

DECISION NOTICE
And
Finding of No Significant Impact
Ski Hill Improvements Project
USDA Forest Service
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Wenatchee River Ranger District
Chelan County, Washington

Background

Based upon my review of the Ski Hill Improvements Project Environmental Analysis (EA), I have decided to implement the proposed action for the Ski Hill Improvements Project. The proposed action was analyzed and design criteria were created by resource specialists from the Interdisciplinary Development Team for the Ski Hill Improvements Project Environmental Assessment (EA), hereby incorporated by reference. The project will address the current lack of quality infrastructure and accessibility at the Ski Hill Lodge area and address antiquated features on the ski slopes. The proposed project included a variety of upgrades to the Leavenworth Ski Hill lodge and immediate surrounding area that will enhance the Lodge infrastructure, improve safety, make the facility more accessible, maintain and enhance ski area facilities, provide additional outdoor space for people to gather and improve service to users. This action is needed to address not only the current antiquated facility amenities of the Ski Hill Lodge, but also to safely and appropriately accommodate the increasing use the area and facilities are experiencing as outdoor recreation and tourism continue to grow in the Leavenworth area.

The proposed project area is located in the Leavenworth Ski Hill area and is within the Wenatchee River Ranger District, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and Chelan County in Washington State.

Decision and Rationale

Decision

Based upon my review of the Ski Hill Improvements Project Environmental Analysis (EA), I have decided to implement the proposed action for the Ski Hill Improvements Project.

The proposed action is comprised of the following:

Improvements adjacent to the Lodge

- Addition of an outdoor patio measuring approximately 2,000 square feet to the northwest exterior corner of the lodge with accompanying stairway
- A propane outdoor fire pit will be integrated in the southwest corner of the patio and the propane tank will be buried west of the patio
- Foot paths leading to the lodge will be resurfaced with crushed gravel
- A new ADA accessible bathroom will be constructed outside the main level of the lodge.
- Move existing woodshed structure to new location

- Upgrade lighting

Improvements to the Lodge (Interior)

- Repurpose downstairs existing bathroom to one unisex accessible bathroom
- Upgrade kitchen appliances and hardware in the interior

Ski Hill improvements

- Replace little tow spar
- Replace big rope tow top anchor spar
- Re-grade bunny hill

Below ground Infrastructure

- Install new septic system, transport line and drain field

Decision Rational

This Decision Notice and FONSI will serve as the documentation for my decision regarding the implementation of the Ski Hill Improvements Project. I have chosen to implement the proposed action with the specified design criteria by resource specialists. The project will make improvements that will increase the lifespan of the lodge, improve safety around the lodge and on the ski slope, make the facility more accessible, provide additional outdoor gathering space, improve service and associated amenities, and enhance the ability of the public to appreciate the historic attributes of the Ski Hill area.

Improvements adjacent to the Lodge

The focal point of improvements adjacent to the Lodge is an outdoor patio measuring approximately 2,000 square feet. It will wrap around the base level of the lodge with the main gathering area on the northwest corner. The patio will extend out from the existing basement level porch with improved access to the main floor of the Lodge via concrete and stone steps on the east and west sides of the Lodge. A propane outdoor fire pit will be integrated in the southwest corner of the patio and the propane tank will be buried west of the patio. All aspects of patio construction will be of Forest Service approved design and complementary to the Historic lodge. To allow for nighttime lodge and patio use, new lighting fixtures will be installed. The patio, stone steps, lighting and path resurfacing will serve to improve accessibility and safety around the lodge and provide additional outdoor gathering space. In addition to the patio, a new accessible bathroom will be constructed outside the main level of the lodge in the location of the existing woodshed on the northeast side of the lodge. The woodshed will be moved to the northeast side of the lodge, approximately 30ft east of the new bathroom building.

Improvements to the Lodge (Interior)

Several upgrades to the interior of the Lodge will improve accessibility and services to visitors, streamline operations, and complete much needed maintenance. The existing concession service counter and seating configuration will remain the same, but kitchen equipment will be replaced with commercial fixtures to allow for increased menu options and improved flow. Current restrooms at the Lodge consist of one men's and women's restroom, both located in the basement and neither are ADA accessible. The basement bathroom will be repurposed and

remodeled to accommodate one single unisex ADA compliant bathroom and a small storage room.

Below ground Infrastructure

Current conditions of the Lodge septic system is not at a level to serve the present or future demand while providing adequate and suitable accommodations. The septic system, which was last upgraded in the 1980's, is prone to intermittent failure and improvements need to be made in order to handle the current and growing usage demands. To address this, a new septic system including tanks, transport line and drain field will be constructed adjacent to the Big rope tow and the old septic tanks will be removed and site rehabilitated.

Ski Hill improvements

Several upgrades and maintenance tasks will improve safety, flow and overall visitor experience while skiing or riding the slopes of the Ski Hill. As a part of infrequent, but needed maintenance, the Big and Little rope tow spars will be replaced. The design will be approved by USFS regional tramway engineer to ensure compliance with ANSI tramway standards and will now use poles. The slope angle of the beginner hill adjacent to the Little Rope Tow causes new skiers and riders to naturally drift into the rope tow on their descent from the top of the hill. The beginner hill will be re-graded to keep skiers and riders away from the rope tow as they descend the hill. Approximately 420 cubic yards will be excavated and used to re-contour the slope.

Built in 1933, the historic Bakke Hill Ski Jump is an iconic structure of the Leavenworth Ski Hill. Through lack of use and maintenance, the jump has slowly become obscured by encroaching trees and brush. To enhance the ability of the public to appreciate the Historic values of the Ski Hill area, approximately 45 trees (~1/4acre; 4"-14" dbh) will be removed.

My decision is based on the effects analysis in Chapter 3 of the EA, no public comments in opposition to the proposed action, and an examination of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information. The Ski Hill Improvements Project EA documents the environmental analysis and associated conclusions are which this decision is based upon. I have determined that this project will serve the public interest.

Public Involvement

Collaboration/Scoping

A pre-scoping letter was sent to the District NEPA mailing list and other interested parties in January 2014. An official scoping letter was sent out on January 30, 2014 and the proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions in the First Quarter of 2014. It described the Purpose and Need for the project, the original Proposed Action and requested comments. A publication of legal notice for scoping went out in the Wenatchee World newspaper on January 31, 2014, marking the beginning of a 30 day comment period for the public. No public comments were received in the 30 day comment period for the proposed project.

Consultation

Separate government to government consultation was conducted with the Yakama Indian Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Letters were sent on January 6, 2014.

This consultation process did not result in the documentation of any specific concerns regarding project impacts on resources of tribal interest. As a result of a no effect determination to fisheries and wildlife, no formal consultation with USFWS and NMFS was needed.

Resolved Resource Conflicts

After interdisciplinary team review of the proposed project, no major issues were identified. Minor concerns were mitigated through resource specialist design criteria, outlined in chapter 2 of this document. When there are no unresolved conflicts (issues) the EA need only analyze the proposed action and proceed without consideration of additional alternatives (36 CFR 220.7 (b)(2)(i)).

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have determined through the *Ski Hill Improvements Project Environmental Assessment* that this is not a major federal action individually or cumulatively that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. Significance, as used in NEPA, is determined by considering the context and intensity of proposed actions. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

Context

This project is a site-specific action that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or statewide importance. The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is comprised of over 4,000,000 acres, the Wenatchee Ranger District is comprised of approximately 800,000 acres and the Ski Hill permit area is approximately 151 acres. All project activities occur in the lower/downhill portion of the Ski Hill permit area and are limited to an approximate 10 acre footprint. The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended action and is within the context of local importance in the area associated with the Ski Hill permit boundary.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the ten Significance Criteria described in NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1508.27):

- 1. Analysis of the beneficial and adverse impacts: Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action, i.e., beneficial effects do not mask potentially significant adverse effects. Analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects is available in Chapter 3 of the EA.

2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety:** There are limited health and safety hazards to Forest Service Employees, permittees, and the general public from the project. None are unusual or unique to this project.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** No prime farmlands, parklands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas are found within the project area. The Washington State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF's determination of **"No Adverse Effect"** on National Register eligible or listed historic and cultural resources on April 8, 2015.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. (See EA Chapter 3).
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:** There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified for the Ski Hill Improvements Project EA. The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks (See EA Chapter 3).
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects:** Activities approved in this decision notice are routine projects similar to those that have been implemented under the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan over the past 20 years. None are new or precedent setting (see Forest Plan consistency statements at the end of each resource discussion in Chapter 3).
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts:** The cumulative impacts are not significant. Each resource area was analyzed and if needed design criteria were put in place to mitigate any individual effect. All cumulative effects are limited to the local area and effects of the proposed action are limited in duration and intensity (EA Chapter 3, Resource Cumulative Effects sections).
8. **The degree to which the action may affect scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The Leavenworth Ski Hill Site (OWNF #06170700107) is listed on the National Register under criteria A and C. The proposed projects will only serve to enhance the character defining features of the historic lodge and surrounding landscape, both of which contribute to the significance of the Leavenworth Ski Hill site. The projects will also improve and upgrade the infrastructure required to support the lodge and ski hills for the site's continued use as a recreational facility. Therefore, the proposed projects will have **"No Adverse Effect"** upon the lodge and surround landscape within the Leavenworth Ski Hill site. Under the 1997 Programmatic Agreement between the State of Washington and the US Department of Agriculture regarding cultural resources management on national forests in the state,

consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF's determination of "**No Adverse Effect**" on National Register eligible or listed historic and cultural resources on April 8, 2015. No districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected. Should any undiscovered sites be located during project activities, work will stop until the Forest Archaeologist could review the site. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation and the Yakama Nation were consulted on this project; no concerns were raised by either Tribal government.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect endangered or threatened species or habitats: There are no identified threatened and endangered fish, wildlife, or plant species in the proposed project area, therefore there is no adverse effect.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental laws or requirements.

Discussion of compliance with environmental laws or requirements is identified in the following section on compliance with other laws and regulations. This project will not violate any environmental laws or regulations.

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Findings Required by other Laws and Regulations

This project was prepared consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, its implementing regulations, and the Forest Service NEPA regulations (36 CFR 220) and Handbook (FSH 1909.15). This decision is consistent with the National Forest Management Act and the long-term Goals and Objectives listed in the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) (1990), as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994). I find that this decision complies with the Northwest Forest Plan as amended by the 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines. It considers suitable habitat for survey and manage species and applies appropriate mitigations providing for a reasonable assurance of species' persistence. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan Management Allocation standards and guidelines. The project is consistent with all applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and meets requirements of the National Forest Management Act (see Forest Plan consistency statements at the end of each resource discussion Chapter 3). The Wenatchee River Ranger District invasive species program in currently in place and BMP's are included as design criteria and incorporates relevant portions of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests Weed Management and Prevention Strategy and Best Management Practices (USDA Forest Service 2002a) as well as standards provided by the Region 6 Invasive Plant Management EIS (USDA Forest Service 2005a) (EA page 31).

The project will help attain objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) and will also meet or exceed all Forest Plan standards and guidelines that apply to riparian reserves (EA page 23-24). The project will not contribute to a negative trend in viability of any fish or wildlife Management Indicator Species (MIS) (EA pages 25, 26).

The project is also consistent with:

- Endangered Species Act because there were no effects to endangered species (EA page 25).
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act because there were no effects to migratory birds (EA page 25).
- Clean Water Act because there were no effects to water quality or quantity (EA page 22).
- Clean Air Act because all of the proposed alternatives will cause no more than incidental dust as a result of implementation of the proposed alternatives. No effect to wilderness visibility or other Class 1 airsheds is anticipated.
- National Historic Preservation Act because Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF's determination of "**No Adverse Effect**" on National Register eligible or listed historic and cultural resources on April 8, 2015.
- Magnuson Stevens Act because Essential Fish Habitat is not adversely affected (EA page 22).
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 because the project would not limit Native American access to sacred sites. Tribes were contacted about the project during initial scoping for the project, and did not raise any concerns.
- Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979, because no archaeological sites will be removed or harmed by planned actions (EA page 33).

Executive Orders:

- Executive Order 11990 and 11988 (protection of wetlands and floodplains), because floodplains and wetlands would be protected by mitigation measures (EA page 93).
- Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice), because effect on low income and minority populations would be minimal (EA pages 92-93).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITY

Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.4, no individual or entity has eligibility to file an objection and no objection period will be scheduled.

Implementation Date

In accordance with 36 CFR 218, the project may be implemented immediately.

Contact Person

For further information regarding this project, contact Sara Jones, team leader, Wenatchee River Ranger District, 600 Sherbourne, Leavenworth, WA 98826 at (509) 548-2579 or sarajones@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Jeffrey A Rivera

5/20/2016

JEFFREY A. RIVERA

Date

District Ranger

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.