

**DECISION MEMO**  
**for**  
**Strawberry Quad Lift and Associated Infrastructure**  
**Snowbasin Ski Area**

Weber and Morgan Counties, Utah  
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests  
Ogden Ranger District

**DECISION AND RATIONALE**

I have reviewed Snowbasin's proposal and the associated environmental review documentation and have decided to approve the elements described below. These elements constitute the proposed action addressed in this Decision Memo:

- A high-speed detachable quad chairlift in Snowbasin's Strawberry Bowl area, with a capacity of up to 2,400 persons per hour, a lift line slope length of 8,500 feet, and a vertical rise of 1,970 feet. About 95% of the total lift line (7,950 feet) will be on Snowbasin property and will include the lower terminal building, lift towers and associated terrain grading. The upper 550 feet (approximately 5%) of the lift line will be located on National Forest System land and includes the upper terminal building, one lift tower and associated grading. It is estimated that these components will affect approximately 1 acre of NFS land.
- A 10-percent-slope, 30-foot-wide skiway from the upper terminal of this lift to the top of Main Street run (approximately 850 feet in length). The skiway will also serve as a summer access road to the upper lift terminal for ski area operation and administrative purposes. It will not be open to public motorized use. In order to accommodate safe and reliable, early and late season egress to the main base area from Strawberry Bowl a buried snowmaking line will be installed in the skiway. This component will affect approximately 0.6 acre of NFS land.
- A buried electrical power line running from Well A to the upper terminal access road. The electrical line will then be buried in the skiway and will provide electrical power to the upper terminal building from Well A. The total area of disturbance on NFS land will be about 30 feet by 180 feet and will affect approximately 0.15 acres.
- A buried snowmaking line, electrical power, and water line running from the Forest boundary at the top of Dan's Run to the 1-million-gallon water storage tank. The total area of disturbance will be about 30 feet by 2,030 feet and will affect approximately 1.4 acres of NFS land.
- A buried snowmaking line that will tie into the line described above that will provide snowmaking coverage from lower Dan's Run to its intersection with Sweet Revenge. The total area of disturbance will be approximately 30 feet by 1,940 feet and will affect approximately 1.3 acres of NFS land.

The total area of disturbance on NFS land will be 4.44 acres. No public access roads will be constructed, and standard rehabilitation and revegetation efforts will follow construction. Work is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2008 and be completed by the end of the 2009 construction season.

I believe that this project will improve the recreational experience at Snowbasin. The proposed chairlift and associated infrastructure will improve skier safety by providing an alternative lift-served egress route from Strawberry Bowl that is less susceptible to weather conditions. The upper terminal of the proposed lift will be below the cloud line in a more protected area. The skiway to the top of Mainstreet will provide skier access to Strawberry Bowl terrain, while the infrastructure improvements to Dan's run will more safety and efficiently accommodate skiers leaving Strawberry Bowl from the upper portion of the bowl or from the upper terminal of the new lift. The proposed snowmaking will help insure a safe and reliable skiing surface on these key routes. The project has been designed in a manner that will minimize potential impacts on the project area as a whole. Overall, I am confident that approval of the proposed action is in the best interest of the public.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

Implementation of the mitigation measures listed below will be required as part of my decision.

### Soil Erosion, Sedimentation, and Water Quality

1. Prior to beginning the project, submit an erosion control plan prepared in accordance with the BMPs typically agreed upon by the Forest Service and Snowbasin for similar projects in the past. The plan should incorporate the WCNF's *Best Management Practices: Ski Area BMPs*. This plan must be approved by the Forest Service prior to construction on NFS land.
2. Include in the erosion control plan stockpiling of excavated material on the upslope side of all excavations, where possible. If this is not possible, stockpiling on the downslope side may require sediment control barriers if in close proximity to live water. Efforts should be made to stockpile topsoil separately from subsoil so it can easily be located and re-applied to the backfilled excavations.
3. Include in the erosion control plan installation of trench blocks and relief drains for subsurface water at areas where the snowmaking-line trench could intercept underground seepage.
4. Include in the erosion control plan installation of culverts and drains at any areas where disturbance areas could intercept surface flow or underground seepage.
5. Include in the erosion control plan water bars on the finished skiway ski run and trench line at a maximum spacing of 100 feet, and at a maximum of 50 feet on slopes in excess of 30 percent.
6. Promptly revegetate disturbed areas using Forest Service approved prescriptions. Revegetation efforts will be monitored by the Forest Service.
7. Use hand crews to excavate and prepare the foundation for the breakover tower (below the upper lift terminal) that will be located on NFS land.
8. Use a helicopter to haul the concrete and the tower structure to build the breakover tower to avoid construction of an access road on NFS land.
9. Install silt fencing to protect the pond adjacent to Dan's Run.

### Visual Resources

10. Chemically treat lift towers and cross arms to reduce glare and blend with the natural surroundings.

## Wetland and Riparian Resources

11. Secure any permitting required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the project.

## Cultural Resources

12. Notify the Forest Service archaeologist immediately if and when any historic or prehistoric resources are exposed during construction activities.

## **SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

On March 19, 2008, the WCNF circulated a scoping notice summarizing this proposal and soliciting input on associated environmental issues and concerns. The notice was mailed to individuals, organizations, and agencies on the agency mailing list and posted on the WCNF website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/proposed>. A 30-day scoping period was provided. Comment letters were received from two environmental organizations. Comments were reviewed and processed, as documented in the scoping report prepared for the project and included in the project file.

In reaching my decision, I considered issues identified by Forest Service interdisciplinary team members who reviewed the proposal and project site as well as the issues raised by commentors. Some of these issues fell under the headings of “extraordinary circumstances” and are discussed in detail below (see Reason for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Action). The specific category and the analysis of potentially extraordinary circumstances are discussed below.

## **REASON FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

I have determined that the proposed project, as described above, is consistent with the types of actions described under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3) -Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than 5 contiguous acres of land. As noted above, the entire project will affect about 4.4 acres of NFS land, all within the ski area’s special use permit boundary. Any potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the project were reviewed and considered in my decision.

In regard to potential extraordinary circumstances, the Forest Service NEPA regulations lists several resource conditions that must be considered (36 CFR 220.6(b)). Forest Service resource specialists visited the project area, reviewed relevant studies and other published information, and documented their findings regarding these resource conditions in the project file. Their findings are summarized below.

- A. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. A biological assessment (BA) was prepared for this project. The determination reached was that no federally listed or candidate plant or animal species or critical habitat will be affected. A biological evaluation (BE) was also prepared, concluding that the project will not impact any Forest Service sensitive plant or animal species.
- B. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. As currently laid out, the approved facilities will not affect any wetland. Based on these considerations, flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds will not be affected by this proposal.

- C. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas. The project area does not include any designated wilderness, wilderness study area, or national recreation area, so such areas do not constitute an extraordinary circumstance for this proposed action.
- D. Inventoried roadless areas. The project area does not include any inventoried roadless areas, so such areas do not constitute an extraordinary circumstance for this proposed action.
- E. Research natural areas. The project area does not include any research natural areas, so such areas do not constitute an extraordinary circumstance for this proposed action.
- F. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites. Prior to European settlement the ski area was used by Native Peoples for both hunting and plant gathering in a lifeway that was otherwise tied to the more abundant resources of the adjacent Salt Lake Valley. These short-term uses leave little archaeological imprint, and few examples of Native American sites remain anywhere in the vicinity. No Native American sites have been found in or near the project area. Based on these considerations, American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites will not be affected by the proposed action, and do not constitute an extraordinary circumstance.
- G. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. In the course of ski area development to date, the history of the area and investigations of archaeological sites and historic properties have been reviewed, and no sites eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places have been identified. Mitigation measure #12 above will protect any archaeological resources discovered during construction. Based on these considerations, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas, will not be affected by the proposed action and therefore do not constitute any extraordinary circumstance.

Based on the findings summarized above, I am categorically excluding this decision from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Based on experience with management activities similar to this, and upon the environmental analysis conducted for this project, the effects of implementing this action will be limited in context and intensity. Connected and cumulative actions have been appropriately addressed, an appropriate category for exclusion has been established by law and documented in the Forest Service Handbook, and our review indicates no extraordinary circumstances to preclude its application.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

The only finding required by other laws not addressed directly or indirectly above is Forest Plan compliance in accordance with the National Forest Management Act. The proposed action has been evaluated for consistency with the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines of the 2003 Revised WCNF Forest Plan. The project area is located within a 4.5 Management Area, which emphasizes providing developed recreation opportunities, often under the terms of a special use permit. Thus, the proposed action is consistent with the management area prescription. In terms of more specific Forest Plan direction, my review indicates that the proposed action, with required mitigation measures in place, is consistent with all applicable standards and guidelines.

## **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This decision is not an authorization to proceed. Once all applicable conditions have been met and engineering reviews completed, a written authorization to begin work will be issued.

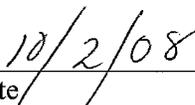
These permitted actions are not one of the 10 activities subject to notice and comment under Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215, as clarified on October 19, 2005, by the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California in Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck. While scoping comments expressed the opinion that potential ORV use of the proposed skiway/access road placed this decision among those 10 activities subject to notice and appeal regulations, the proposed skiway/access road will be used solely for ski area operations and administrative purposes, and will not be open to motorized use by the public. Therefore, this decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) is not subject to appeal.

## CONTACT PERSON

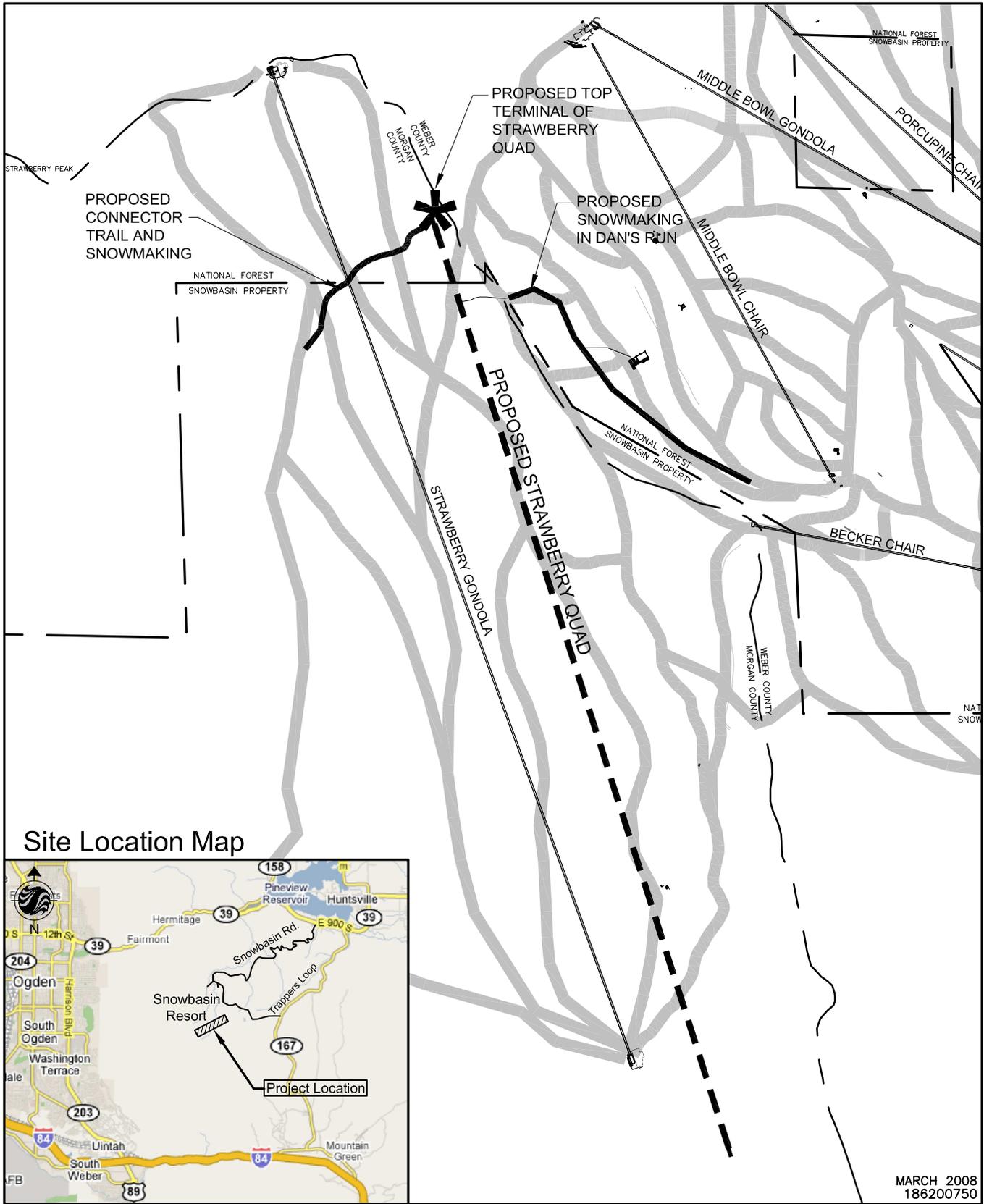
For further information contact Chip Sibbernsen at:

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BRIAN FEREBEE  
Forest Supervisor

  
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Date

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Site Location Map



MARCH 2008  
186200750

Client/Project  
SNOWBASIN RESORT



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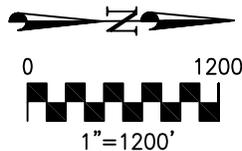


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Title

STRAWBERRY QUAD LIFT AND  
SNOWMAKING MODIFICATIONS