

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In March 2001, Core Mountain Enterprises, LLC, submitted an application to the USDI-Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for authorization of long-term commercial use of about 1,300 acres of BLM administered land by the Silverton Outdoor Learning and Recreation Center (SOLRC). The project site is in southwestern Colorado, about 6 miles north of Silverton. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the BLM initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of issuing the requested authorization.

SOLRC currently operates at a small scale on private land and on BLM land used under annual permits. Their proposal to expand onto BLM-administered land would substantially increase the unique recreational and educational opportunity available to the public at the center, capitalizing on the San Juan Mountain's rugged beauty, steep and challenging terrain, abundant snowfall, and intact high-elevation ecosystems. In terms of winter recreation, the centerpiece of SOLRC's operation, the requested authorization would allow a one-of-a-kind melding of minimal ski area infrastructure with otherwise undeveloped terrain. The intended result would be an affordable opportunity for advanced and expert skiers to obtain an extreme, backcountry type experience previously available only to helicopter and cat skiers at a high price or to those with the specialized knowledge, equipment, and stamina to access high-elevation backcountry on their own. (Note that the term "skiing" is used in this document to include alpine skiing, alpine touring, telemark skiing, snowboarding, and other snow-sliding sports.) The requested use authorization would also increase the scope of year-round educational and summer recreational opportunities available at SOLRC.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is BLM issuance of authorization for long-term commercial operations on the 1,300 acres of public land as requested by SOLRC. SOLRC's request is for a 40-year authorization, but the term and other administrative details of the authorization would be at the discretion of the agency, documented in the ROD or subsequent agreements between the BLM and SOLRC. The following elements of the SOLRC operation would be authorized on BLM administered land:

Use of approximately 1,300 acres of BLM administered land for skiing in the winter, hiking in the summer, and educational programs year-round.

Unrestricted skier access to all permit-area terrain not closed or otherwise restricted by SOLRC for snow safety reasons.

Use of the permit area by up to 475 SOLRC guests per day.

Up to 17 temporary foot/skier bridges across Cement Creek within the permit area of which six would be on BLM land.

A hiking trail from the ridgeline near the upper lift terminal down into the Colorado Basin, connecting with County Road 52.

A summer and winter mountaineering route following the ridgeline south from the upper terminal of the chairlift, eastward across the top of Storm Peak, then northward and westward around the permit area boundary to tie into County Road 52 between the cirque lake in Colorado Basin and Gladstone.

A small solar-powered radio repeater on public land near the existing radio reflector on 13,053 Peak (an unnamed peak northwest of Storm Peak, within the permit area).

In addition, the Proposed Action would amend the *San Juan/San Miguel Planning Area Resource Management Plan* (RMP) to add lift-served skiing and sightseeing to the list of allowable uses (kinds and levels of recreation) authorized in the SOLRC permit area within the Silverton SRMA.

Note that the Proposed Action includes only those elements of SOLRC's planned development that involve BLM administered land. Other elements involve private land only, including a permanent base lodge, 10 yurts or cabins for overnight accommodation, and two rope tows on the ridgeline adjacent to the upper chairlift terminal. These elements do not require federal agency approval and may be completed regardless of the BLM's decision regarding the Proposed Action. Therefore, these private-land elements are addressed in this analysis as part of the No-Action Alternative.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA direct that agencies define the underlying purpose and need to which they are responding in preparing an EIS (40 CFR 1502.13). In this instance, SOLRC submitted an application for authorization to conduct long-term commercial operations on BLM administered lands. SOLRC's objective is to establish a viable business enterprise, drawing on the project area's outstanding natural resource base to provide unique forms of mountain recreation and education.

The BLM is responding to SOLRC's application in accordance with NEPA and FLPMA, analyzing and disclosing the environmental impacts of issuing the requested land-use authorization and reviewing the Proposed Action for conformance with the RMP. A successful operation would further the BLM's objective of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities on the lands under their administration.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

The decisions to be made in consideration of this EIS are whether, and under what conditions, to authorize SOLRC's requested long-term use of the permit area and whether to amend the RMP to allow for the proposed activities. The agency official making these decisions will be the BLM Colorado State Director.

The decision maker may select a combination of elements of the Proposed Action and the alternatives if the environmental impacts of the combined elements are adequately assessed and disclosed in this EIS. The decision maker may also choose to adopt some or all of the mitigation measures identified in this EIS.

The land-use authorization will be issued under the authority of FLPMA, section 302(b), as implemented through regulations under 43 CFR Part 2920, Leases, Permits, and Easements. The decision to amend the RMP to allow for the proposed activity will be made under 43 CFR 1610.5-5, Resource Management Plan Approval, Use, and Modification - Amendment. The decision will be documented in a Record of Decision that will be prepared and released at the conclusion of this EIS process.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

Public involvement is a central component of the NEPA process, and several opportunities for participation by interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are being provided through the course of this EIS process. To date, two formal scoping comment periods and several public meetings have been completed to assist the BLM in identifying the environmental issues and concerns to be addressed through this NEPA process. The first scoping period was from August 9 through September 7, 2001, following initiation of the original EA process that was originally initiated to address this project. Public meetings were held during this period at Durango (August 22) and Silverton (August 23). The BLM received a total of 139 scoping responses comprising 408 specific comments. The substantive issues identified are summarized below.

Watershed Resources

The Cement Creek watershed has been severely impacted by mining activity, and a number of concerns were raised regarding additive impacts due to the proposed SOLRC operation. These concerns included: the potential for human waste to contaminate water, increased soil erosion due to construction and bicycle use, and the water quality impacts of avalanche-control explosives. Concern regarding the availability of adequate potable water for SOLRC was also noted.

Vegetation

The permit area comprises different vegetation types, ranging from wetland and riparian areas in Colorado Basin and along Cement Creek, through upper montane spruce-dominated forest, to alpine communities at higher elevations. Comments cited potential impacts of construction and summer recreation on special status plant species (i.e., federal and state listed threatened and endangered species as well as BLM and Forest Service identified sensitive species), on alpine vegetation communities, and on wetlands and riparian areas.

Wildlife

Associated with the project area's diverse vegetation communities are a range of wildlife species. Potential impacts to special status species, particularly Canada lynx, were identified as a key concern. Potential impacts to elk, grouse, ptarmigan, subnivian species, and aquatic species were noted, and assessment of the effects of summer recreation, winter recreation, avalanche control, and facility construction on these species was requested.

Land Use

Public land and resources in and adjacent to the proposed project area provide for a number of current uses, including various forms of dispersed recreation, livestock grazing, and mining-related activities. There are also a number of private inholdings within the proposed permit area. These are patented mining claims, some of which have not been developed beyond the level necessary to secure the original patent, while others have been developed with recreational or year-round residences. Right-of-way authorizations exist in the vicinity of the proposed permit area for roads (CR 110, CR 52, and access roads), powerlines, telephone, and communication

sites. Concerns regarding the Proposed Action's impact on land use involved changes in public land access and use, the impacts to existing uses of public lands, SOLRC's ultimate objectives, and impacts to other private property and property rights within the proposed permit boundary.

Socioeconomics

The potential for positive impacts to the depressed economies of Silverton and San Juan County was the basis for many expressions of support for the project. Specific issues raised included effects on local business, resident and visitor populations, and local schools. Potential increases in property values, taxes, and the cost of public services, including search and rescue and emergency medical services, were also noted, as was the availability of adequate emergency medical services.

Recreation

Comments in this category cited the unique nature of the SOLRC skiing experience (i.e., advanced, lift-served backcountry skiing with limited associated infrastructure), its lower level of impact on the environment, and its lower price relative to other resort or commercial guided skiing options. The main issue raised was whether SOLRC would in fact attract enough guests to achieve the desired purpose and need and to justify the allocation of public resources. An adequate balance between on-mountain and base-area capacities at SOLRC was also a cited concern. (Note: the issue of access to the permit area by other recreationists is addressed under Land Use.)

Safety

The proposed permit area is subject to frequent and severe avalanche hazard, and the primary safety issue raised was snow safety. Specific concerns included SOLRC's capability to adequately provide for the safety of their guests and the issue of liability for avalanche related injuries. The potential hazard to SOLRC visitors posed by abandoned mines was cited, as were the potential for collisions between SOLRC skiers and snowmobilers on County Road 52, the potential for heightened wildfire hazard due to increased visitation, and the risk of lightning strikes.

Transportation

Access to the project area from Silverton is via County Road 110 (formerly State Highway 110A). Commentors questioned the capacity of the road to handle the additional traffic, the adequacy of parking for SOLRC, the impact of avalanche control efforts and associated closures on traffic and parking, and how emergency access would be maintained.

Aesthetic Resources

The relatively undisturbed, natural character of the project area accounts for much of its attraction to recreationists, sightseers, other visitors, and residents. The potential impacts of construction noise and dust, avalanche control explosives, and proposed structures on the area's aesthetic values were noted by commentors, as was concern over the long-term visual impact if the operation should fail.

Cultural Resources

The project area includes several historic mining sites. Potential impacts to such sites were a cited concern.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION, ALTERNATIVES, AND MITIGATION

SOLRC’s proposal to the BLM constitutes the Proposed Action addressed in this EIS. NEPA also requires that the impacts of not undertaking a proposed federal action be analyzed to provide a baseline for impact assessment. The No-Action Alternative (Alternative A) in this case is not issuing the requested land-use authorization, effectively restricting SOLRC’s operation to private lands. Of the issues identified through scoping and summarized above, only snow safety was determined to be an alternative-driving issue. One alternative (Alternative B) centered on providing only guided skiing on BLM administered land to address safety concerns. Another alternative (Alternative C) was developed as a hybrid, authorizing both guided and unguided skiing depending on snow stability conditions. These alternatives are summarized in Table S-1.

Table S-1. Summary of public-land elements of Proposed Action and alternatives.				
	Proposed Action	Alt. A – No Action	Alt. B – Guided Only	Alt. C – Guided and Unguided
Approximate acreage of public land in permit.	1,300	None.	1,300	1,300
Snow safety approach.	Resort style hazard reduction, focusing on avalanche control.	Same as Proposed Action.	Backcountry style hazard avoidance, focusing on avalanche forecasting and stability testing.	Integrated resort style and backcountry style.
Projected daily visitation on BLM land.	475	0	100 (based on skier: guide ratio of 8:1)	475
Adjunct facilities on public land.	Mountaineering route, hiking trail, foot/skier bridges, and radio repeater.	None.	Same as Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action, plus alternative skiing, hiking, and biking trail from lift top to base area, including portions on public land.
Helicopter use on public land.	No.	No.	Yes.	No.
Selective tree removal on public land.	No.	No.	No.	Yes.

NEPA requires that an EIS identify and assess mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the adverse environmental effects of a proposed federal action. The agency decision maker then adopts some or all of the desired measures in the ROD. Thirty-nine mitigation measures were identified and assessed in the course of this analysis. These measures address impacts in the areas of watershed resources, vegetation, wildlife, land use, recreation, safety, transportation, aesthetic resources, and cultural resources. Any or all measures may be required by the decision maker under the Proposed Action or any alternative selected in the ROD.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Table S-2 summarizes the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives identified through this analysis.

Table S-2. Summary of impacts of Proposed Action and alternatives.				
Alternative/ Impact Type	Proposed Action	Alt. A – No Action	Alt. B – Guided-Only Operation	Alt. C – Integrated Guided and Unguided Operation
Watershed Resources	In addition to watershed impacts described under the No-Action Alternative, disturbance on public land would occur during construction of the Colorado Basin Hiking Trail (about 0.6 acres) and placement of up to six temporary foot/skier bridges. Explosives use and residue would be most extensive under the Proposed Action, but notable adverse water quality impacts are not anticipated. The safety mitigation measure calling for an access route would create an additional 4.3 acres (up to) of surface disturbance (about 60 percent on public land). Impacts to sediment concentrations would be manageable with suggested mitigation.	Adequate culinary water supply would be available for base-area facilities. Most watershed impacts would occur under this alternative. Construction of base area structures and rope tows would disturb a total of about 0.4 acres of private land. A total of six temporary foot/skier bridges would be placed on private land. The extent of impacts from explosives residue would be limited to private land and would consequently be less under than any other alternative.	Impacts from explosives residue would be somewhat less extensive than under the Proposed Action due to the reduced level of avalanche control associated with guided-only operation. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Construction of the Alternative Lift Trail for hiking/biking would disturb an additional 1.7 acres. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.
Vegetation	In addition to vegetation disturbance described under the No-Action Alternative, construction of the Colorado Basin Hiking Trail would disturb about 0.6 acres of alpine vegetation. Summer recreation	Most project elements generating vegetation impacts would occur under this alternative, all on private land. Construction would disturb about 0.4 acres in the base area, in addition to the 7.4, 1.3, and 3.9 acres of clearing and	Similar to the Proposed Action.	About 1.1, 0.08, and 0.06 acres of additional disturbance in the upper montane spruce forest, forest clearings, and alpine communities,

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Vegetation (cont'd)	activities could result in additional trampling disturbance. The access route proposed as safety mitigation would result in up to 2.7, 0.2, and 1.4 acres of cut-and-fill disturbance on a steep slope in the upper montane spruce forest, forest clearings, and alpine communities, respectively. No impacts to wetlands, and no known impacts to special status plants are projected.	grading that have previously occurred on private land in the upper montane spruce forest, forest clearings, and alpine communities, respectively. Summer recreation impacts to alpine communities would be reduced by restricting trails and organized activities to private land, although some guests would likely follow the ridgeline up from the top of the lift. No impacts to wetlands or special status plants are projected.		respectively, would result from construction of the Alternative Lift Trail for hiking/biking. In addition, the area in montane spruce forest identified for selective tree removal is currently estimated at up to 75 acres of 190 potential acres. Up to 20 percent tree removal could take place in this area. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.
Wildlife	Human-wildlife encounters and noise from explosives could cause temporary disturbances to Canada lynx. Diurnal security, travel, and winter foraging habitat available to lynx would be affected to the degree that forested habitat was used for recreation. Potential impacts would be minimized by suggested wildlife mitigation. If the safety mitigation measure calling for an access route were implemented, there would be opportunities for additional access to forested habitat by lynx competitors.	Human-wildlife encounters and other associated recreation disturbances are not anticipated on public land, as the project area would be limited to private land. Snow-compacted corridors could increase due to concentrated use of terrain. Minor water depletions associated with the culinary well would contribute to cumulative downstream impacts on endangered fish species. Potential impacts on aquatic habitat and subnivean species would be less than under the Proposed Action. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Potential noise disturbance to wildlife from helicopter use could occur. Potential human-wildlife encounters on public land in the winter would be less than under the Proposed Action because winter recreation on public land would be more dispersed and involve fewer people. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Human-wildlife encounters and other associated winter recreation disturbances would be greatest under Alternative C, because of the large amount of available ski terrain and high number of skiers anticipated. Selective tree removal would affect lynx habitat, reducing diurnal security, travel, and

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Wildlife (cont'd)	Potential impacts to other federal, state, and BLM species of concern would be minor or nonexistent, depending on species presence. Short-term impacts and potential displacement of species of high public interest could occur. Potential impacts to aquatic species would be negligible and mitigable. Impacts to subnivean species would not change notably from natural conditions.			winter foraging habitat to a greater degree than under the Proposed Action. Skiing in tree removal areas could increase snow compaction and potentially increase opportunities for lynx resource competition. In summer wildlife encounters on public land could increase with the construction of a new hiking/biking trail from the base to the top of the chairlift. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.
Land Use	Winter recreational access to public land in the permit area would be restricted. Summer access would not be affected. Road access would be affected during closures of CR 110 or CR 52 for avalanche control. With the exception of these impacts on access, private property rights and development potential would not be affected. Private property boundary management would continue as under	Public lands surrounding the permit area would be available for public use, but access would be periodically limited by temporary closures of CR 110 and CR 52. Road closures and associated access impacts would be less frequent than under the Proposed Action. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Potential for trespass on private property would be less than under the Proposed Action since skiers would be guided. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Similar to the Proposed Action.

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Land Use (cont'd)	the current permit. Grazing and mining operations would not be impacted. Use of the project area for commercial recreation would not be impacted.			
Socio- economics	Annual visitation is projected to reach 15-25,000 skier visits, with increased demand for goods and services and population increases due to increased employment. Direct winter employment: 24 full-time and five part-time. Direct summer employment: 14 full-time and one part-time. Short-term and long-term housing needs would be met by surrounding communities. Impacts to community services would be met by existing infrastructure. Skier spending and summer visitation would strengthen the local economy. The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund could be occasionally affected.	Annual visitation would be less than the Proposed Action projection, with slightly increased demand for goods and services and a slight population increase. Direct winter employment: six full-time and four part-time. Direct summer employment: 10 full-time and two part-time. Slightly increased demand for housing and community services would occur. Local economy would be strengthened less than under Proposed Action and action alternatives.	Annual visitation would be less likely to reach the upper range of skier visits projected under the Proposed Action, with less demand for goods and services and less population increase. Direct winter employment: 17 full-time and 10 part-time. Direct summer employment: 14 full-time and one part-time. Skier spending and summer visitation would strengthen the local economy less than under the Proposed Action. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Annual visitation would be more likely to reach or exceed 15-25,000 skier visits than under Proposed Action, resulting in the highest demand for goods and services and greatest population increases. Direct winter employment: 28 full-time and seven part-time. Direct summer employment: 14 full-time and one part-time. Skier spending and summer visitation would strengthen local economy the most. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.

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Recreation	Annual visitation is projected at 15-25,000 skier visits per season. SOLRC would offer a unique skiing product that would dovetail with current market trends indicating that skiers are seeking a backcountry skiing experience. Summer demand would be increased by addition of hiking trail, mountaineering route, and expansive terrain for educational programs. Balance between ski area capacity and infrastructure would be adequate.	Activities would be limited to private land. Limited terrain would result in high skier densities on trails, packed snow conditions, and long lift lines. Base facilities would likely be less than adequate to serve peak day visitors. SOLRC would be unlikely to attract the number of guests projected under the Proposed Action because the type of recreation product offered would be better provided by existing regional resorts. Summer demand would be largely restricted to scenic lift rides.	Up to 100 skiers per day would use public land in guided parties (based on 8:1 skier: guide ratio). A helicopter would be authorized to transport skiers and conduct snow safety work. Low skier density and professional assistance from guides would provide a desirable skiing product for those in the guided skiing groups. The remaining guests would be required to remain on private land. Lower skier densities would result in a better skier experience than under the No-Action Alternative, but this experience would be similar to that at regional resorts, and SOLRC would be unlikely to achieve the visitation levels projected under the Proposed Action. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Use of the entire permit area for unguided or guided skiing would be authorized based on snow safety conditions. Using both options would attract more visitors and make more terrain open, in general. SOLRC would be able to offer a unique skiing experience, and visitation would be similar to or exceed the Proposed Action. Addition of the alternative hiking/biking trail would add to summer recreational opportunities. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.
Safety	Snow safety risk would be somewhat greater than under other alternatives but manageable through effective implementation of the snow safety plan and suggested mitigation measures. The safety mitigation	All potential impacts would be reduced by the smaller scale of operation. Snow safety risk would be lowest because of terrain limits, but effective external boundary management to reduce risk to skiers in unmanaged terrain around ski	Snow safety risk would be somewhat less than under the Proposed Action because of the greater safety of the guided operation on public land and the higher likelihood of	Snow safety risk would be less than under the Proposed Action, mainly because of the greater safety of guided operations, increased

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Safety (cont'd)	measure calling for an access route would facilitate emergency snowmobile access from the base area to the top of the lift. Abandoned mine risk, potential for skier/snowmobile collisions on CR 52, fire hazard, and lightning risk would be manageable with suggested mitigation.	area would be essential. Otherwise, similar to Proposed Action.	effective boundary management. Risk overall would be higher than under the No-Action Alternative. Otherwise similar to Proposed Action.	visitation, and thus revenue generation to fund snow safety program. The Alternative Lift Trail would facilitate emergency snowmobile access. Risk overall would still be somewhat higher than under the No-Action Alternative. Otherwise, similar to Proposed Action.
Transportation	The capacity of CR 110 and available parking spaces would accommodate traffic and vehicles related to SOLRC operations. Road closures would be managed under the direction of the <i>SOLRC/San Juan County Cooperative Avalanche Reduction Plan for San Juan County Roads 110 and 52</i> . The avalanche hazard index would be slightly elevated. Because of expanded avalanche control activities, road closures would likely be more frequent, and impacts to parking and base areas would be potentially less. Emergency access to CR 110 would continue to be provided on the basis of urgency and safety.	Road closures would likely be less frequent than under the Proposed Action because of reduced avalanche control activities. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Road closures could be less frequent than under the Proposed Action because of reduced avalanche control activities. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Similar to the Proposed Action.

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Aesthetic Resources	In addition to the visual impacts on private land under the No-Action Alternative, facilities authorized on BLM lands under the Proposed Action and as mitigation would be visible to the public. With suggested mitigation in place, SOLRC infrastructure constructed on public land would be consistent with applicable BLM Visual Quality Management objectives. The main noise impact would be avalanche control explosives, and this impact is not projected to change notably from current levels. Air quality impacts would be restricted to minor, temporary, construction dust. Suggested mitigation would reduce this impact.	Most visual impacts would occur under this alternative, associated with base area construction. No visual standards are in place for private lands. Development would change the visual character of the base area site but would not be inconsistent with mining and residential development in the Cement Creek watershed. Noise associated with avalanche control would continue but at reduced levels due to restriction to private land. Air quality impacts associated with construction and heating would be minor and mitigable.	Operation of a helicopter would add substantially to noise in the Cement Creek watershed. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Similar to the Proposed Action.
Cultural Resources	There are 12 known historic sites and 15 isolated finds in the SOLRC project area. Six of the 12 historic sites were determined by the SHPO to “need data,” meaning that the sites are potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and must be protected as eligible until determined otherwise. There would be no direct impacts to these identified cultural resources. Indirect impacts	The potential for indirect impacts to public-land sites would be reduced because the SOLRC operation would be restricted to private land and there would likely be fewer guests. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.	Similar to the Proposed Action.	The potential for indirect impacts could increase under this alternative if selective tree removal facilitated access to historical sites. Otherwise, similar to the Proposed Action.

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Cultural Resources (cont'd)	could occur due to increased visitation and associated vandalism and souvenir collection. Mitigation measures have been suggested to protect sites.			

NEPA requires that EISs disclose any unavoidable, adverse, environmental impacts of a proposed federal action. This analysis identified several such impacts, the most notable of which include:

- Wildlife: adverse impacts on the threatened Canada lynx and its habitat; short-term disturbance and possible displacement of species of high public interest, including elk, grouse, and ptarmigan.
- Land Use: reduced access to the project area by winter recreationists not visiting SOLRC; occasionally reduced access to adjacent private property and private inholdings.
- Safety: more people exposed to the inherent risk of backcountry-type skiing.
- Transportation: more people exposed to the inherent avalanche risk of driving on CR 110; periodic closure of CR 110 when SOLRC conducts control work on slopes above the county road.
- Aesthetic Resources: change to the visual character of the base area due to construction of hiking trails and associated infrastructure.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The BLM's *National Environmental Policy Act Handbook* (H-1790-1) directs that the manager responsible for preparing an EIS should select the agency's preferred alternative, and that the selection should be based on the results of the environmental analysis as well as other factors that influence the decision or are required under other statutory authority (Chapter V, B.2.b).

Alternative C, Integrated Guided and Unguided Operation, has been selected as the agency's preferred alternative. The rationale for this selection is as follows:

- This alternative would provide the greatest recreational opportunity. In terms of diversity, it would authorize both guided and unguided options, each of which constitutes a distinctive recreational experience. In terms of the amount of terrain made available, it is projected to maximize the useable portion of the permit area. In terms of the number of people served, providing diverse opportunities on the largest land area possible would meet the desires of the greatest number of skiers.
- This alternative would best address public safety concerns. The main, alternative-driving issue addressed in this EIS is snow safety, given the inherently high avalanche hazard in the San Juan Mountains. This alternative would combine the two approaches to snow safety associated with guided and unguided operations (hazard avoidance and hazard reduction, respectively), and the combination would be more effective at reducing risks to the public than either approach alone. Further, because this alternative is projected to attract more skiers than the other alternatives, it would generate more revenue to fund what will undoubtedly be an expensive snow safety program.
- This alternative would not result in any notable environment impacts beyond those associated with the Proposed Action and Alternative B.