



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Brundage Mountain Resort Cat-Ski Outfitter and Guide Permit Reissuance Environmental Assessment

New Meadows and McCall Ranger Districts, Payette National Forest, Adams, Idaho, and Valley Counties, Idaho
May 2016 with July 2016 errata



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Cover Photo: Skier enjoys the extreme terrain and untracked conditions available by cat-ski at Brundage Mountain Resort. United States (U.S.) Forest Service photo.

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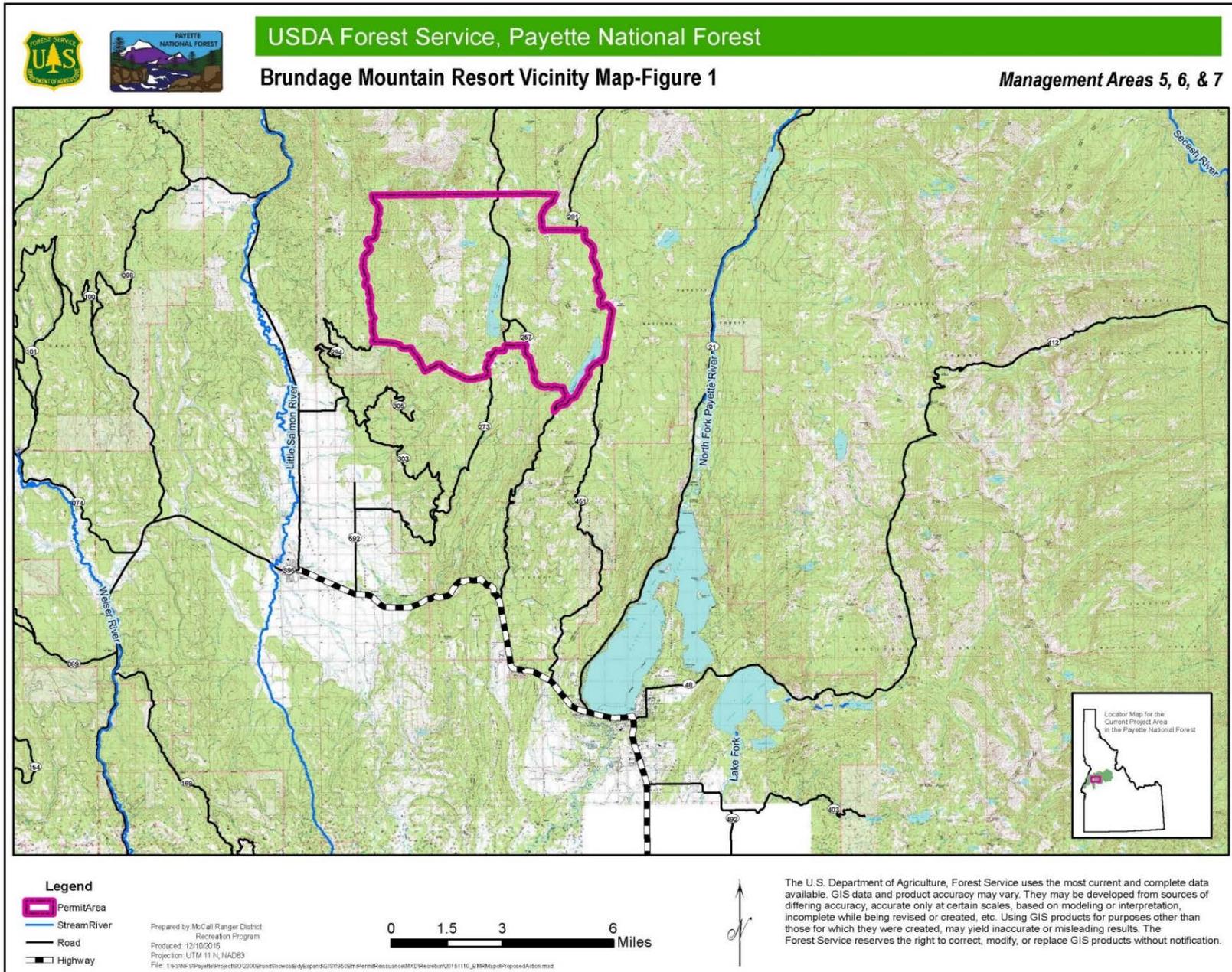
Introduction

The Forest Service is proposing to reissue the Brundage Mountain Resort (BMR) cat-ski permit for a 10-year term.

The Forest Service prepared this environmental assessment (EA) to determine whether reissuing the special use permit (SUP) for BMR cat-ski outfitter and guide service may significantly affect the quality of the human environment and thereby require preparing an environmental impact statement. By preparing this EA, we are fulfilling agency policy and direction to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. For more details of the proposed action, see the “Proposed Action and Alternatives” section of this document.

Proposed Project Location

The analysis area for the BMR cat-ski permit reissuance is located on the New Meadows and McCall Ranger Districts of the Payette National Forest (Forest), approximately 19 miles from McCall, Idaho. The extent of the analysis includes the area surrounding the Goose Lake Reservoir and Granite Mountain and Slab Butte. The approximate 17,912-acre project area is located within the following legal description(s): Township 21 North, Range 2 East, Sections 7, 35, 36, 34, and 33; Township 20 North, Range 2 East, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; Township 21 North, Range 3 East, Section 31; Township 20 North, Range 3 East, Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, 19, 20, 30. The project area spans three counties: Adams, Idaho, and Valley (Figure 1).



Need for the Proposal

The purpose of the project is to reauthorize the BMR SUP for outfitting and guiding with permitted activities that include guided backcountry skiing via snowcat on approved routes. This action is necessary in order to respond to a proposal brought forward by BMR to retain the permitted cat-ski terrain authorized to them in 1994 (USDA Forest Service 1994) and through subsequent Decisions, as well as examine requests for adding and modifying over-snow snowcat routes, abandoning over-snow snowcat routes, and using assigned sites for the purpose of placing temporary, seasonal structures in the form of yurts. The requested changes would allow BMR operational flexibility when dealing with adverse conditions related to inadequate or adverse snow packs for over-snow snowcat route construction. BMR has also identified safety concerns regarding snowmobile use on their snowcat routes that they would like addressed in this permit reissuance.

The cat-ski program allows guided recreationists a unique opportunity to ski in a natural environment difficult to replicate in the highly manipulated settings of ski resorts. The area currently permitted to BMR provides an area for backcountry skiers who wish to experience light powder, challenging natural topographic features, and varied vegetation of the Forest.

A Commercial Needs Assessment (available in the project record) completed in 2012 for the Forest affirmed a need exists for this type of service. Providing commercially guided cat-ski trips can ensure a quality experience for those unfamiliar with National Forest System (NFS) lands or those who may lack the necessary skill or equipment to experience a winter backcountry setting. Continuing to use commercial guides also provides an opportunity for professionals to educate recreationists and others about the area and snow safety during guided trips.

Background

In 1994, the Forest completed an EA and issued a Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the cat-ski proposal from BMR that authorized guided backcountry ski opportunities and provided transportation with a snowcat (USDA Forest Service 1994). In 2006, the Forest reauthorized the SUP for an additional 10 years (until April 2016) under the Brundage Snowcat Backcountry Skiing Outfitter and Guide Permit Re-issuance Decision Memo (USDA Forest Service 2006). In 2012, a DN and FONSI was completed amending the SUP by adding 227 acres to the authorized cat-ski area while reducing the overall allowed over-snow snowcat routes by 0.6 miles (USDA Forest Service 2012). The existing SUP authorizes outfitting and guiding services on approximately 17,912 acres, and BMR's cat-ski program is authorized on approximately 65 miles of over-snow routes, which includes active snowcat routes, unused permitted snowcat routes, and over-snow groomed snowmobile routes maintained by Valley County.

The permit authorizes snowcat routes for transporting customers via snowcat machines to skiable terrain and use of two assigned sites. Routes are constructed annually over snow each season and far fewer miles are constructed each year than what are authorized. Fewer miles are actually constructed to allow for flexibility as route construction depends on favorable snow conditions (temperature of snow and amount of snow) and placement depends on access to skiable terrain in the permitted area. Routes used within the permit boundaries are

not part of the Forest's over-snow groomed routes that were established under the 2013 Forest-wide Over-snow Trail Grooming Project Decision Notice (USDA Forest Service 2013).

Service days (i.e., days of actual use) for BMR's cat-ski operations have fluctuated due to snow and other conditions. From 2009 to 2014, BMR reported between 304 and 688 days of actual use for the cat-ski program (Table 1). Planned service days (client bookings) have been much higher (Table 1). However, trips have been cancelled because of inadequate snow loads, weather conditions, safety concerns, and snowmobiles out-competing skiers for powder terrain.

Table 1. Actual service day use versus planned service day use for Brundage Mountain Resort, 2009–2014

Year	Actual Use (Service Days, Used)	Planned Service Days, Total	Difference (Days of Cancellation)
2009–2010	304	920	616
2010–2011	547	745	198
2011–2012	546	909	363
2013–2014	688	920	232

Source: Email from Niki LeClair, Brundage Mountain Resort, dated February 05, 2015 (available in the project record)

A service day is an allocation of use constituting a day or any part of a day on NFS lands for which an outfitter or guide provides a service to an individual client. For example, if BMR provided a guided trip for 12 clients in the morning, and then provided a second trip in the afternoon to a different group of 12 clients, the total number of service days used that day would be 24. Service day allocation is based on the highest amount of use by a permitted operator in the previous 5 years of the authorization, with an additional 25% for operators with less than 1,000 service days allocated each operating season (Forest Service Manual [FSM] 2709.14.53.1n).

Snow conditions for the project area warrant the availability of outfitted and guided activities to begin mid-December, with activities normally ending early to mid-April. Trip client size for guided trips is limited to 11 persons per trip, plus guides. (Regardless of client party size, 2 guides are always assigned.)

The 17,912 acres of the project area are not exclusive to the permit holder. Under current travel management planning for the Forest, the project area is open to over-snow use by snowmobiles as shown on the Winter Travel Map, Payette National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2016). However, in order to preserve the non-motorized recreation experience and safety of all visitors using the Granite Mountain portion of the project area, a special order was written to enforce winter over-snow restrictions. The special order, as written, prohibits motorized use in this area for a 75 day period (January 15–March 31). The amount of area that is included in this order is approximately 4,730 acres. This Granite Mountain Motorized Over Snow Vehicle Closure was first signed on December 15, 2011 to be in effect from January 15, 2012 through March 31, 2012. A special order has been in effect each January 15 through March 31 since 2012.

The remaining acreage within the project boundaries are still open to multiple uses, including snowmobile recreationists. This includes Slab Butte, a place popular for recreationists owing to the scenic vistas that are viewed from it. The topography below Slab Butte has several miles of permitted snowcat routes that traverse steep, rugged terrain, as well as areas of dense vegetation. Rather than travel cross country through the open travel area, the privately installed routes are an attractive choice for many motorized users looking to access Slab Butte. BMR staff, Forest Service law enforcement, and recreationists have expressed concerns regarding the use of these privately installed snowcat routes, citing safety reasons. There has also been frustration expressed by BMR staff that the snowcat routes are damaged by snowmobile recreationists that use them. BMR has also expressed concerns over the potential for collisions between the snowcat and motorized users on their other permitted routes and ski areas potentially resulting in serious injury. Currently, BMR places signs at all of their entry points for snowcat routes with "No Snowmobiles" messages.

Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation

Public review processes were conducted in compliance with 36 CFR 218, and there were three specific opportunities for public review and comment or objection.

Public scoping was conducted February 12 through March 16, 2015, for the purpose of soliciting comments and concerns from interested members of the public, organizations, and agencies. At the January 2015 McCall Winter Recreation Forum, this project was introduced and participants were directed to the project webpage. Scoping letters were mailed to 197 addressees, and the opportunity to comment was published on the project website and in a legal notice in the McCall Star News on February 12, 2015. Twelve comment letters were received. Complete documentation of what was shared during scoping, who received scoping information, and comments submitted during scoping is contained in the project record.

The EA for review and comment was available for comment December 17, 2015, through January 15, 2016. One written comment in support of the project was received during the comment period. The project was also discussed at the January and April 2016 monthly meetings with the Winter Recreation Forum, a McCall based group that includes representatives of motorized and non-motorized winter recreation interests that collaborates across jurisdictional boundaries to provide a range of quality winter recreation opportunities in Valley and Adams County. Verbal comments expressed during the meeting identified concerns about the exclusion of snowmobiles from the cat-ski routes as well as safety issues that arise when snowmobiles venture onto the cat-ski routes. Subsequently, further discussion with the BMR and Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers identified the need to modify the proposed action to include a Special Order to prevent snowmobiles from traveling on the cat-ski routes. This document reflects those changes and the recreation analysis has been expanded to include the impacts of this new Special Order.

The project was open for objections May 12 to June 27, 2016. One comment was received regarding safety concerns related to snow conditions at the intersection of groomed snowmobile routes and snowcat routes, which was addressed with a new mitigation measure in Appendix A of the Decision Notice. The commenter did not wish to pursue the objection process and was satisfied with this minor edit, thus the objection period ended and the decision notice was prepared for signature.

Tribal consultations follow the protocols established with each tribe. Project briefing documents were presented to the Nez Perce Tribe for the March 4, 2015, staff-to-staff meeting, and a formal letter to the Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribe was sent on April 21, 2015. A formal letter to the Chairman of the Shoshone Bannock Tribe of Fort Hall was sent on April 21, 2015. Project briefing documents were presented to the Shoshone Paiute Tribe at the March 12, 2015, Wings and Roots consultation and again at the January 14, 2016, meeting. Copies of the EA for review and comment were provided to all three Tribes and no additional comments were received. Additional consultations will occur at each major phase of the project, including the opportunity for objection and release of the draft DN, and issuance of the final DN. During the objection period, copies of the revised EA and draft Decision Notice were again provided to all three Tribes and no objections were received.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action Alternative

The Forest Service proposes to authorize BMR a SUP for a term of 10 years. The proposal does not make any changes to the existing permit boundary (Figure 2). Nor does it change the existing over-snow travel management plan for the Forest. The proposal is specific to the outfitted and guided opportunity for the specific project area, which includes assigned site use, minor modifications of cat-ski routes, allocation of service days, and flexibility in changing and modifying over-snow snowcat routes.

Operations would continue within the currently permitted terrain and boundaries, with the following revisions:

- Authorization of a seasonal yurt at an assigned site near Slab Butte—This yurt would be placed on a portable platform, which would be pulled into place over the snow at the beginning of each cat-ski season and removed after each season of use (Location: Township 20 North, Range 3 East, Section 7).
- Authorization of a seasonal yurt at an assigned site near Granite Mountain (Location: Township 20, Range 3 East, Section 10)
- Addition, modification, or removal of routes—A total of 1.79 miles would be added or modified and 0.76 miles would be abandoned for a net gain of 1.03 miles of groomed snowcat routes as follows:
 - ◆ Addition of a new route at the north end of Goose Lake Reservoir for approximately 0.22 miles (Location: Township 20 North, Range 2 East, Sections 11 and 12)
 - ◆ Abandonment of approximately 0.36 miles of cat-ski routes along the southern end of Goose Lake, near the Goose Lake Campground (Location: Township 20 North, Range 3 East, Sections 11 and 12)
 - ◆ Extension of the existing route along the West side of Goose Lake Reservoir for an addition of approximately 0.74 miles (Location: Township 20, Range 2 East, Sections 14 and 23)
 - ◆ Addition/modification located near Twin Lakes—A new route would connect the Twin Lakes Route with an adjacent Southern Route, with an approximate distance of 0.14 miles. The eastern portion of the southern route would be abandoned for a total

- mileage of approximately 0.40 (Location: Township 20 North, Range 2 East, Section 2).
- ◆ Addition of a new route in the northwest portion of the permit boundaries, near Granite Mountain, with an approximate length of 0.69+ miles (Location: Township 20 North, Range 2 East, Section 10).
 - Allocation of 860 service days to BRM per operating season—Service day allocation is based on the highest amount of use by a permitted operator in the previous 5 years of the authorization, with an additional 25% for operators with less than 1,000 service days allocated each operating season (FSM 2709.14.53.ln). The highest use BMR has reported in the previous 5 years of operation is 688 (Table 1). Therefore, 860 service days are being proposed as the established allocated use number.
 - Examination of flexibility in changing and modifying over-snow snowcat routes from year-to-year based on current snow and climate conditions, as long as no net increase in authorized miles occurs and mitigation measures outlined in previous Decisions are met. BMR will be permitted 66.03 miles of recognized snow routes within their permitted boundaries. However, BMR will only be authorized to install 65 miles of over-snow routes each operating season.
 - Response to safety concerns brought forward during scoping and public review regarding the use of snowcat routes by motorized recreationists. Until such time that winter travel management plans for the Forest can be amended or revised, establish a Special Order that would close snowcat routes within the permit boundaries to motorized users. Motorized recreationists would still be able to cross over the permitted snowcat routes within open travel management areas; however, they would not be authorized to travel on the snowcat routes as a direct line of travel. The implementation of such a closure would be an administrative action taken by the appropriate Authorized Officer. The exemption to the use of snowcat routes would be the route known as “The Boulevard”, which would remain open to motorized users.

Project Design Features

The following design features will be applied to the proposed action. All project design features will be addressed through stipulations outlined in the permit and in the Five-Year Operating Plan.

- The permittee will avoid removing white bark pine whenever possible. Using white bark pine for firewood is prohibited by the Forest. Removing any vegetation is not authorized without the consent of the Authorized Officer.
- The Forest Service reserves the right to send personnel to work with BMR and ride with the cat-ski operator if resource concerns are present, whether concerns are physical, biological, or social in nature.
- In order to ensure no net increase in over-snow mileage each year, BMR will use Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking to record the miles of routes installed. Data will be provided to the Forest Service annually.

The permittee will continue to incorporate design features from previous Decisions regarding use of only snowcat routes, fuel spill containment measures, construction of snowcat routes and snow bridges (related to snow depth) and reporting of any observations of threatened or endangered species. This includes the 2006 Brundage Snowcat Backcountry Skiing Outfitter

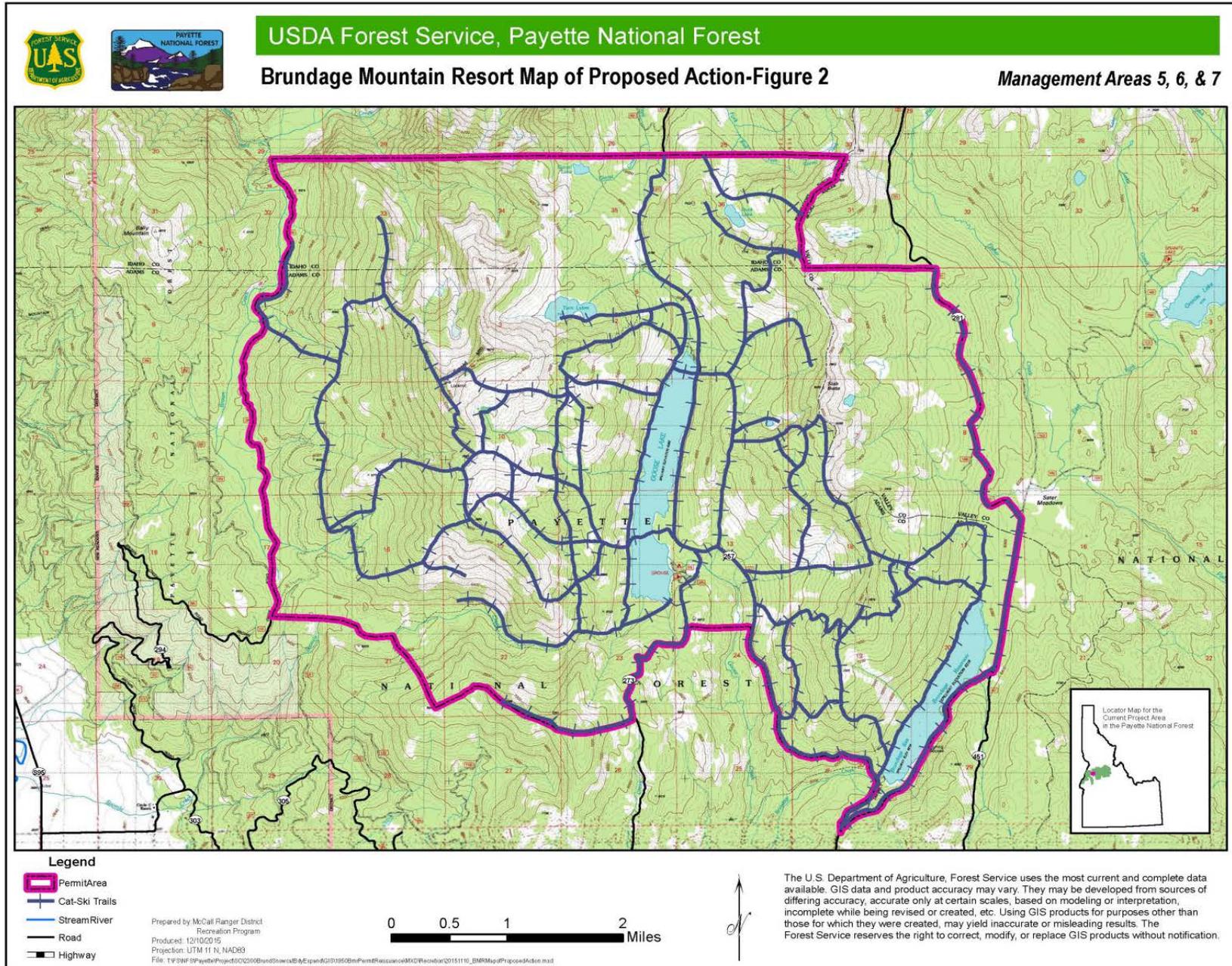
and Guide Permit Re-Issuance Decision Memo, as well as the 2012 Brundage Mountain Cat-Ski Outfitter and Guide Permit Boundary Expansion.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, BMR's cat-ski permit would not be reauthorized and would expire at the end of its current term of April 2016. The Forest Service would not offer service days to BMR to provide guided services to customers/clients. Snowcat routes in the project boundary would cease to be installed or maintained during the winter months. No assigned sites would be permitted and temporary seasonal shelters would not be erected.

Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Analysis

The reauthorization of the existing permit without revision was considered but dismissed because the 2012 boundary expansion (USDA Forest Service 2012) changed the on-the-ground configuration of the project area. A new proposal was brought forward by BMR to consider their operation in light of the boundary expansion and to resolve some operational needs. Thus, a reauthorization of the existing permit without revision was not considered a viable alternative because of changes in the project area.



Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

This section summarizes the potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives for each impacted resource. Comprehensive specialist reports were prepared to analyze each topic in detail, including geospatial and numerical data; best available science; and relationship to the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; USDA Forest Service 2003a), laws and policies, and regulations. Specialist reports are on file in the project record and are summarized below by topic. The following resources and topics were not impacted and, therefore, were not further analyzed: air quality; soil and geologic resources; prime farmlands, forest lands, and range lands; floodplains and wetlands; environmental justice; irretrievable or irreversible commitment of resources; potential or unusual expenditures of energy; and conflicts with other plans, policies, or jurisdictions.

The discussion and analysis is limited to the winter months and recreational activities associated with snow. For direct, indirect, and cumulative effects, the affected area for recreation is the project area that has been permitted to BMR since 1994 (USDA Forest Service 1994) and amended in 2012 (USDA Forest Service 2012), for a total of 17,912 acres.

Recreation (Including Socio-economics)

Affected Environment—Payette National Forest Visitor Use Numbers and Social Characteristics

In 1998, a team of research scientists and Forest Service staff developed a recreation sampling system called “National Visitor Use Monitoring” (NVUM) that provides statistical recreation use information at the Forest, regional, and national level. The first round of surveys on the Forest were conducted in 2003, with additional surveys completed in 2008 and 2012 (Table 2). The survey also asked questions regarding spending patterns to get an estimate on economic expenditures in the local area. (Complete survey information resides at the Forest Supervisor’s Office, with the Recreation Program Manager.)

Table 2 displays the information gathered specific to winter activities for the three survey cycles regarding participation in the main activity that visitors came to the Forest to enjoy. These three activities are snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and downhill (alpine) skiing or snowboarding. Nordic skiing was assumed to fit into the category of cross-country skiing, but back-country skiing was not captured adequately in any of the survey cycles because of the remote nature of the activity. However, the data presented provide insight into winter recreational activities associated with the Forest and the amount of visitor use the area receives.

As displayed in Table 2, trends show that snowmobile use is increasing on the Forest, cross-country skiing is declining slightly, and downhill skiing remains the most popular use in the area, but use is declining. These figures are not exact and consideration must be given to a good and/or bad snow year. Fewer visitors come to ski, snowmobile, and participate in winter recreational activities when snow levels are low.

Table 2. Winter sports visits

Activity	Estimated Visits (2003)	Estimated Visits (2008)	Estimated Visits (2012)
Downhill skiing or snowboarding	130,542	132,450	108,000
Snowmobiling	37,298	88,300	67,000
Cross-country skiing	24,865	52,980	16,000

All three surveys gathered information on gender, age, duration of visit, and origin location. Most respondents were male, middle aged, and visited the Forest as day users. People using the Forest came primarily from Valley and Adams counties, then from the Boise–Nampa area, then from Washington and Oregon. Fifty-five percent of Forest visitors originated from 100–200 miles away, with approximately 25% of visitors originating from the local area (McCall, Council, New Meadows, and Cascade). Only 10% of visitors traveled more than 500 miles to use the Forest.

As commodity production of timber and other resources has declined, local communities increasingly look to tourism to support their economies. This is true of the communities based in Adams, Idaho and Valley counties. Snowmobile recreationists, downhill skiers, Nordic skiers, and backcountry skiers are all a vital addition to the local winter economy for hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other retail stores. While specific economic data for the McCall area is not available, the Outdoor Industry Association reported in 2012 that \$1.8 billion in outdoor recreation dollars supported salaries and wages for over 77,000 people throughout the state of Idaho (Outdoor Industry Association 2012).

In terms of backcountry use, cat-ski programs allow recreationists a unique opportunity to ski in a natural environment that is difficult to replicate in the highly manipulated settings of ski resorts. Most people that participate in cat-skiing programs are seeking an experience that allows for less congestion resulting from other skiers, powder snow, natural terrain features, timbered vegetation, and a variable environment that is distinct and unmanicured. While the setting is not as formalized as a ski resort, participants in these programs are led by an experienced guide that will determine where to ski, as well as if clients should ski independently or ski as a group. Cat-ski programs offer an experience that allows the client to gain several runs utilizing a snowcat that travels on established trails and routes.

Within the State of Idaho, six companies offer this type of guided recreational experience for the backcountry setting: Sun Valley Resort, Selkirk Powder Company at Schweitzer, Grand Targhee Snowcat Skiing, Soldier Mountain Cat Skiing, BMR, and Payette Powder Guides. (Idaho Ski Areas Association 2015).

Of the operations listed above, BMR is the only permitted operator authorized to provide cat-ski services for client visitors to the Forest.

Currently, 1,061,130 acres are open to over-snow motorized uses on the Forest, with 291 miles of groomed-over-snow trails authorized, though not all trail miles are groomed each year. This number does not account for those miles groomed on State of Idaho lands, private land, and other land ownerships that provide access to the National Forest. Some motorized users stay on the groomed system trails and do not go off the established routes.

More advanced riders use the groomed routes as a way to access backcountry areas that are open to motorized and non-motorized uses.

Backcountry skiers also use the groomed trails to access areas where they want to ski via snowmobile. Some areas lend themselves to access the top of the ridge with a snowmobile so that a skier can ski down, with other machines available at the bottom to take them back to the top again. Other skiers “skin up” once on site and climb to the top of ridge lines, then ski back down.

Many skiers and snowboarders have embraced snowmobiling as a means to gain access farther into the backcountry or closer to non-motorized opportunities. These “hybrid users” value the ability of snowmobiles to allow them to travel 10 to 20 miles away from a vehicle, which is substantially farther than many are able to ski into backcountry on day trips. These cross-over motorized/non-motorized users personify the “multiple use” recreationist on public lands. This type of use is prevalent in the project area.

Additional information and analysis for recreation and economics regarding relationship to Forest Plan direction, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), visuals, and inventoried roadless areas (IRAs), is included in the recreation specialist report in the project record.

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the Forest Service would reauthorize BMR’s SUP for a term of 10 years. Operations would continue within the currently permitted terrain and boundaries with minor revisions, including authorizing 2 assigned sites, modifying routes for a total net gain of 1.03 miles, allocating service days, and allowing for flexibility in changing and modifying snowcat routes as long as no net increase occurs in the miles authorized and mitigations measures are met.

Effects to Recreation

Under this alternative, BMR would retain their ability to provide a guided service to backcountry skiers for as many as 860 service days per year.

Effects to backcountry skiers would be that an option to travel via snowcat to the project area would remain. Persons desiring to travel to and ski in this type of backcountry setting with the assistance of a trained guide would continue to have that option on the Forest, rather than having to travel to other places in Idaho or other regions of the country.

The option to travel with a trained operator would increase safety for less experienced backcountry skiers. Thus, fewer independent skiers would need to be found by local search and rescue operations. Fewer injuries to backcountry skiers who recreate in the backcountry with a guide would also be expected.

Competition for powder terrain between snowmobile users and backcountry skiers would continue in the project area.

Effects to snowmobile users would be that the project area would continue to be open to both motorized and non-motorized users under the current travel management plan. However, owing to safety concerns, the privately installed snowcat routes would be unavailable to motorized users through a subsequent closure order. Less experienced or technical snowmobile riders would potentially lose opportunities to access desired geographic

locations. Motorized users would still have the availability to access desired areas situated in open winter travel management areas; however, allowances would only be made for users to pass over snowcat routes, not use them as direct lines of travel.

Effects to Economics

Effects to economics would be that a small segment of the recreating public would continue to travel to the local area to participate in cat skiing, thereby contributing to the tourism industry and economic well-being of the area.

Effects of the No Action Alternative

Effects to Recreation

Under the No Action Alternative, BMR's cat-ski permit would not be reauthorized. Service days would not be authorized by the Forest to provide guided services to customers/clients. Snowcat routes in the project boundary would not be installed or maintained during the winter months. No assigned sites would be permitted and temporary seasonal shelters would not be erected.

Effects to backcountry skiers would be the loss of a transport option via snowcat to a desirable backcountry area on the Forest. Far fewer backcountry skiers would be able to experience the project area for its scenic values and unfettered, skiable terrain. Backcountry skiers preferring to travel with a trained guide for comfort or safety would be unable to have this experience in the project area. Individuals wanting to partake in this type of guided cat-ski service would be forced to go to other locations in Idaho or other regions of the country. Backcountry skiers would still be able to access the project area; however, they would need to travel under their own power from accessible parking lots using personal motorized or non-motorized means. Without the expertise of a local, trained guide an increased risk exists for less experienced individuals to become lost or injured as they attempt to ski in the backcountry. An increased need for local search and rescue operations for lost or injured backcountry skiers may occur.

Effects to other recreationists would also occur. Overall, fewer backcountry skiers would visit the project area. Snowmobile use would be the dominant recreational activity in the project area and snowmobilers could travel freely without having to avoid snowcat routes

Without the presence of guides to provide education and information to recreationists, motorized users may increase their incursions into designated non-motorized areas. Without the presence of guides to facilitate skiing in popular multiple use areas, an increased risk of collisions between motorized and non-motorized users would exist.

Effects to Economics

BMR would cease guided cat-ski operations, thereby losing the opportunity to transport backcountry skiers to the project area. BMR would experience lost revenue and the ability to market BMR as a beginner to expert destination resort. Ceasing operations would also mean a loss of employment by persons providing guide services for BMR.

Effects to the local economy would be a loss of revenue from tourists coming to the McCall area for cat-skiing. Tourists that would travel and stay in motels and hotels specifically for

the purposes of cat-skiing would take their business to other destinations offering this opportunity. Other local businesses providing goods and services would also lose a small amount of revenue from the recreating public who come to McCall for the opportunity to cat-ski.

It is expected that snowmobile use would not increase or decrease if BMR no longer offered cat-skiing and the snowcat routes were available to snowmobilers. It is also expected that the Granite Mountain Motorized Over Snow Vehicle Closure would remain in place since it provides a non-motorized experience for backcountry skiers. Thus there would be no change in economic effect by an increase in motorized use because there was no longer a cat-skiing opportunity.

Effects Common to Both Alternatives

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The ROS provides a framework for defining the types of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences the public might desire, as well as the mix of the spectrum a given National Forest might be able to provide. It also provides a context and tool for estimating and describing recreational resources as well as effects to those resources from alternative management strategies and actions. The Forest Plan has identified ROS settings which allow for many kinds of recreational activities and experiences. The entire project area, as defined under the winter ROS setting, is identified as being Semi-Primitive Motorized. The Forest Plan defines standard as follows for the Semi-Primitive ROS category (USDA Forest Service 2003a, p. F-2):

In areas seen from travelways, a natural-appearing setting dominates the outdoor physical environment, with only subtle or minor evidence of human-caused modifications. These areas are generally more than 2500 acres in size and they offer opportunities for solitude, remoteness, and risk, with little on-site controls and restrictions. Other user encounters should be generally low, however, the sounds of other users may be evident due to motorized uses.

This ROS class, which accommodates for motorized recreation in the backcountry setting, is why the project area and the surrounding area is popular for recreationists. The classification allows individuals to access the area via motorized means, but, once reaching a destination within this ROS setting, can still experience solitude and remoteness, whether continuing use via snowmobile or non-motorized means. Encounters between recreationists are considered to be generally low in the project area boundaries; however, sounds from others may be evident.

Effects to ROS under both alternatives would remain unchanged. Use currently permitted by BMR already conforms to the ROS assignment. Additionally, changes to travel management are not considered under any alternative.

Visual Quality Objectives

Visually sensitive routes and use areas represent locations from which the scenic environment is considered especially important. During the Forest Planning effort, various visual quality objectives (VQOs) were established, primarily for those areas seen from open

roads and trails. These VQOs function as indicators of allowable levels of induced change on the landscape. Visually sensitive travel routes or areas generally have a more restrictive VQO assigned to them than areas not seen from travel routes. The following VQOs apply to the project and immediately adjacent areas:

- **Retention (R)**—Provides for management activities that are not visually evident to the casual forest visitor.
- **Partial Retention (PR)**—Management activities may be visible but remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape (USDA Forest Service 1974).

VQOs would continue to be maintained under both alternatives. No ground-disturbing activities are proposed under either alternative that would disrupt the visual qualities of the project area.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

No travel management changes are proposed under either alternative.

The project area overlaps with two IRAs: Patrick Butte and French Creek. IRAs would not be affected by either alternative. The final rule that established management direction for the designation of roadless areas provides prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions that govern road construction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development within IRAs.

The final rule does not apply to existing roads or trails, motorized equipment or mechanical transport, or outfitting and guiding activities (36 CFR Part 294, Special Areas). Therefore, the Idaho Roadless Rule does not affect any aspect of the IRAs located in the project area under either alternative.

Cumulative Impacts to Recreation

Recreational use on the Forest and the surrounding landownership is heavy, with many ongoing winter activities. BMR operates a ski area for alpine recreational skiing approximately 3 to 4 miles south of the cat-ski area. The project and surrounding areas also include snowmobile use on groomed routes authorized under the 2013 Forest-wide Over-snow Trail Grooming Project Decision Notice (USDA Forest Service 2013) and over-snow snowmobile use in areas authorized under travel management. Other winter recreational uses to the area include snowshoeing; fat tire biking; backcountry skiing; and recreational special use events, such as snowmobile fun runs.

The above uses were considered as they pertain to the Proposed Action. Retaining BMR's permit for the purposes of outfitting and guiding backcountry skiers is not expected to negatively impact recreational users participating in these activities in the future. Allowing for BMR's continued use is expected to provide services that enhance recreational use on the Forest.

Activities affecting winter recreational use, ROS, and the local economy are reflected in the descriptions above. The following ongoing/foreseeable future activities could potentially affect these resources:

- Forest snowmobile use—Snowmobile use on the authorized groomed routes and on authorized areas not associated with groomed routes would be expected to continue at rates similar to existing conditions.
- BMR—Operations at the alpine skiing area would continue to bring visitors/clients to the alpine area.

Water Resources

Affected Environment

The proposed action occurs in the Six Mile, Goose Lake, and Brundage Reservoir Hydrologic Units (HUs). The Six Mile subwatershed is 5,375 acres and takes in the headwaters of Six Mile Creek. The Six Mile subwatershed eventually flows into the 43,973-acre Middle Little Salmon River watershed. The Goose Lake subwatershed is 4,496 acres, and the Brundage Reservoir watershed is 4,635 acres. Both Brundage and Goose Lake reservoirs eventually flow into the 152,217-acre Upper Little Salmon River watershed.

Beneficial uses for these streams are generally considered to be Cold Water Biota, Salmonid Spawning, Primary and Secondary Recreation, Domestic Water Supply, and Special Resource Water. The State of Idaho has determined Six Mile Creek and Goose Lake to meet State assigned beneficial uses (IDEQ 2006). The Forest conducted fisheries surveys in Six Mile Creek within the proposed boundary expansion. Instantaneous temperatures were recorded in 2003, 2004, and 2006, and all were considerably lower than needed to achieve water quality standards for Cold Water Biota.

Watershed Condition Indicators (WCIs) were assessed for Six Mile Creek as part of the fisheries specialist report (available in the project record) for the Brundage Mountain Resort Cat-Ski Outfitter and Guide Permit Boundary Expansion Environmental Assessment (USDA Forest Service 2012). In general, most WCIs related to water quality are functioning appropriately. Brundage Reservoir watershed was listed as a Clean Water Act 303(d) impaired watershed in 1999 due to concerns over elevated temperatures.

Brundage Reservoir's temperature was monitored weekly by the State from early July through mid-August in 2005. Monitoring occurred in late afternoon and early evening when reservoir temperatures would be highest. No violations of the cold water temperature standard were detected. Brundage Reservoir is proposed for delisting for temperature (IDEQ 2006).

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

The potential for chemical contamination to affect water quality through fuel or oil spills from operating snowcats for BMRs snowcat skiing operation was evaluated in the 2007 biological assessment (Olson and Burns 2007). The assessment found the potential for spills was negligible due to several factors. First, fueling of snowcats occurs at the base area of the resort where fuel containment equipment is maintained onsite. Secondly, several terms and conditions of SUPs for outfitting and guiding dictate that any permit holder has the affirmative duty to protect the land, property, and other interests of the United States, including the release of any hazardous material such as petroleum products. Additional

snowcat routes would not increase the likelihood of spills because the operational procedure and required mitigation described above would not change under this Proposed Action.

Effects of the No Action Alternative

Because the BMR permit would not be reauthorized, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to the hydrological resources would occur under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Impacts to Water Resources

The cumulative effects analysis area is the same as the direct and indirect effects analysis area because of the minimal risk from direct and indirect effects on water quality and the lack of any ground disturbing effects to soils, riparian areas, wetlands, or steep slopes. Past management actions, including timber harvest, road building, recreation developments, snowmobile route grooming, and livestock grazing, have the potential for cumulative impacts when taken in consideration with this proposal. The Brundage Mountain Resort Cat-Ski Outfitter and Guide Permit Boundary Expansion Environmental Assessment describes projects that may contribute to cumulative effects (USDA Forest Service 2012).

Under the Proposed Action, the potential for chemical contamination to affect water quality through spills of fuel or oil would remain the same as the original analysis and is not thought to pose a threat because of operational practices and mitigation measures currently in effect in the snowcat program. Any existing levels of contamination would not be changed.

Under either alternative, this project is not expected to have any measureable cumulative effects on chemical contamination, stream temperature, wetlands, or floodplains when combined with other activities and current conditions in the cumulative effects area.

Fisheries

Affected Environment

In the Little Salmon River subbasin, Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Snake River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Columbia River Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) (all Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish species) and their respective critical habitat are present downstream of the permit area in the Little Salmon River and some of its tributaries. ESA-listed species are not found within, or immediately downstream of the Permit Area in the Sixmile Creek-Little Salmon River or Upper Goose Creek subwatersheds. A barrier falls on the Little Salmon River at river mile 21 (downstream of the analysis area) precludes access of anadromous species into the upper Little Salmon River watershed. This falls is over 15 miles downstream of the project area in the Sixmile Creek drainage and over 30 miles downstream of the project area in the Goose Creek drainage. Bull trout are not present the upper Little Salmon River (including the Sixmile Creek-Little Salmon River and Upper Goose Creek subwatersheds) above the aforementioned falls (Olson and Burns 2007). In the Hard Creek subwatershed, bull trout, steelhead (and their respective critical habitat) are found immediately downstream of the Permit Area Chinook salmon are found near the confluence of Hard and Hazard Creek and in the lower portion of Hazard Creek.

Anadromous species (Chinook salmon and steelhead) were extirpated from the North Fork Payette River by Black Canyon Dam and bull trout are considered to be extinct in the Forest portion of the North Fork Payette River watershed (Burns et al. 2005), which includes the Fisher Creek subwatershed within the Permit Area. Reference hereafter to anadromous species or bull trout refers to those in the Little Salmon River Subbasin.

Westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) is a species designated as sensitive by the Regional Forester. They are present in the lower part of the Little Salmon River and some of its tributaries downstream of the Permit Area in the Little Salmon River Subbasin (USDA Forest Service 2003b). Westslope cutthroat do not exist (except where they have been introduced) in the North Fork Payette River Section 7 watershed (Faurot and Burns 2001).

Redband and/or rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*, spp.) and introduced brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) are found either within and downstream of the analysis area in the Little Salmon River and North Fork Payette River Subbasins (unpublished data on file Payette National Forest Supervisor's Office).

The Forest's Management Indicator Species (MIS) for fish is bull trout, a species that is also listed as "Threatened" under the ESA. Bull trout in the Little Salmon River are not widely distributed due to many migration barriers that exist, including the Little Salmon River Falls located at river mile 21 (Nelson and James 2010). Critical habitat occurs in the mainstem Little Salmon River downstream of the falls and in tributaries of the Little Salmon River (75 FR 63898). Bull trout are not present in the permit area or anywhere within the Little Salmon River watershed upstream of the falls. In the Hard Creek subwatershed, bull trout and their critical habitat are found immediately downstream of the Permit Area.

The WCIs and the associated matrices in Appendix B of the Forest Plan were developed to assist managers in identifying how management actions may influence the condition and trend of soil, water, riparian, and aquatic resources and native and desired non-native fish species (USDA Forest Service 2003a). The Appendix B matrix analysis (required by the Forest Plan), including baseline and effects matrices, was completed under "Brundage Mountain Snowcat Skiing" in the Biological Assessment for the Potential Effects of Managing the Payette National Forest in the Little Salmon River Section 7 Watershed on Snake River Spring/Summer and Fall Chinook salmon, Snake River Steelhead, and Columbia River Bull Trout and Biological Evaluation for Westslope Cutthroat Trout; Volume 21: Ongoing and New Actions (Olson and Burns 2007) and is included in the project record.

The WCI most relevant to fish habitat that may potentially be affected by implementation of this project is the chemical contamination/nutrients WCI. Effects to other WCIs from this project are not anticipated. The Forest Plan desired condition for the Chemical Contamination/Nutrients is, "Low levels of chemical contamination from agricultural, industrial, and other sources; no excess nutrients, no [Clean Water Act] 303(d) water quality limited water bodies" (USDA Forest Service 2003a, p B-19).

Olson and Burns (2007) assessed the Chemical contaminants/nutrients WCI to be Functioning at Unacceptable Risk at the larger, 5th level subwatershed scale, which contains multiple 6th level subwatersheds, including the parts of the Sixmile Creek-Little Salmon

River and Upper Goose Creek subwatersheds, which are within the Permit Area. At the scale of this project, however, the portions of all the subwatersheds within the Permit Area do not contain any Clean Water Act 303(d) listed waterbodies (IDEQ 2012) and other activities within those areas such as vehicle use on roads, recreation activities, and livestock grazing pose a small risk of chemical contamination of waterways. Therefore, based on professional judgement, the portions of all of the subwatersheds within the Permit Area are determined to be Functioning Appropriately.

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

The use of snowcats near and across waterways (streams and lakes/reservoirs) creates the risk of fuel (and other petroleum products such as lubricants and hydraulic fluid) contaminating project area waterways and, potentially, affecting stream reaches downstream. Should fuel or other petroleum products enter live water, they would affect water quality and invertebrates and could directly affect ESA-listed fishes and non-listed fishes, should petroleum products come in contact with them. Fuels and other petroleum products can directly poison salmonids and their aquatic invertebrate food source. Fuels and petroleum products are moderately to highly toxic to salmonids, depending on concentrations and exposure time (Gutsell 1921, Allen and Dawson 1961). Free oil and emulsions can adhere to gills and interfere with respiration, and heavy concentrations of oil can suffocate fish (McKee and Wolf 1963). Evaporation, sedimentation, microbial degradation, and hydrology act to determine the fate of fuels entering fresh water (Saha and Konar 1986). Sources of mortality to fishes from the types of effects described above can be density independent.

Operation of snowcats near and across streams and lakes/reservoirs creates the risk that fuel may spill in the event of an accident or mechanical malfunction. The risk of fuel (or other chemicals and petroleum products) spill with snowcat operation is low. Snowcat operating procedures such as fueling at the maintenance facility (snowcats can generally complete a round-trip without refueling) and no large-scale storage of fuel outside the Brundage Mountain facilities (10 gallons of extra fuel is carried on the snowcat for emergencies) reduce the risk that fuel may be spilled and enter streams. Mitigations that require spill containment to be carried (and used if needed) on the snowcat and at the maintenance facility further reduce the risk of fuel contamination of streams. Operation of snowcats typically occurs with 5 feet or greater snow depth, and construction of snow bridges over streams also reduces the chance of snowcat tipping or damage to the snowcat (and associated fuel or fluid spill) when crossing stream channels. The use of existing roads as snowcat trails further reduces the risk of tipping, damage or other means by which fuel or other contaminants may spill. Implementation of this alternative is not expected to result in more than small risk of fuel contamination and is not expected to affect the current condition or retard the attainment of the desired condition.

Effects from Permit reissuance is expected to have none to negligible effects to the other WCIs described in Appendix B of the Forest Plan (Olson and Burns 2007). Due to mitigation measures to reduce the risk of fuel contaminating waterways, no anticipated ground disturbing activities, operation of snowcats over snow, and the use of snow bridges and/or culverts at stream crossings, no effects to streambanks, RCAs, or riparian vegetation is expected. Permit reissuance is expected to maintain WCIs at their current conditions and not retard the attainment of the desired condition.

Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout (designated sensitive by the Regional Forester) are not present in the permit area. Listed species, (including bull trout, the Payette National Forest fish MIS) and designated critical habitat are however, present downstream of the project area in the Little Salmon River, including some of its tributaries. Bull trout and Steelhead (including their respective critical habitat) are located immediately downstream of the project area in the Hard Creek subwatershed (tributary of the Little Salmon River). Fuel contamination was analyzed for Snowcat Skiing in the current permitted area in Olson and Burns (2007) and it was determined that it posed a negligible risk to ESA-listed and Sensitive species due to the location of the proposed actions relative to those species and their respective critical habitat (Olson and Burns 2007). BMR's snow cat skiing has been analyzed in the Biological Assessment for Ongoing Actions, Little Salmon River Volume 21 (Olson and Burns 2007) which made a "*Not Likely to Adversely Affect*" determination for effects to ESA-listed fishes and their respective critical habitat. Identical effects to ESA-listed fishes are expected with this permit reissuance.

Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the permit would not be reauthorized so current fish habitat conditions would be maintained. Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout (including their respective critical habitat), and westslope cutthroat trout (designated sensitive by the Regional Forester) are not present in the permit area, but are located downstream in the Little Salmon River and some of its tributaries. Potential effects to listed species would continue as described in Olson and Burns (2007).

Cumulative Impacts to Fisheries

The cumulative effects analysis area is the same as the analysis area for direct and indirect effects due to the minimal risk to water quality and the lack of any ground disturbing activities. Past management actions, including timber harvest, road building, recreation developments, snowmobile route grooming, and livestock grazing have the potential for cumulative impacts when taken in consideration with this proposal. This project is not expected to have any measureable cumulative effect on fish and fish habitat when combined with other activities and current conditions in the cumulative effects area.

Wildlife

The draft Wildlife Conservation Strategy for the Forest identifies 290 species of wildlife (amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles) that occur or potentially could occur on the Forest. Source habitat for all species fit within a hierarchical system that groups source habitats into suites and families based on similarity of habitat needs (USDA Forest Service 2011, Appendix E). Four source habitat suites have been identified: Forest Only, Combination of Forest and Rangeland, Rangeland Only, and Riverine and Non-riverine Riparian and Wetland. Each suite is further broken into source habitat families (see Table 3).

Focal species are those species selected during this analysis to represent other species within a source habitat family and to best evaluate the effects of the proposed activities. The species were selected by evaluating the key environmental correlates and ecological functions associated with species in the family and on their variations to responses from disturbance in the winter (Table 3). One caveat of focal species selection is that any potentially affected

ESA listed, Region 4 sensitive, and Forest Plan MIS be included in the wildlife specialist report (project record) in response to requirements associated with these species.

Proposed activities within the analysis area have the potential to affect habitat of species in Family 2 (Broad Elevation, Old Forest) and Family 3 (Forest Mosaic). Species that would not be affected by the proposed activities (due to a lack of habitat in the project area or because populations do not use the area during winter) were not evaluated further. Species listed as sensitive for the Forest, which may be affected by proposed activities, are discussed in greater depth as part of the Biological Evaluation in the wildlife technical report (project record). A summary of the determination of effects is provided in Table 3. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribe has previously expressed interest in effects to black bears from permit activities; hence, a discussion of the potential effects to black bear is included below.

Effects from the proposed activities to mule deer and elk were considered but found not to be of concern. The majority of winter range occurs outside the Forest boundary on lower elevation grasslands. An estimated 186,000 acres of winter range occur on the Forest outside of the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness. Another 178,000 acres occurs within the Wilderness. Winter range is a critical element of habitat. Areas with minimal human activities and adequate forage will reduce the energetic costs associated with overwinter survival. Snowmobile traffic is one form of disturbance that can potentially impact winter range. For this reason, the Forest has imposed travel restrictions in winter range to prevent disturbance and harassment of elk and deer during a period when physical stress is already relatively high. Because of the importance of winter ranges to elk, the Forest has closed much of the elk winter ranges to over-snow vehicle use. Currently, 105,000 acres are closed and 81,000 acres are open. Open acres fall mostly below the average snowline (estimated at 4,000 feet) and are outside of the analysis area.

Consultation is underway with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding federally listed species analyzed in the Biological Assessment and the results of that consultation will be included in the decision document and required conservation measures will be included in the operating plan for the BMR cat-ski special use authorization.

Analysis Area

The analysis area for wildlife includes the area surrounding Goose Lake Reservoir, Granite Mountain, and Slab Butte. Effects to lynx were evaluated based on Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) that encompass this area as defined in the Lynx Conservation Assessment Strategy (USFWS 2000).

Affected Environment

Broad Elevation, Old Forest Habitat—These are late-seral, multi- and single-storied montane forests that provide source habitat (Wisdom et al. 2000). Special features of these source habitats include snags and logs. Some species that use these habitats depend on the juxtaposition of certain seral stages, while others rarely or infrequently use younger structural stages. Many species are able to take advantage of departed vegetative conditions, benefitting as structural stages develop larger tree size classes and denser conditions. Pileated woodpecker, American three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, and fisher are species that use this habitat and were analyzed for project effects (Table 3).

Forest Mosaic Habitat—Species using this source habitat tend to be habitat generalists in montane forests. Most of these species also use subalpine forests, lower montane forests, or riparian woodlands as source habitats (Wisdom et al 2000). A few species use upland shrub and upland herb communities. Source habitat occurs across all Potential Vegetation Groups (PVGs) and structural stages (Egnew 2011). Family 3 species analyzed for project effects include Canada lynx and wolverine (Table 3). The Brundage Mountain Cat-ski Outfitter and Guide Permit Reissuance project falls with the Little Salmon River and North Fork Payette River Section 7 Watersheds. The Little Salmon River Section 7 Watershed contains 5 LAUs: Boulder, Goose Creek, Hazard Creek, Lower Little Salmon, and Rapid River. The North Fork Payette Section 7 watershed contains the following LAUs: Kennelly Creek, Lake Fork, and Upper North Fork Payette.

Forest and Range Mosaic Habitat—Species within this source habitat use a broad range of forest, woodland, and rangeland as source habitat (Wisdom et al. 2000). Source habitat occurs in all PVGs and structural types, as well as woodland and non-forested types. Human disturbance is a primary factor impacting some species as is altered fire regimes (Wisdom et al. 2000). As noted above, black bear is the species within this source habitat that was analyzed for project effects because of interest by the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe even though it is not a special status species, have special status in Region 4, or have special status under the Forest Plan.

Table 3. Wildlife species considered, rationale for additional detailed species analysis, and effects determination (2 pages)

Suite	Family Number	Family Name	Species Considered	Analyzed in depth or Rationale for No Further Analysis Needed	Species Status ^a	Focal Species	Effects Determination ^b
Suite 1: Forest Only	1	Low Elevation, Old Forest	White-headed Woodpecker	No habitat in project area.	S/MIS		NI
			American Three-toed woodpecker	Yes, analyzed in biological evaluation	S		MII
			Boreal Owl	Yes, analyzed in biological evaluation	S		MII
			Fisher	Yes, analyzed in biological evaluation	S		MII
			Flammulated Owl	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
	2	Broad Elevation, Old Forest	Great Gray Owl	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Northern Goshawk	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Pileated woodpecker	Yes, analyzed in biological evaluation	MIS	X	MII
			Mountain Quail	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
	3	Forest Mosaic	Wolverine	Yes, analyzed in biological evaluation	S	X	MII
			Canada Lynx	Yes, analyzed in biological assessment	T	X	NLAA
	4	Early-seral & Lower Montane	Lazuli Bunting	No habitat in project area.	—		NE
5	Forest & Range Mosaic	Peregrine Falcon	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI	

Suite	Family Number	Family Name	Species Considered	Analyzed in depth or Rationale for No Further Analysis Needed	Species Status ^a	Focal Species	Effects Determination ^b
Suite 2: Combination of Forest and Rangeland	7	Forests, Woodlands, Sagebrush	Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Rocky Mountain Elk	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	—		NE
			Gray Wolf	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NE
			Spotted Bat	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Townsend’s Big-eared Bat	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
Suite 3: Rangeland Only	11	Sagebrush	Greater Sage grouse	No habitat in project area	S		NI
	12	Grassland Sagebrush	Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	No habitat in project area	S		NI
			Northern Idaho ground squirrel	No habitat in project area	T		NE
Suite 4: Riverine and Non-riverine Riparian and Wetland	13	Riverine Riparian & Wetland	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	No habitat in project area	C		NI
			Bald Eagle	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Columbia Spotted Frog	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI
			Harlequin Duck	No effects to habitat. Activity limited to winter season which will not conflict with the species habitat use.	S		NI

^aSpecies Status: C = candidate, E = endangered, P = proposed, T = threatened (USFWS 2015), MIS = Forest Plan management indicator species; S = sensitive (USDA Forest Service 2003a)

^bDetermination language for TEPC species: NLAA = Not Likely to Adversely Affect., NE = No Effect for listed species ; NI = No Impact; for Candidate species. Determination language for Sensitive species: NI = No Impact; MII = May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the Forest Service would reauthorize BMR's SUP for a term of 10 years. Operations would continue within the currently permitted terrain and boundaries with minor revisions that include authorizing assigned sites in 2 locations, modifying routes, allocating a set service day amount, and allowing for flexibility to change and modify snowcat routes as long as no net increase in the miles authorized occurs and mitigations measures are met.

American three-toed woodpecker—While American three-toed woodpeckers may occur in the project area when operations are occurring, no habitat would be disturbed. In comparison to the No Action Alternative, this alternative has a greater potential for disturbing and displacing birds, when they are present, through increased noise and human presence. The effects determination of the Proposed Action on the American three-toed woodpecker is “*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability.*”

Boreal owl—Winter recreational activities could occur during a portion of the breeding period for the boreal owl. Hamann et al. (1999) reports boreal owls may tolerate some human disturbance in relation to roads and motorized trails. While boreal owls may occur in the project area when operations are occurring, no habitat would be disturbed. The Proposed Action could cause disturbance, from noise and human presence, which may affect behavior and/or affect the use of adjacent areas. These effects may be negligible due to the fact that the activities, especially snowcat use, occurs in more open terrain and away from the denser forested stands the species inhabits. Boreal owl habitat is most abundant outside of the project area, and this species can utilize interior forest habitat away from grooming activities and snowmobile use. Therefore, effects, if any, are likely to be minimal. The effects determination of the Proposed Action on boreal owl is “*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability.*”

Fisher—While fisher may occur in the project area when operations are occurring, no habitat would be disturbed. In comparison to the No Action Alternative, this alternative has a greater potential for disturbance and displacement of animals because noise and human presence would increase slightly. However, fisher appear to be tolerant of moderate degrees of human activity, including low density housing, farm roads, and small-scale logging (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994). With a preference for continuous forest canopies and low snow accumulations, and their tendency to avoid open deep snow, the effects of this alternative on fisher would be negligible. The effects determination of the Proposed Action on fisher is “*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability.*”

Pileated woodpecker—While pileated woodpeckers may occur in the project area when operations are occurring, no habitat would be disturbed. Observations of pileated woodpeckers along groomed Nordic trails in the Brundage Bear Basin area have found little evidence they are substantially disturbed by cat-ski or Nordic activities (Egnew pers. obs. 2009, 2010, 2011). In comparison to the No Action Alternative, this alternative could disturb and displace birds, but these disturbances would not be expected to have lasting changes to use or occupancy. The effects determination of the Proposed Action on pileated woodpecker

is “*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability.*”

Wolverine—Preliminary findings of the ongoing study investigating interactions between wolverines and winter recreation indicate no spatial avoidance of recreated areas in monitored animals at the home range scale (Heinemeyer and Squires 2014). Forest Plan standard TEST12 requires modifying any winter activity if that activity impacts an active nest or den site of any sensitive, threatened or endangered species (USDA Forest Service 2003a). In comparison to the No Action Alternative, this alternative has a slightly greater potential for disturbance and displacement of animals. The effects determination of the Proposed Action on wolverine is “*May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend towards federal listing or a loss of viability.*”

Canada lynx—The relatively small modifications in snowcat routes (about 1.0 mile) are unlikely to affect lynx due to location of the routes, which would occur mostly outside quality lynx habitat. Quality lynx habitat on the Forest occurs in large, contiguous blocks generally above 6,000 feet or in the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness. The modified groomed route would not access any areas within the permitted boundary not already accessed by adjacent routes. Hence, no additional advantage or increased intrusion from potentially competing predators is expected to occur. Under the Proposed Action, changes from the existing permitted condition are small and localized, particularly when the amount and condition of the available habitat is considered. Also, the short-term nature of this decision (10 years) allows the Forest to reassess any change in habitat and any potential implications to lynx in any LAU. For these reasons, changes would result in negligible effects to lynx. The effects determination of the Proposed Action is “*May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect*” Canada lynx.

Black bear—The Proposed Action is expected to have minimal, if any, effects to denning bears and overall bear survival on the Forest. Research on the potential effects of noise and winter recreation on denning bears is limited, and results have been inconsistent. In some cases, bears may be sensitive at den sites to certain sounds, while in other situations, impacts appeared to be limited, if any. Project activities are expected to have little-to-no additional effects on black bears, considering that hunting and available food supplies are the primary variables affecting the species, no dens have been identified near snow trails, and dens are typically located in lower elevations with less snow. An effects determination is not appropriate for this species as it is not a forest indicator species or a federally listed species.

Effects of the No Action Alternative

American three-toed woodpecker—There is no indication that the current over-snow vehicle use within the analysis area is detrimentally affecting the American three-toed woodpecker, in part because these birds can utilize interior forest habitat with closed canopies away from snowmobile use and because the majority of habitat for this species occurs in beetle-killed forest, which is not adjacent to trails. In 2015, the Tepee Springs Fire burned an estimated 53,000 acres, starting 1.2 miles north of the project boundary. Given the mosaic pattern in which the fire burned, additional habitat for this species was likely created.

Boreal owl—No change in available nesting or species occurrence is expected because these birds can utilize interior forest habitat away from snowmobile use, which would continue to be allowed in the majority of the analysis area, and the majority of habitat for this species occurs outside of the project area.

Fisher—Habitat fragmentation, trapping, accidental collision, and winter stress can occur within winter habitat of the fisher. Fishers appear to be tolerant of moderate degrees of human activity, including low density housing, farm roads, and small-scale logging (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994). Over-snow motorized vehicle use would continue to be allowed within the majority of the analysis area. There is no indication that this use within the analysis area is detrimentally affecting fisher, in part because these animals utilize dense canopies and areas with less snow, which is less desirable for winter recreation.

Pileated woodpecker—The No Action Alternative would be expected to result in less organized activity noise and more sporadic disturbances than the Proposed Action, but these differences would not result in any substantial change in occupancy or use by pileated woodpecker or other associated species.

Wolverine—Little information exists in the literature on the possible effects to wolverines from winter recreational activities, so the Forest is collaborating with the Idaho Fish and Game and Round River Conservation Studies to investigate potential impacts to wolverine denning from winter recreation (Heinemeyer and Squires 2014). Once the wolverine–winter recreation study is complete, necessary changes to winter recreational activities (e.g., scope, location) would be evaluated.

Canada lynx—Over-snow use by snowmobiles would still occur in areas open under travel management and there has been no indication that the current use within the analysis area is detrimentally affecting lynx.

Black bear—In general, hunting and food availability likely have the greatest effects on black bear populations. Only controlled black bear hunting occurs on most of the west side of the Forest (Hunting Units 22 and 32/32A). Having no “open season” limits the impacts to black bears in the area (and provides a quality hunting experience). No additional effects are expected under this alternative.

Cumulative Impacts to Wildlife

Under the No Action Alternative, the cat-ski permit would not be authorized, which would reduce the number of backcountry skiers able to access desirable backcountry areas of the Forest (recreation technical report, available in the project record). The Forest Service would not offer service days to BMR to provide guided services to customers/clients. Cumulatively, the effects of the No Action Alternative may be slightly beneficial to pileated woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, fisher, wolverine, and black bear. Cumulatively, the effects of the No Action Alternative would be insignificant to Canada lynx when considered within the context that no known lynx occur in the area and the size of the area affected.

The Proposed Action may slightly increase disturbance and displacement of pileated woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, fisher, wolverine, and black bear when considered in combination with other ongoing and foreseeable activities. However, pileated woodpeckers in the area are likely habituated to the disturbance. These cumulative effects,

when viewed in the context of the area currently open to winter recreation and the extent of similar habitat across the Forest, are likely negligible.

The Proposed Action would increase snow compaction within the Hazard and Goose Creek LAUs over the No Action Alternative. However, this small increase would occur within an area already accessed by other groomed routes and would not change the competitive advantage (if any) to other predators. The cumulative effects to lynx, when viewed in the context of the limited amount of the expanded groomed routes and the wide extent of lynx habitat across the Forest, and the low probability that lynx occur in the action area, would be negligible.

Rare Plants

Affected Environment

From 1995 to 2002, the USFWS added five Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate (TEPC) species to the Payette National Forest 90-Day Species List because potential habitat for these species was thought to occur on the Forest (USFWS 2002). Since that time, the Forest Botanist has surveyed, analyzed projects effects, and consulted on the Threatened species of Ute lady's tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*), MacFarlane's four o'clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*), and Spalding's silene (*Silene spaldingii*) and the Candidate species of narrowleaf grapefern (*Botrychium lineare*). None of these species have been found on the Forest or in the project area.

No historical populations of any TE plant species are known to occur on the Forest, and no occupied or unoccupied habitat of any TE plant species is known to occur on the Forest. The most recent update from the USFWS contains no TE plant species needing consultation or analysis (USFWS 2015). But, white bark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a Candidate species, does occur on the Forest and its habitat occurs in the project area. Habitat for the sensitive species Tobias' saxifrage (*Saxifraga bryophora* var. *tobiasiae*) also occurs in the proposed project site, and both species have known occurrences in the Granite Mountain and Slab Butte areas.

The USFWS defines Candidate species as plants and animals that have been studied and should be proposed for addition to the Federal endangered and threatened species list. Candidate species have sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support issuance of a proposed rule to list but issuance of the proposed rule is precluded because other species take more precedence. No consultation for white bark pine is required at this time, but the species is protected under the Regional Forester's Sensitive species guidelines.

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

No TE species occur within the project area, so no effects would occur to any TE plant species.

White bark pine—Direct effects to a few individual plants of white bark pine could occur from the proposed action through snow compaction for the snowcat routes. Also, the long-term growth of white bark pine saplings could be affected if the terminal buds are harmed or branches are broken in areas of the seasonal yurts. However, habitat quality for white bark pine on the Forest would not be impacted by the proposed project. The effects determination

for the Proposed Action on whitebark pine is “*May impact individual plants but would not trend the species toward federal listing.*”

Tobias’ saxifrage—No direct or indirect effects would occur to Tobias’ saxifrage. Monitoring of Tobias’ saxifrage has occurred since 1996, and permanent monitoring of plots from 2001 to 2011 (Mancuso 2001) show stable populations in the project area. Tobias’ saxifrage, a low, herbaceous plant, would have no aerial parts that could be damaged by snowcat operations. The plant also occurs at high elevations where snow cover averages 3–12 feet during the snowcat operating season. No groomed over snow routes or seasonal yurts are assigned to Tobias’ saxifrage habitat. Only two populations occur anywhere near snowcat operations on Granite Mountain, and no populations occur near snowcat operations at Slab Butte. Direct effects to Tobias’ saxifrage from snowcat operations or permit activities is highly unlikely. Indirect effects to sensitive plants from weed invasion and erosion are also unlikely given that activities will occur over a heavy snow layer. The effects determination for the Proposed Action on Tobias’ saxifrage is “*No impact*”.

Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the permit would not be reauthorized; therefore, no impacts to rare plants or their habitat would occur under this alternative.

Cumulative Impacts to Rare Plants

The following activities were considered for the cumulative effects analysis: recreational activities, fire management, habitat improvement projects for wildlife and fish, vegetation management, and livestock grazing. These activities have occurred and will continue to occur within the project area that supports white bark pine and Tobias’ saxifrage. Additional analysis will be required for future projects. The cumulative effects would not adversely affect the habitat or populations of sensitive species and would not contribute to a trend toward federal listing for any sensitive species. Impacts may or may not overlap temporarily and would likely not be measureable in intensity. Currently, white bark pine mortality caused by white pine blister rust and mountain pine beetle cannot be stopped. However, the Forest Service and other partners have made important strides in understanding white pine blister rust and mountain pine beetle ecology. The agency is currently developing conservation plans and planting rust-resistant seedlings.

Heritage Resources

Affected Environment

Since 1979, over 22 federal actions have provided heritage staff with the opportunity to conduct cultural resource site inventories on a variety of projects that overlap with the project boundary. The most recent inventory was conducted in 2014. No new survey was completed for this project; the project’s activities will be conducted during the winter months when snow cover is present. Heritage Program staff have identified 8 previously recorded cultural resource sites in the project area. Of these 8 sites, 4 met the National Register of Historic Places criteria for eligibility, meaning 4 sites are also not eligible for the National Register.

Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

The Forest Archaeologist has determined this project would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on the 4 eligible sites. The eligible historic structures are already accessed by the public outside of the winter months; proposed activities associated with the project would not generate any added concern for these structures. The project would have no effect on ancestral American Indian sites because they would be protected by snow cover. The Forest Archaeologist has received a concurrence of No Effect determination from the State Historic Preservation Office (project record).

Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the permit would not be reauthorized; therefore, no impacts to heritage resources would occur.

Cumulative Impacts to Heritage Resources

The project would not have any cumulative impacts to heritage resources.

Finding of No Significant Impact

As the Responsible Official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have reviewed and considered the EA and documentation included in the project record, and I have determined that the Proposed Action to renew the Brundage Mountain Resort Cat-Ski Outfitter and Guide Special Use Authorization will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. As a result, no environmental impact statement will be prepared. My rationale for this finding is as follows, organized by sub-section of the CEQ definition of significance cited above. Following public review and comment on the EA, I will again consider this FONSI and, if my finding remains unchanged, I will issue a Draft DN and initiate an objection period. If no objections are received or objections are resolved, I will issue a final FONSI and DN and implementation of this project will proceed.

Context

Most effects from the Selected Alternative would occur within the Brundage Mountain Cat-Ski SUP permitted boundaries. The activities for this alternative occur in the French Creek and Patrick Butte IRAs. Effects to watershed and fisheries were based on the following hydrological units: Six Mile, Goose Lake, and Brundage Reservoir. The extent of the wildlife analysis includes the area surrounding the Goose Lake Reservoir and includes Granite Mountain and Slab Butte. Effects to lynx were evaluated based on LAUs that encompass this area.

Intensity

Intensity is a measure of the severity, extent, or quantity of effects and is based on information from the effects analysis of this EA and the references in the project record. The effects of this project have been appropriately and thoroughly considered with an analysis that is responsive to concerns and issues raised by the public. The agency has taken a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions gained from field visits. My FONSI is based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the 10 factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

The interdisciplinary team analyzed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed action on social, biological, physical, and cultural resources. Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action. The analysis documented in the EA did not indicate that the selected alternative will have a significant effect, either beneficial or adverse, on the environment (EA, pp. 10–30).

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The selected activities will have no significant effects on public health and safety. By implementing the selected alternative, it is expected that public safety will be maintained, particularly for backcountry recreationists who would like to experience this portion of the Forest during the winter season but are uncomfortable doing so without the assistance of a trained guide. The selected activities also mitigate unsafe interactions between motorized and non-motorized users of the permitted boundaries.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No significant effects on unique characteristics of the project area will occur because the activities of the selected alternative occur during the winter recreation months when snow covers and protects wetlands and other hydrological features. No park lands or prime farmlands occur in the analysis area.

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

Impacts of the proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. This assessment is based on the content of the project record that contains the relevant scientific information, which includes biological, historical, cultural, economic, and social reviews. The project file includes the relevant literature citations, references, biological assessments, and monitoring reports that were used to support this decision.

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

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 risk. The selected alternative implements actions similar to those effect covered under the current permit and past permits. (See EA, pp. 3–8, for permit history and the Proposed Action.)

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

The activities associated with the Brundage Mountain Resort Cat-Ski Permit Reissuance are similar to previous decisions that have been implemented and will continued to be implemented by authorized officers for recreation SUPs on NFS lands. The activities are within the scope of the Forest Plan.

- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.**

Based on the analysis completed for this EA, I find no significant cumulative effects to the environment, either when combined with the effects created from past or reasonably foreseeable future projects (EA, pp. 10–30).

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

As stated previously, I find that the activities described will not adversely affect any cultural or historical resources (see p. 30 for a description of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on cultural resources). The project record also contains the cultural resources report that documents concurrence with the State of Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The Forest has reached concurrence with SHPO, including a “No Effect” determination on cultural resources for this project.

- 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.**

The selected alternative will not affect the viability of any TEC wildlife, fish, or plant species that may occur in the project area.

Botany—No TE plant species occur in the project area; therefore, no effects should occur to any TE plant species. The project may impact some individual plants of white bark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a candidate species but will not tend the species toward federal listing. No impact should occur to any other sensitive plants.

Fisheries—Chinook salmon, steelhead, and westslope cutthroat trout (designated Sensitive by the Regional Forester) are not present in the permit area. Listed species, (including bull trout, the Forest fish MIS) and designated critical habitat are present downstream of the project area. Fuel contamination was analyzed for snowcat skiing in the current permitted area in Olson and Burns (2007). Olson and Burns (2007) determined fuel contamination posed a negligible risk to TES species due to the location of the proposed actions to those species and their respective critical habitat. The currently permitted snowcat skiing area is included in the Biological Assessment for Ongoing Actions, Little Salmon River Volume 21 (Olson and Burns 2007) which made a “*Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” determination for effects to ESA-listed fishes and their respective critical habitat. Permit reissuance is expected to maintain WCIs at their current conditions and not retard the attainment of the desired condition.

Wildlife—TES species analyzed are summarized in the EA (Table 3 on pp. 23–24). Of the species analyzed, American Three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, fisher, pileated woodpecker, wolverine, and Canada lynx were analyzed in depth (pp. 25–27).

Threatened Species—For Canada lynx, the actions increase the snow compaction within the Hazard and Goose Creek LAUs. However, this small increase occurs within an area already accessed by other groomed routes and would not change the competitive advantage (if any) to other predators. The cumulative effects when viewed in the context of the limited amount of the expanded groomed routes, and the wide extent of lynx habitat across the Forest, and the low probability that lynx occur in the action area, demonstrate that potential effects to lynx are negligible. The actions “*May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect*” Canada lynx.

Sensitive Species—American three-toed woodpecker, boreal owl, fisher and wolverine, the effects of the actions “*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability.*”

Management Indicator Species—Pileated woodpecker, the effects of the actions “*May impact individuals, but is not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability.*”

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of 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. Applicable laws and regulations were considered during the analysis by resources specialists that are contained within this EA and within the project record. The action is consistent with the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2003a).

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 impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

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Appendix A: Glossary

Allocation of Use: An amount of use allocated to a holder that is measured in service days or quotas and enumerated in a programmatic or project decision consistent with the applicable land management plan. (*Source: Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50)*)

Commercial Use or Activity: Any use or activity on National Forest System lands

1. Where an entry or participation fee is charged or
2. Where the primary purpose is the sale of a good or service and, in either case, regardless of whether the use or activity is intended to produce a profit (36 CFR 251.51). (*Source: FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50*)

Guiding: Providing series or assistance (such as supervision, protection, education, training, packing, touring, subsistence, transporting people, or interpretation) for pecuniary remuneration or other gain to individuals or groups on NFS lands. The term “guide” includes the holder’s employees and agents. (*Source: FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50*)

Needs Assessment: An assessment of public or agency need for authorized outfitting or guiding activities (*Source: FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50*)

Outfitting: Renting on or delivering to NFS lands for pecuniary remuneration or other gain any saddle or pack animal, vehicle, boat, camping gear, or similar supplies or equipment. The term “outfitter” includes the holder’s employees and agents. (*Source: FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50*)

Service Day: An allocation of use constituting a day or any part of a day on NFS lands for which an outfitter or guide provides services to a client. The total number of service days is calculated by multiplying each service day by the number of clients on the trip. (*Source: FSH 2709.14—Chapter 50*)

Cultural resources: An object or definite location of human activity, occupation, or use identifiable through field survey, historical documentation, or oral evidence. Cultural resources are prehistoric, historic, archaeological, or architectural sites, structures, places, or objects and traditional cultural properties. (*Source: FSM 2360.5*)

Heritage Program: The comprehensive Forest Service program of responsibilities related to historic preservation. The purpose of the Heritage Program is to manage prehistoric and historic cultural resources for the benefit of the public through preservation, public use, and research. (*Source: FSM 2360.5*)

Historic Properties: 36 CFR 800.16 defines historic properties as “any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places. This term includes artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties. The term includes properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meet the National Register criteria.” (*Source: FSM 2360.5*)

July 2016 Errata

Change in Legal Status for Wolverine

On April 4, 2016 the U.S. District Court- District of Montana vacated the USFWS's withdraw of its proposed rule to list the distinct population segment of the North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) occurring in the contiguous United States as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (case 9:14-cv-00246-DLC, document 108). Pending a final decision on the status of the species by the USFWS the Forest Service is directed to analyze the species as "proposed threatened".

A species status under the ESA supercedes any Forest Service special designation. As such, where this document has identified wolverine as a U.S. Forest Service Region 4 sensitive species and a finding of "*May impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability,*" it is revised to identify the wolverine as proposed for federal listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The original determinations under the old status for wolverine translate as follows: Alternative A is "*No Effect*" and Alternative B is "*Not Likely to Jeopardize the Continued Existence Of The Species Or Result In Destruction Or Adverse Modification Of Proposed Critical Habitat.*" Section 7(a)(4) of the ESA requires Federal agencies to confer (rather than consult) with the Service *only* on actions that are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a species proposed to be listed. Therefore, no additional consultation with the USFWS is required.