residents and overnight guests in the Town of Bear Valley (including the *New Village at Bear Valley* project). The *Village Lift* will provide a new

opportunity for ski in/ski out access from lodging and homes, as well as the ability to download on the *Village Lift* from the ski area to the Village and Town. Additionally, the Bear Valley Shuttle will also continue to provide transportation service between the Town and the ski area for beginner skiers/boarders and days when the *Village Lift* may be inoperable. These opportunities will reduce the need of vehicle travel between the Town and BVMR for residents, guests and visitors. It is therefore assumed that there will be a small reduction in parking needs at BVMR for residents and guests of the Town. However, the extent of the reduction is unknown at this time.

- Bear Valley Village I and II LLCs are undergoing a separate environmental approval process through Alpine County. As lead agency, Alpine County is preparing and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the CEQA according to policies governing private lands. The Proposed Action described for NSF lands incorporates the CEQA EIR by reference for a discussion of connected action's impacts on private lands.

**PRELIMINARY REGRADING/WIDENING PLAN****SPRING GAP RUN (PROJECT # 4)**

The contouring/grading plan for Spring Gap would be divided into 3 sections, the upper, middle and lower. The upper section consists of the area at the top of Spring Gap and under Bear/Kuma Chairs extending down to edge of the tree island to where it intersects with the skiers/boarders left of Porridge Bowl. The middle section is considered to start at the edge of the tree island and extends across the bottom of Porridge Bowl and top of Groovy Gully to the tree line on skiers/boarders right of the Cornice Run and ending there. The lower section would begin at the bottom of the Cornice Run and the top of Avalanche where Spring Gap enters back into the trees and continues down to the top of Rodeo. In total, approximately 7.9 acres of ground would be disturbed by the construction of Spring Gap (see Figure 2 – Proposed Action).

The upper section would be lengthened and recontoured by removing approximately eight feet of depth of the lava cap from under Bear and Kuma chairs. The upper end would be feathered into the top. The excavated material would be moved down to widen Spring Gap by an additional 12 to 15 feet. This widening process would require the removal of 35 to 40 trees on the lower edge of this upper section. Once the newly widened Spring Gap reaches Porridge bowl, it would be feathered into the existing grade of Porridge Bowl. This would minimize the ledge drop from skiers/boarders left along the Porridge Bowl tree line.

The middle section would not require any dirt work activity to re-contour or re-grade, but would be left in its existing condition. During the season, Porridge Bowl and Groovy Gully would be maintained by the same grooming strategy utilized over the last few years. The transition area between Porridge Bowl and Groovy Gully is fairly level, it already accommodates the necessary grades needed for beginner skiers/boarders. There would not be a continuation of the road cut across the bowl.

At the top of the lower section, the entry crown would be lowered by ten feet, and that material would be moved down Spring Gap to widen the trail by 12 to 15 feet. There would also be some realigning and straightening of the minor curves that currently exist on the trail. About half way down the existing trail there is high spot that would also be lowered by approximately 5 feet. That material would be used to assist in tying the grading of the lower section together. It is anticipated that 20 to 25 trees would be removed to accommodate the trail widening.

**PRELIMINARY REGRADING/WIDENING PLAN****MOKELUMNE WEST RUN (PROJECT #5)**

In the upper section, a transition zone would be created to direct beginner skiers/boarders to the new trail. The skiers/boarders left side of the trail would be laid back to create an approximately 75 foot wide trail with a slope of 23 percent. Skiers/boarders right would not be touched to preserve the current intermediate skiing. No trees would be removed in this section.

The middle section would create an approximate 50 foot benched skiway. Material would be removed from the edge of Mokelumne West and proceed westerly at approximately an 18 percent slope into the trees following the fall line. The first 100 feet of the section would be constructed to funnel skiers/boarders to the skiers/boarders left. After approximately 100 feet, the trail width narrows to a 25-foot skiway at a 10 percent grade for approximately 1,000 feet. Material would be excavated by cutting back approximately 10 to 15 feet into the skier' left slope. Excavated material would be moved down the trail to fill in low spots closer to the merge with Mokelumne Ridge. As the proposed ski way turns to the north, material would be removed by edging 10 to 12 feet into the hillside on skiers/boarders' right and moved to balance fill requirements on skiers/boarders left to bring it up to grade. Approximately 950 trees would be removed in the middle section to construct the trail. Tree sizes range from non-merchantable, which account for approximately 35 percent of the total tree count, to over 36 inches. Approximately 60 percent of the trees that will be removed range between 12 and 36 inches, while approximately 5 percent are over 36" inches in diameter. A majority of the trees targeted for removal fall within the 24-inch size class.

The lower section would consist of the skier merging zone between the proposed ski way and intermediate to advanced skiers/boarders on Mokelumne Ridge. From skiers/boarders left on Mokelumne Ridge, the merging zone would be constructed approximately 125 feet down slope to the existing summer work road. Material excavated from the middle section would be moved to fill in the lower section and lessen the grade for beginner skiers/boarders. No trees would be removed for construction of this part of the trail.



**PRELIMINARY REGRADING/WIDENING PLAN****BONO'S ALLEY/WATER TANK (PROJECT #6)**

The contouring/grading plan for Bono's Alley is divided into two sections, the upper section and lower section. The upper section begins northwest of the proposed top terminal, and continues approximately 100 yards down toward the summer work road intersection. The lower section would begin just above the summer work road intersection and continue down to the green water storage tank.

The upper section will be widened on skiers/boarders left by removing the lava cap to widen the corner by cutting into the cap by 50 feet. No disturbance of The Koala Rocks would occur during this project. This would allow traffic to pass well around the unload area from the new lift terminal. The uphill edge would be laid back and contoured as terrain and material allow. The material from the expanded corner would be used to widen the lower section on skiers/boarders right, as well as to flatten the unloading zone for the *Village Lift*. In regards to the lower section, skiers/boarders left would be widened by edging approximately 15 feet into the hillside. That material would be used to continue the widening along skiers/boarders right of Bono's Alley down to the green water storage tank. This widening process would require the removal of 40 to 50 trees on skiers/boarders right below the edge of this lower section. All edges and banks would be contoured as the terrain and materials allow.

A portion of Water Tank would be widened and regraded to an average of 45 feet with a slope of 15 percent. Total disturbance for this trail would entail approximately 2.1 acres. The trail would be reshaped by removing the high spots and filling in the low spots. This cut and fill technique would lower the crowns by ten feet and raise the low areas. This procedure would provide a more consistent grade to better accommodate lower level skiers/boarders and snowboarders. All activity would occur on skiers/boarders right of the center island of trees. The Water Tank trail would then blend into the last section of the trail just above the Koala parking area. No tree removal is necessary to complete this project.

The proposed alignment has taken into consideration the needs of both intermediate and beginner skiers/boarders utilizing this area. skiers/boarders coming down Hog Back would still enjoy the same terrain and grade as long as they stay to skiers/boarders left of the center tree island. The skiers/boarders right edge of the trail would be widened into the tree islands to provide the beginner slope. Skiers/boarders left of the existing trail would retain its intermediate grade for use by these skiers/boarders.

Alpine skiing was introduced on the STF in 1950. The region's popularity for alpine skiing prompted the Forest Service to begin exploring other skiing options in the early 1960s. Bear Valley opened to the public for skiing in 1967 as Mt. Reba and has since become an important winter recreational venue in northern California. The following chronology briefly traces the development of this proposal from the time the Bear Valley Ski Company (BVSC) took over the special use permit in 1991.

1967: – The ski area opened under name of Mt. Reba Ski Resort.

1991: – Mt. Reba is purchased by Jim Bottomley under business name Bear Valley Ski Company.

1991: A new special use permit is issued to BVSC following the sale of the ski area, formerly Mt. Reba. The existing day lodge is expanded, and a snowmaking system and associated facilities are authorized by decision notices subsequent to environmental assessments. BVSC begins work on a Master Development Plan for expansion activities.

1991-1995: Due to planning priorities on the Forest, and in order for the new BVSC to have time to evaluate the expansion proposal, the expansion-planning project was put on hold. The Forest Service was also developing a policy and program to address management of spotted owl habitat in California. In 1993, the Forest Service made a determination that any spotted owl potential habitat within any expansion area would be evaluated prior to final approval of actual habitat disturbing activity. This allowed for the continuation of the planning process.

1995: A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and ROD were issued for the BVSC for a new Master Development Plan (MDP). The ROD selected Alternative 3 with the stipulation that there would be no expansion into an undeveloped area known as East Bowl until necessary and financially feasible (USFS 1995). The USFS defined 'necessary' as the point at which the ski area exceeds the approved SAOT five times in one season.

2005: Bear Valley Associates I, LLC (BVAI, LLC – ownership entity) purchases the operations of the ski area from the Bottomley family, maintaining the name Bear Valley Mountain Resort. BVMR began initial planning for the construction of the *Village Lift*, one of the transfer lifts approved in the 1995 ROD, and other improvements included with this proposal.

2006: BVAI, LLC changes name to Bear Valley Alpine Ski Company, LLC (BVASC, LLC), maintains ski area name of Bear Valley Mountain Resort. BVASC, LLC holds all assets of the ski area (i.e. there is no land component). BVMR receives approval from the USFS and replaces the Hibernation lift with the Polar Express (high-speed quad) providing better service to the primary intermediate ski pod on the mountain.

2007: BVASC commissions environmental and planning studies to finalize the development of the transfer lift from the Town of Bear Valley to the ski area under the 1995 ROD.

**Skier's Left-** Left when facing downhill.

**Skier's Right-** Right when facing downhill.

**Areas in Common-** As described in the 1978 Master Plan for the Town of Bear Valley, *“Open Space Common Areas shall be preserved as open space and used for recreational purposes and other purposes incidental and ancillary to the use of Lots. Such use shall be limited to the private use for aesthetic and recreational purposes by the Owners, their tenants, families and guests.”*

**Open Space-** As described in the Alpine County General Plan, land that

*“...is intended to protect and promote wise use of the County's natural resources. Types of land uses allowed on (OS) designated lands should be limited to uses that would be integrally related to the wise use and protection of natural resources including, but not limited to, the protection or development of mineral resources, the growing or harvesting of forest products, ranch or farm type agricultural production, protection of important wildlife and aquatic habitats, preservation of significant view corridors and dispersed recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and camping.”*

**Hard Boundary-** For purposes of this document, a hard boundary is the Special Use Permit area boundary.

**Soft Boundary-** Ropes, fencing, or signs that indicate a closure to skier access.

**Catch Trail-** A skiway constructed at the bottom of fall-line terrain that returns skiers to the base of a lift.

**Skiway-** A constructed, benched ski trail that traverses across the fall-line. Ideally constructed at 10% grade and 30 ft. width. Also known as Cat-Track and Traverse.

**Beginner Skier-** First-time skier who is only comfortable skiing the shortest, easiest slopes of 8-12%, rides surface lifts, first days of skiing.

**Low Intermediate Skier-** Skier who will ski groomed Blue Square symbol rated slopes up to 35%. Will not ski on moguls or off designated runs.

**Intermediate Skier-** Skier who is comfortable skiing on any Blue Square symbol rated run, and on slopes up to 45%, will ski ungroomed mogul runs and off the designated runs if conditions are favorable.

**Advanced Skier-** Skier who will ski on Black Diamond symbol rated runs up to 55% slope and seeks alternate types of terrain such as glades and open bowls, although often only under favorable conditions.

**Expert Skier-** Skiers who can ski any of the terrain on the mountain, regardless of conditions.

### Acronyms

**STF-** Stanislaus National Forest

**SAOT-** Skiers-at-one-time

**BVRI-** Bear Valley Residents Incorporated

**BVMR –** Bear Valley Mountain Resort (public name of ski area)

**BVASC, LLC –** Bear Valley Alpine Ski Company, LLC (operating entity of ski area)

**BVV –** Bear Valley Village (proposed new development of BVVI, LLC and BVVII, LLC in town of Bear Valley)

**BVVI and BVVII, LLCs –** Bear Valley Village I, LLC and Bear Valley Village II, LLC (ownership entities of VC-1 and VC-2 land parcels in Bear Valley)

**VC-1 –** Village Center-1 (current Bear Valley Lodge and Commercial Center occupy this land)

**VC-2 –** Currently vacant land parcel which is part of BVV proposal (Village Lift will be located on VC-2)

**Town of Bear Valley –** includes homes, roads, condos, etc in subdivision and town center uses.