

Record of Decision

USDA-Rural Development's Business and Industry Program is issuing this Record of Decision for:

Adoption of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the White Pass Ski Area Expansion, Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests, and Gifford Pinchot National Forest, State of Washington

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Business and Cooperative Programs is considering an application from KeyBank for a guaranteed loan for the White Pass ski resort expansion project. The request is for a 70% loan guarantee on \$6.3 million. Rural Development requires an environmental analysis in compliance with its NEPA regulations at 7 CFR 1940-G, prior to a decision on any approval of the loan application. USDA Rural Development has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared by the US Forest Service, Okanogan, Wenatchee and Gifford Pinchot National Forests for the White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan Proposal dated June, 2007. The Forest Service issued a Record of Decision (ROD) approving the project and subsequently issued a special use authorization allowing the project to be constructed in accordance with the special use permit (SUP). The application for the loan guarantee to fund the expansion project, identified as Modification Alternative 4 in the FEIS and subsequent ROD, is substantially the same proposed action for the Guaranteed Business and Industry Program. RD has evaluated the analyses of the FEIS, and subsequent mitigation actions, and has determined that the FEIS meets the standards for NEPA compliance under its implementing regulations. By this ROD today, RD intends to adopt the Forest Service FEIS in its entirety in compliance with the RD NEPA requirements.

Background

White Pass Ski operations are located within the Okanogan, Wenatchee, and Gifford Pinchot National Forests, in the State of Washington (see Figure 1). The land is federally owned with the U.S. Forest Service serving as the land management agency. White Pass has a current ski operation on approximately 865 acres which is now in the process of expansion to cover approximately 1,572, all under the FS SUP.

The expansion and improvements to be guaranteed by the RD loan include constructing 18 new trails on 85 acres of terrain, installing two new chairlifts, constructing a new 2000-square foot, two-story mid-mountain lodge which will have 150 seats and restroom facilities. A 400-square foot wooden ticket booth with composting toilet will be constructed adjacent to the Yakima Ski Club building, in addition to the construction of a new 7 -acre parking lot and utilities trenching into the ski trail clearings with aerial crossings over streams. (Figure 2 shows the area of current operations and expansion).

The Forest Service completed the FEIS (*White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan Proposal*) in June, 2007, and issued a Record of Decision which selected the alternative (Modified Alternative 4 of the FEIS) and stipulated a substantial number of mitigation measures to be implemented as part of the issued Special Use Permit (SUP). The mitigation measures are detailed in the 2009-2010 Implementation Plan. White Pass Ski Resort began construction related activities in 2007 and is mid-way through the planned construction. To date, tree removal activities, utility line installation, ski lift tower footings, mid-mountain lodge foundations, and trail re-routing (of a Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail segment) have been completed. All activities have been monitored by Forest Service personnel. Forest Service personnel report implementation of all construction to be on-schedule, and in accordance with the approved implementation plan (letter of Randy Shepard, District Ranger, September 4, 2009).

Applicable laws, regulations, and policies

The overall regulations for implementing NEPA are in 40 CFR Part 1500 of the Council on Environmental Quality; specifically, Section 1506.3 provides for adoption of an Agency's EIS; RD Instruction 1940.324(a) further provides that another agency EIS may be adopted after completion if:

- 1- An independent review of the document is conducted (by RD) and it is concluded that the document meets the requirements of this subpart; and
- 2- That the actions covered in the EIS are substantially the same as those proposed (by RD) and the environmental conditions have not substantially changed since its publication; and that the circulation and timing requirements of subparagraphs (f), (g), and (j) of Section 1940.320, as well as Parts 1506.3(c), 1506.9, and 1506.10 of the CEQ regulations will apply.

It is the conclusion of RD environmental personnel that the FS FEIS meets the requirements of Subpart 1940, that the actions of the EIS are substantially the same as those proposed as the loan guarantee to KeyBank. Further, RD environmental personnel conclude that environmental conditions have not substantially changed since the publication of the FEIS, only that the proposed action has been partially implemented in its first year of construction, and that such implementation has been in accordance with the all permit conditions and mitigation measures of the FS.

Alternatives

The decision for RD is to guarantee the loan by KeyBank to White Pass for the purpose of construction operations under the approved SUP. While the actions of White Pass proposal are the same as under the FEIS, the decision by RD is qualitatively different from the one by the Forest Service. The FS was making a land use and permitting decision, and the consideration of alternatives was necessarily broader and site specific. Hence, the FEIS considered a number of alternatives relating to White Pass operations

and locations which are not relevant to the RD decision. Essentially, RD can approve the loan guarantee or not approve it. Non approval is the same as the No Action Alternative under the FEIS and forms the baseline to compare any environmental impacts. Approval of the loan guarantee is the proposed action.

Environmental Issues/Impacts

Table 1 (attached) summarizes the impacts of the proposed White Pass expansion compared to the No Action Alternative. The major issues of the FEIS dealt with protection of important water resources, notably wetlands, riparian buffers and reserves, scenic vistas for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, and wildlife values.

Mitigation Measures

The FEIS proposed a number of mitigation measures during construction and operation to protect those important environmental resources. The FS ROD for FEIS adopted those mitigation measures and required them to be addressed under the SUP in the implementation plan. The Implementation Plan for 2009-2010 addresses all those mitigation measures of the SUP and details how construction activities will avoid, minimize or reduce the environmental impacts of construction in each area of proposed activity. Monitoring by FS personnel for specific resource protection activities is regular and current. To date, White Pass has demonstrated compliance with all mitigation activities recorded in the FS ROD and Implementation Plan.

Factors other than environmental consequences considered in making the decision

The analysis of Key Bank's proposal for White Pass Ski Resort is presented in a separate loan application evaluation governed by RD Business and Cooperative Programs' regulations and policies.

Identification of environmental document(s) considered in making the decision

USDA, Forest Service, *White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan*, Final Environmental Impact Statement, June, 2007

USDA, Forest Service, *White Pass Expansion Master Development Plan*, Record of Decision, June 2007

USDA, Forest Service, *Implementation Plan, White Pass Expansion*, May 2009.

USDA, Forest Service, *Letter of September 4, 2009 to Frank Mancino*, USDA, RD.

Public involvement conducted

In accordance with its NEPA regulations, RD published a notice in the local newspaper and EPA published a Notice in the Federal Register on September 14, 2009 on the intent to adopt the FS FEIS and requested comments during the 30 day review period. RD sent

letters to twenty eight agencies at the Federal, State and local level (see Table 2). The letters summarized the White Pass proposal and the RD decision, provided an on-line location for accessing the complete FEIS, and requested comments on the RD action. To date, six comment letters have been received. The Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency pointed out that White Pass Ski should file a Dust Control Plan with the YRCCA, and an order of approval must be issued prior to the start of construction. This comment has been transmitted to White Pass Ski, and they are responsible for complying with the YRCCA for the construction activities which may require YRCCA approval.

The State of Washington, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation concurred with the mitigation conditions for professional archaeological monitoring of selected areas and requested a copy of the monitoring report which will be provided to them by the FS.

The State of Washington, Department of Transportation noted that prior to the construction of the access connection from the new parking lot to US 12, a WSDOT Access permit will be required, and provided a name and contact for additional information regarding the Access Connection Permit. This letter will be sent to White Pass Ski so they may obtain the necessary permit for the connection.

The State of Washington, Department of Ecology noted a recent court decision affecting water rights within the State of Washington, and questioned if White Pass Ski Resort had sufficient water capacity. The FEIS demonstrated that the demand for water at White Pass under the Selected Alternative (Alternative 4) would be approximately 40% of the current storage capacity of 52,000 gallons (Table 3.13-3, page 3-432). Therefore, sufficient water capacity exists and the outcome of any court decision upon existing water users in the State of Washington is considered remote and speculative at this time.

The State of Washington, Department of Ecology also recommended the use of a recycling program and green materials development as part of the construction and operation of facilities, such as the Mid-Mountain Lodge. RD will provide those comments to White Pass for their consideration.

The State of Washington, Department of Ecology questioned whether the Wetlands survey and analyses of the FEIS included isolated wetlands, and recommended they be identified for appropriate mitigation, as part of State regulatory authority over waters of the State of Washington. Section 3-3 of the FEIS analyzed impacts to all waters and wetlands within the project area, and Appendix C of the FEIS identified all wetlands within the SUP, including isolated wetlands. The FEIS and FS ROD identified mitigation measures to avoid/or reduce impacts to wetlands, and those measures are addressed in the Implementation Plan. White Pass does need to obtain a permit from the Department of Ecology for a NPDES Section 401 Water Quality Certification, and it is recommended that White Pass consult with Washington DOE at that time about any additional measures to address isolated wetlands.

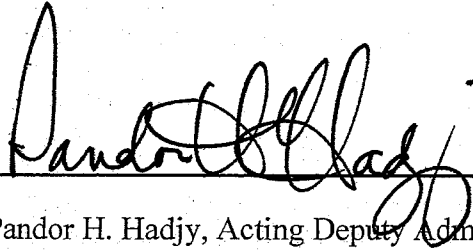
Timing of Action

In accordance with 40 CFR 1506.3 and RD Instruction 1940.324(a), a final EIS may be adopted by RD after circulating the FEIS for a 30 day comment period. That comment period is now over and the comments received have been addressed above. RD has fulfilled its NEPA responsibilities for timing and comment and may adopt the FS FEIS through this Record of Decision.

Implementation Date: September 24, 2009

Contact Person: Frank Mancino, RD/PSS 202-720-1827

Signature and Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pandor H. Hadjy", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Pandor H. Hadjy, Acting Deputy Administrator,

Business Programs, Rural Development

Date

Attachments: Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, Figure 2

Table 1: Comparison of Environmental Impacts by Alternative

Project Components	No Action Alt. 1	Modified Alt. 4	EIS References
Climate and Snow			
Avalanche Control	As needed along cliff band	Increased on an as needed basis	Section 3.1.3.2
Potential Dispersal of Backcountry Skiers to High Avalanche Hazard Areas	No	Yes	
Geology and Soils			
Grading Impacts (acres)	0.0	+19.6	Table 3.2.4
Total Graded Area (acres)	45.1 (existing)	64.7	Table 3.2.1
Impervious Surface Impacts (acres)	0.0	+8.1	Table 3.2.3
Total Impervious Surface Impacts (acres)	35.9	44.0	
Detrimental Soil Condition Impacts (acres)	0.0	+8.1	
Total Detrimental Soil Conditions (acres)	45.11	53.2	
% of White Pass Study Area With Detrimental Soil Conditions	2.9%	3.4%	
Water and Watershed			
Total Stream Crossings	28	51	Tables 3.3-2, 3.3-10 and 3.3-11
Stream Stability Impacts (miles)	0.0	+0.5	Tables 3.3-6 and 3.3-12
Total Unstable Streambanks (miles)	1.5	2.0	
Wetland Impacts (acres)	2.3	+0.1	Tables 3.3-3 and 3.3-13
Total Wetland Impacts (acres)	2.3	2.4	
Riparian Reserve Impacts (acres)	0.0	+25.8	Table 3.3-14
Riparian Influence Area Impacts (acres)	0.0	+5.9	Table 3.3-16
Fisheries			
Fish Presence	None	None	Section 3.4.2

Impacts to Habitat	None	None	Section 3.4.3
Vegetation			
Vegetation Community Impacts (acres)	0.0	+44.7	Table 3.5-5
Wildlife			
Riparian Reserves Impacts (acres)	0.0	+25.8	Table 3.6-7
Impacts to Forested Riparian Reserves (acres)	0.0	+24.8	Table 3.6-7
Total Forested Riparian Reserves (acres)	522.7	497.9	
Air Quality			
Exceed 24-hr. PM25 Standard?	No	No	Section 3.8.2
Exceed 24-hr. PM10 Standard?	No	No	
Exceed 1-hr. CO Standard?	No	No	
Heritage Resources			
NRHP Eligible Resources Affected?	No	No	Section 3.9.6.2
Non-eligible Heritage Resources affected?	No	No	
NRHP Eligible Traditional Cultural Heritage Resources affected?	No	No	
Non-eligible Traditional Cultural Heritage Resources affected?	No	No	
Social/Economics			
Environmental Justice	No disproportionate effects to minority or low income populations		Section 3.10.3.1
Employment			
Full time	18	+2	Table 3.10.-6
Seasonal	144	+20	
Total	162	184	
Recreation			
CCC	2,670	3,800	Section 3.11.3.1
Number of lifts	5	7	Section 3.11.3.2
Number of trails	37	55	
Nordic Trails (km)	13.64	11.55	Section 3.11.3-4
Visits in Year 1	109,782	149,782	Table 3.11-4
Visits in Year 5	115,382	157,422	
Visits in Year 10	121,268	165,453	

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCNST)	No Change	PCNST Reroute in view of Chairlift Terminal	Section 3.11.3.6
Transportation			
Parking (visitors/vehicles)	2,890/1109	3,800/1505	Table 3.12-FEIS1
Unpaved Road Length (miles)	6.2	6.2	Tables 3.12-1 and 3.12-2
Paved Road Length (miles)	0.5	0.5	
Road Density (mi/sqmi)	2.7	2.7	
US 12 LOS	LOS B	LOS C	Section 3.12.3
Utilities			
Power (kW)	Transformer: 2,970	4,000	Sections 3.13.2.3 and 3.13.3
Peak Water Demand (gallons/day)	12,561	20,566	Table 3.13-3
Wastewater	Existing Treatment facility; design capacity 12,000 GPD	Mid-Mountain Treatment facility and drainfield; at base area possible equalization and/or drainfield	Sections 3.13.2.6 and 3.13.3
New Structures	None	Mid Mountain Lodge and Ticket Booth	Section 3.12.3
Inventoried Roadless Areas			
Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA)	No Change	Development within 767 acres of the White Pass IRA would disqualify this portion of the IRA from placement on the inventory of potential wilderness areas	Section 3.14
Visual Resources			
Viewpoints#1-5	Retention/High	Retention/High	Section 3.15.3

Noise			
Maximum Noise Levels during construction at a distance of 50 ft	N/A	93dBA	Section 3.16.2
Effect of Operations	Similar to operations in Year 2007	Similar to operations in Year 2007 with slight increase in noise due to increased traffic and facilities	

(Source: FEIS Pages ES-9 -13)

Table 2: List of Agencies Contacted

Ken S. Berg
United States Dept. of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Western Washington Office
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 102
Olympia, WA 98503

Rob Whitlam, Ph.D.
State Archeologist
Dept. of Archeology and Historic Preservation
PO Box 48343
Olympia, WA 98504-8343

Lewis County Commissioners
Lewis County Courthouse
351 NW North Street
Chehalis, WA 98532-1900

Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority
6 South 2nd Street
Suite 1016
Yakima, WA 98901

District Ranger
Naches Ranger District
10237 US Highway 12
Naches, WA 98937

Ms. Allison O'Brien
Regional Environmental Assistant
US Dept. of Interior
500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 356
Portland, OR 97232

Superintendent
Mount Rainier National Park
55210 238th Avenue East
Ashford, WA 98304

Executive Director
Southwest Clean Air Agency
11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294
Vancouver, WA 98682-2322

US Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 3755
Seattle, WA 98124-3755

US Army Corps of Engineers
Portland District
PO Box 2946
Portland, OAR 97208-2946

Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters
10600 NE 51st Circle
Vancouver, WA 98682

US Environmental Protection Agency
Region 10
Regional Administrator's Office, RA-140
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101

Mr. Tom Tebb, Regional Director
Department of Ecology
Central Regional Office
15 West Yakima Avenue, Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902-3452

Ms. Sally Toteff, Regional Director
Department of Ecology
Southwest Regional Office
PO Box 47775
Olympia, WA 98504-7775

Mr. Jay Manning, Director
Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Mr. Phil Anderson, Interim Director
Washington State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
500 Capital Way North
Olympia, WA 98501

Ms. Mary Selecky, Secretary of Health
Washington State Dept. of Health
101 Israel Road SE
Tumwater, WA 98501

Donald R. Wagner, Regional Administrator
Dept. of Transportation, SW Region
11018 NE 51st Circle
Vancouver, WA 98682-6686

Mr. Peter Goldmark
Office of the Commissioner of Public Lands
PO Box 47001
Olympia, WA 98504-7001

Regional Administrator
Dept of Transportation, South Central Region
PO Box 12560
Yakima, WA 98909-2560.

Gary Pruitt, Executive Director
Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency
329 North First Street
Yakima, WA 98901-2303

Yakima County Commissioners
Yakima County Courthouse
128 North 2nd Street
Yakima, WA 98901

Robyn Thorson, Regional Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Region
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232

The Honorable Ralph Sampson, Chair
Confederated Bands and Tribes of the
Yakama Nation
PO Box 151
Toppenish, WA 98948

The Honorable William Iyall, Chair
Cowlitz Tribe
1055 9th Avenue, Suite B
Longview, WA 98632

The Honorable Cynthia Iyall, Chair
Nisqually Tribe
4820 She-Nah-Num Drive SE
Olympia, WA 98513

The Honorable David Lopeman, Chair
Squaxin Island Tribe
SE 10 Squaxin Lane
Shelton, WA 98584

Figure 1 White Pass Location

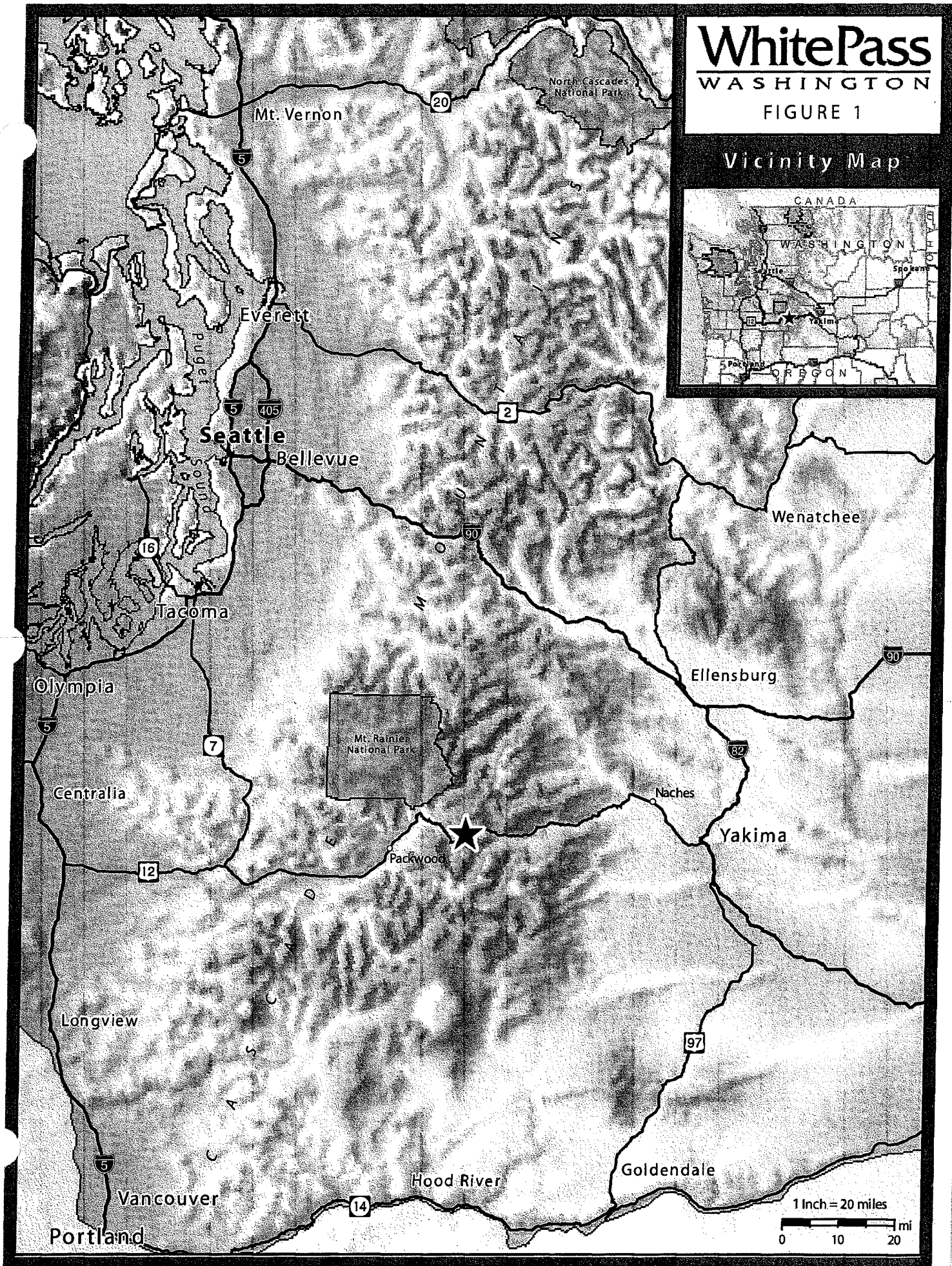
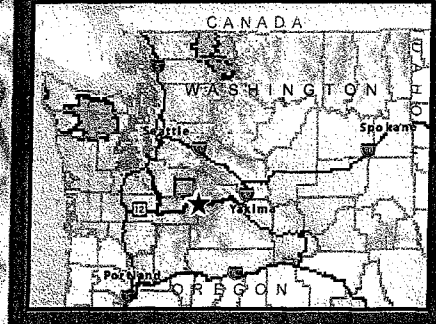
Figure 2 Project Locations

WhitePass

WASHINGTON

FIGURE 1

Vicinity Map



WhitePass

WASHINGTON

ROD - FIGURE 1

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

Created By: S.Drexler
 Contour Interval: 100 ft
 Scale: 1" = 1200 ft
 Date: June 2007
 Produced By:

