

CHAPTER 2: PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the alternatives that were developed to satisfy the purpose and need for the Federal action as described in Section 1.5 and to address the Key issues identified throughout Chapter 1. Four alternatives are described: (1) the No Action Alternative; (2) the Proposed Action (Tranquility Road); (3) the Snow Shed - East Village Access Alternative; and (4) the Dual Access Road Alternative - Tranquility Road and the Snow Shed - East Village Access Alternative. This chapter also describes other alternatives that were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration, identifies project design criteria and mitigation measures, identifies the preferred alternative, and presents a summary comparison of the environmental impacts of all alternatives. Lastly, this section presents a description of the potential future development of the Village. Although the development of the private property as the Village is a non-Federal action, it has the potential to cause cumulative impacts when assessed in combination with all Federal action alternatives. As such, the Village is a major consideration in this EIS.

2.2 ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative is the current USFS management situation. Under this alternative, USFS would not issue the Applicant any special use authorization for access or utility corridors across NFS lands to the private property. However, this action would not preclude the Applicant from continuing to have limited access to the private property. The Applicant has stated the intent to develop 2,172 units on the private property as the Village even if the No Action Alternative is selected by the USFS.

2.2.1 Access Road

FSR 391 is presently used as a means of accessing the private property with passenger vehicles from Highway 160, during limited times of the year when the road is otherwise open for use by the general public (Figure 2.2-1 presents the location of FSR 391). USFS policy is to generally allow a landowner the use of any existing FSR for accessing non-Federal land, without the need for a special use authorization, as long as the road is used in a manner consistent with the FSM direction, road classification, and at times during which such a road is generally open and available for use by the public.

The following are the current management characteristics and use limitations of FSR 391 for both the public and the Applicant as a route of access to the private property.

The FSR 391 is:

- An Operation Maintenance Level (OML) 3 gravel road (single lane with turnouts) that allows for access by passenger cars at slow speed. Pursuant to USFS guidelines in FSM 7700, Transportation Systems, the OML 3 definition is, “assigned to roads operated and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in standard passenger car. OML 3 roads receive moderate vehicle traffic, typically 10-30 vehicles per day during the use season.”
- Traffic Level “C” Designation - Limited for dry weather use to vehicles not exceeding 8 feet in width and/or 80,000 pounds in gross vehicle weight; open and maintained for low speed, single-lane driving by standard passenger cars, with either native ([dirt] or processed material [e.g., gravel] surfaces).
- Generally available and open for vehicle use by the public from June through September (when free of snow accumulation); closed to vehicle use during all other times of the year.
- Available for use by the public, including the Applicant, visitors, and service industries, generally from October through May, providing that the use/access is by foot travel, including skis and snow shoes.
- Portions of FSR 391 are used by the Ski Area as part of its skiable terrain.
- For winter access to the private property (Village), the USFS has agreed to work with the Applicant and the Ski Area to determine a route and operational procedures to provide for reasonable access to the private property in a manner that does not materially interfere with the operation of the Ski Area and also protects NFS resources.

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction or reconstruction of FSR 391 or snow removal would be authorized and the Applicant would be responsible for the cost of any maintenance needed as a result of use of the road. If the Applicant chooses to use FSR 391 for vehicular access to the private property during that time of the year when the road is otherwise closed to such use, the Applicant would need to apply for and secure special-use authorization from the USFS. This would constitute an “action” and would require future analysis. Public access across the private property on FSR 391 would remain unchanged from the current USFS management conditions.

2.2.2 Utility Corridors

No utility corridors across NFS lands would be authorized under the No Action Alternative.

2.3 ALTERNATIVE 2 – PROPOSED ACTION

The Applicant submitted a request for authorization to construct and use an 80-foot wide corridor across NFS lands for both road and utility purposes, from Highway 160 to the private property via an extension of Tranquility Road (see Figure 2.3-1). The road access associated with this alternative (60-foot width) would merge into the current entrance to the Ski Area at the junction with Highway 160. Utility corridors (20-foot width) to the east and the north of the approximately 2,350-foot access road would include buried electrical transmission lines,

television and communication cables, fiber-optic lines, and other utilities as required to facilitate development of the private property as the Village. Public access across the private property on FSR 391 would remain unchanged from the current USFS management conditions.

2.3.1 Access Road

The all weather year-round access road would not exceed 2,350 feet in length within a 60-foot width. Any new or upgraded sections of the roadway would be constructed to USFS specifications and would cross NFS land from Highway 160 to the private property. The first approximately 2,100 feet of this proposed route has been developed as a road, known as “Tranquility Road,” for access to Ski Area parking lots and will be operated and maintained under the WCSC SUP (see Figure 1.4-1). Tranquility Road has a 23-foot driving surface, and WCSC plans to complete it in 2004. To access the western boundary of the private property, the Applicant is proposing to extend Tranquility Road by adding approximately 250 feet of road length. This extension would have a minimum 24 feet wide running surface to be compatible with Mineral County requirements for the Village roads. The access road would merge into the current entrance to the Ski Area at the junction with Highway 160. Once built, vehicle traffic would consist of construction equipment, passenger vehicles, buses, and other vehicles and transportation necessary to develop, construct, operate, and support the residents and businesses associated with the Village. Residents and services to the Village would enter and exit Highway 160 at the same location as skiers and services to the Ski Area. Implementation of this alternative would entail a road easement being issued to the Applicant for a 60-foot wide corridor with a stipulation that the first 2,100 feet of the Tranquility Road access would be shared with WCSC. WCSC would retain their existing SUP for Tranquility Road with an amendment made to the permit to stipulate that the 2,100 feet of Tranquility Road will be shared use with the Applicant.

2.3.2 Utility Corridors

Authorization for construction and use of buried utility corridors across NFS land would provide the necessary infrastructure to serve future private property development. Utility authorizations would be directly issued to utility companies by the USFS, not to the Applicant. These corridors would consist of:

- One 10-foot wide utility corridor for electricity to the east and north of Tranquility Road, plus
- One 10-foot wide utility corridor for other utilities such as phone, cable, etc., to the east and north of Tranquility Road, plus
- One 10-foot wide utility corridor approximately 1,000 feet in length (identified as “Utility Corridor #3” in Figure 2.3-1) for electricity and located as shown on the map coming from Highway 160 to the northwestern boundary of the private property.

2.4 ALTERNATIVE 3 – SNOW SHED - EAST VILLAGE ACCESS ALTERNATIVE

The Snow Shed - East Village Access Alternative would authorize the construction and use of an access road and three utility corridors (within a 80-foot ROW) that would begin on Highway 160, at a point approximately 0.33 mile east of the current entrance to the Ski Area and approximately 0.25 mile west of the Snow Shed. Utility corridors alongside the approximately 1,500-foot access road would include buried electrical transmission lines, television and communication cables, fiber-optic lines, and other utilities as required to facilitate proposed development of the Village.

2.4.1 Access Road

Under this alternative, the Applicant would be authorized to construct and use an access road to the private property beginning on the Highway 160 corridor between the Ski Area and the Snow Shed, traversing approximately 1,500 feet of NFS land into the northwest boundary of the private property. This alignment is presented in Figure 2.4-1. The corridor associated with the access road would be approximately 60-feet wide with a minimum 24-foot wide running surface running at an average grade of 6 percent.

2.4.2 Utility Corridors

Under this alternative, authorization would allow construction and use of utility corridors across NFS land to provide infrastructure to serve the private property. These utility corridors would be utilized for the installation, operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement of electrical transmission lines and facilities; television cables, communication cables and lines, fiber-optic lines, and other utilities to serve the Village. These easements would consist of:

- One 10-foot wide utility corridor for electricity along side the Snow Shed – East Village access road, plus
- One 10-foot wide utility corridor for other utilities such as phone, cable, etc., along side the Snow Shed – East Village access road, plus
- One 10-foot wide utility corridor approximately 1,000 feet in length (identified as “Utility Corridor #3” in Figure 2.4-1) for electricity and located as shown on the map coming from Highway 160 to the northwestern boundary of the private property.

2.5 ALTERNATIVE 4 – DUAL ACCESS ROAD ALTERNATIVE

This Alternative provides two access roads to the private property and utility corridors associated with those roads. This Alternative would be a combination of Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) and the first 750 feet of Alternative 3 (from Highway 160 to the northwestern boundary of the private property). Public access across private lands on FSR 391 would remain unchanged from the current management conditions.

2.5.1 Access Roads

Under this Alternative, the Applicant would be authorized to construct and operate two all weather, year- round access roads. The first would be the use of a road which would not exceed 2,350 feet in length within a 60-foot corridor. The roadway would be constructed to USFS specifications and would cross NFS land from Highway 160 to the private property. The first approximately 2,100 feet of this proposed route has already been approved for development as a road, known as “Tranquility Road,” for access to a Ski Area parking lot and would be operated and maintained under a SUP by the Ski Area. Tranquility Road is partially built with a 23-foot driving surface, and the Ski Area plans to complete it in 2004. To access the private property, the Applicant is proposing to extend Tranquility Road by approximately 250 feet to the western boundary of the private property. Once built, vehicle traffic would consist of construction equipment, passenger vehicles, buses, and other vehicles and transportation necessary to develop, construct, operate, and support the residents and businesses associated with the private property. Under this alternative, the access road would merge into the current entrance to the Ski Area at the junction with Highway 160. Residents and services to the private Village would enter and exit Highway 160 at the same location as do skiers and services to the Ski Area.

Under this alternative, the Applicant would be authorized to construct and use a second access road to the private property beginning on the Highway 160 corridor at a point approximately 0.33 mile east of the current entrance to the Ski Area and approximately 0.25 mile west of the Snow Shed. The second access road would traverse approximately 750 feet of NFS land to the northwestern boundary of the private property. This alignment is displayed in Figure 2.5-1. The corridor associated with the access road would be approximately 60-feet wide with a minimum 24-foot wide running surface at an average grade of six percent.

2.5.2 Utility Corridors

Under this alternative, authorization for construction and use of utility corridors across NFS land would provide the necessary infrastructure to serve the private property. These utility corridors would be utilized for the installation, operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement of electrical transmission lines and facilities; television cables, communication cables and lines, fiber-optic lines, and other utilities as required to serve the private property. They would consist of:

- One 10-foot wide utility corridor for electricity to the east and north of Tranquility Road. One 10-foot wide utility corridor for other utilities such as phone, cable, etc., to the east and north of Tranquility Road.
- One 10-foot wide utility corridor approximately 1,000 feet in length (identified as “Utility Corridor #3” in Figure 2.5-1) for electricity and located as shown on the map coming from Highway 160 to the northwestern boundary of the private property.