



DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN WINTER RECREATION PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
INYO NATIONAL FOREST
MAMMOTH AND MONO LAKE RANGER DISTRICT
MONO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

I have reviewed the Mammoth Mountain Winter Recreation Project Environmental Assessment and supporting analysis in the project record, for four winter recreation projects at Mammoth Mountain Ski Area and Woolly's Adventure Summit, both under special use permit with the Inyo National Forest. I referenced the documents and maps incorporated as Appendixes in the EA and fully understand environmental effects disclosed therein. I have also considered the supportive comment submitted during public scoping for this record and it is available in the project record.

DECISION RATIONALE

Based upon this review, which documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, to improve two ski runs at Mammoth Mountain Ski Area on Face of Three and Upper Coyote by removing and relocating two old shacks; removing abandoned footings, and ski run grading, and to extend a snowmaking line to enable snowmaking at Rollercoaster half pipe. At Woolly's Adventure Summit, I approve the lengthening of tubing lanes, thinning of small trees within the snowplay area and expanding the parking area as defined in Appendix D, Figure 5 of the EA and attached to this decision.

My reasons for this decision are to improve safety deficiencies by removing two old shacks, removing abandoned footers and grading the sections of terrain that interrupt the natural flow of skiers within two MMSA ski runs. At Woolly's Adventure Summit, safety deficiencies are being improved by lengthening steep tubing lanes, so the rise over run facilitates a more controllable safety slow zone as one nears the bottom of the run. Expanding the parking area promotes public safety and manageable ingress and egress of vehicles.

Resolving deficiencies at Mammoth Mountain Ski Area and Woolly's Adventure Summit will meet current and future public expectations for quality skiing, tubing, snowplay and parking to support enjoyable winter recreation experiences.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The legal notice which announced the start of the 30-day comment period was published in the Inyo Register on May 17, 2012. Copies of the proposed project were sent to 19 individuals and organizations. Official Tribal consultation letters were sent via certified mail on May 11, 2012 to four Native American tribes (seven contacts). An electronic copy of proposed project was available for comment and made available via the Inyo National Forest website. The comment period ended on June 18, 2012. One supportive comment from the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board was received during the comment period. The comment letter, and my consideration of it, is contained in the project record.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

I have determined this project is not a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of potential impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This determination was made considering the following factors:

1. *Beneficial and adverse impacts:*

Mitigations and management requirements designed to reduce potential for adverse impacts were incorporated into the proposed action. These mitigations and management requirements would minimize or eliminate potential adverse impacts caused by soil disturbance. See Appendix B Best Management Practices and Appendix E Environmental Checklist (EA pgs. 20-25 and 33-50 respectively).

Mitigation measures to help prevent the establishment of non-native invasive species in the project area, such as cleaning equipment, monitoring and weed control are identified on pages 13-14 of the EA. Analysis prepared in support of this document considered both beneficial and adverse effects. None of the potential adverse effects of the proposed action would be significant, even when considered separately from beneficial effects which occur in conjunction with those adverse effects. There were no cumulative impacts for archeology, hydrology, wildlife or botany(EA pgs 13-16).

2. *Degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety:*

There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. However, there would be improved public and employee safety, as projects are designed for safer skiing and tubing experiences. The grading at Face of Three and Upper Coyote eliminate ski run slope deficiencies, as the improved run provides a wider and more friendly run thus meeting current and future public safety expectations for quality skiing. Removal and relocation of the shacks and the abandoned footings at the top of Face of Three will resolve line of access operational deficiencies during winching, such that winching will be possible while the Gondola is running, enabling better and faster opening and snow maintenance operations thus meeting current and future public visual and timely access expectations for quality skiing. The identified deficiencies at Woolly's Adventure Summit are short, steep tubing lanes, minimal snow play area and limited parking spaces. The lengthening of tubing lanes thus reducing the tubing speed near the end of the run, the thinning of trees within the snowplay area and the expanding of the parking area resolve minor safety issues for the public and employees.

3. *Unique character of the geographical area:*

There are no parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas within the project area. The project area is completely outside of designated wilderness. Protection of

heritage resources has been incorporated into the project and will follow stipulations in the Programmatic Agreement between Forests of the Sierra Nevada and the California State Historical Preservation Office.

Information regarding field surveys and management recommendations for heritage resource sites and features are contained in the Heritage Reports No. R1983050400310, Heritage Report No. R1983050400310, Heritage Report Nos. R1979050400075, R1983050400310, R1990050400488 and R2011050401702 as referenced on EA page 14. As further referenced on EA 14, no heritage resources were found within the area of potential effect. California Environmental Quality Act requirements and permit requirements will be in place before project activity is initiated.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The project follows management direction in the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 1988), as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (USDA Forest Service 2004). Potential adverse effects have been minimized to the point where there are few effects to draw controversy. Public involvement efforts did not reveal any significant issues or any other significant controversies regarding environmental effects of this proposal. Based on the supportive comment received during the comment period and the analysis of effects by an interdisciplinary team of Forest Service specialists referenced in EA Appendix F, List of Preparers, there are no significant effects expected to quality of the human environment from implementing either of the alternatives, including the proposed action alternative.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The project follows management direction in the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 1988), as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (USDA Forest Service 2004). The project reflects management requirements designed to reduce potential for adverse effects. Local expertise in implementation of these types of projects minimizes chance of highly uncertain effects or effects which involve unique or unknown risks. On pages 13-16 of the EA, specialist input is referenced from Stewart, Lutrick-Noesser, Nelson, Perloff and Foxworth supporting project activities are routine in nature, employing standard practices and protection measures, and their effects generally well known.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Mammoth Mountain Winter Recreation Project represents a site-specific project which does not set precedence for future decisions with significant effects or present a decision in principal about future considerations. Any future decisions would require a site-specific analysis to consider all relevant scientific and site-specific information available. These activities are in accordance with the best available science to manage winter recreation activities and land stewardship.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

A cumulative effect is the consequence on the environment which results from incremental effect of an action when added to effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes these other actions and regardless of land ownership

on which these actions occur. A cumulative effects analysis was completed separately for each resource area. None of the resource specialists found potential for significant adverse cumulative effects (EA pgs. 14, 15, 16)

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

It is determined there would be no effect to cultural, or historical resources from implementing this project as ground disturbance is taking place within previously disturbed/heavily modified areas or areas where no cultural or historic resources were found. There are no adverse effects to district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and there will be no loss or destruction of cultural or historic resources(EA pgs.14 and 16).

Six heritage reports are cited as: Heritage Report No. R1983050400310, Heritage Report No. R1983050400310, and Heritage Report Nos. R1979050400075, R1983050400310, R1990050400488 and R2011050401702. There are no adverse effects to district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and there will be no loss or destruction of cultural or historic resources(EA pgs.14 and 16).

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered wildlife or plant species known to occur or have suitable habitat (including critical habitat) within the project area. There would be no effect to federally listed threatened or endangered wildlife or plant species or critical habitat from implementation of the proposed action (EA pgs. 12-16).

Nelson, Kathleen July, 2012 Biological Evaluation for Sensitive Plants, Mammoth Mountain Winter Recreation Project: Woolly's Adventure Summit, Face of Three Run Improvements, Coyote Run Improvements, Rollercoaster Snowmaking Line Extension, Inyo National Forest. Project file, Mammoth Ranger District, Mammoth Lakes, CA. 2 pgs.

Perloff, Richard July, 2012 Biological Evaluation, Sensitive Animal Species, Mammoth Mountain Winter Recreation Project. Mammoth Lakes, CA: USDA, Forest Service Inyo NF, 5 pgs.

10. *Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. The proposed action is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, Executive Order 13007 (1996), under Section 101(d)(6) of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended), and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (as amended), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Executive Order 13007, Executive Order 13175, and 36 CFR 800.2 (c). The proposed action is fully consistent with the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 1988), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (USDA Forest Service 2004).

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Because only supportive comments were received during the 30-day comment period ending on June 18, 2012, this decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12. Implementation may begin after:

- Publication of the legal notice of decision in the Inyo Register (36 CFR 215.7) and
- Project proponents have obtained proper permits from other regulatory agencies, including compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Allison Jackson at Mammoth Ranger Station, P.O. Box 148 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546; 760.914.1895; or email ajackson@fs.fed.us



JON C. REGELBRUGGE

DISTRICT RANGER



Date

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