

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F Street
Shoshone, Idaho 83352

Scoping Information Package
Bald Mountain Trails (BLM Portion)
NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2013-0025-EA

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to construct 7.8 miles of mountain bike trails within the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area in accordance with the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an environmental assessment with an estimated decision date spring 2014. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The BLM's purpose and need is to respond to the Sun Valley Company's request to construct 7.8 miles of trails specifically designed for mountain bikers.

Proposed Action

Sun Valley Company, holder of the joint USFS/BLM ski area term permit, is requesting authorization to construct or reconstruct 19 miles of summer, non-motorized trail to increase lift-assisted mountain biking recreational opportunities on Bald Mountain. The USFS authorized 11.2 miles of the project on June 10, 2013 on Forest Service land within the permit area. The remaining 7.8 miles of proposed trail are on public lands managed by the BLM. The nine new bike trails proposed are listed in order of priority (Table 1 and SVC_Summer_Trail_Proposal map).

The proposed mountain bike trails would be constructed using a combination of hand tools and trail construction machinery. They would utilize sustainable "flow" design and construction techniques that link banked turns, sections of uphill gradients, and other natural and man-made features to manage downhill bike speeds. An example of a 'flow' design and construction within the Wood River Valley include the Punchline trail in the Croy Creek trail network. Construction would occur over four to six years. Sun Valley Company would construct, maintain and patrol the new trails.

The Bald Mountain Trail will continue to be the primary hiking route from River Run to the

Roundhouse Restaurant and the top of Bald Mountain. No changes are proposed in the existing use or layout of the Bald Mountain Perimeter Trail.

Table 1

Trail Number	Designation	Trail Length (miles) and Jurisdiction	Average Grade (%)	Average Tread Width	Average Disturbance Width	Disturbance Area (acres)	Construction Type	Construction Phase
1	Hike (up/down) Bike (up)	1.2/BLM	9	48"	72"	0.87	New	1
2	Bike, Flow, Intermediate Downhill	2.1/BLM	5	72"	108"	2.29	Redesigned to downhill flow trail	1
3	Bike, Flow, Intermediate Downhill	3.4/BLM 0.4/FS	7	72"	108"	4.04	New	1
4	Bike, Flow, Novice Downhill	3.8/FS	6	72"	108"	4.14	New	2
5	Bike, Flow, Advanced Downhill	1.0/BLM 0.3/FS	18	72"	108"	1.53	New	3
6 (upper)	Bike, Flow, Intermediate Downhill	1.5/FS	6	72"	108"	1.64	Redesigned to downhill flow trail	4
6 (lower)	Bike, Flow, Intermediate Downhill	1.8/FS	5	72"	108"	1.97	New	4
7	Bike, Flow, Novice Downhill	2.1/FS	5	72"	108"	2.29	New	5
8	Bike, Flow, Intermediate Downhill	0.8/BLM	8	72"	108"	0.83	New	6
9	Hike (up/down) Bike (up)	1.2/FS	8	48"	72"	0.87	New	7
10	Hike (up/down) Bike (up)	BLM					No change	
Totals		11.2/FS 7.8/BLM				20.47		

Finished trail widths will average 36-48 inches with maximum widths of 72 inches at corners and other special features.

Existing Condition

The proposed action is within Blaine County and occurs within the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area. The Ski Area Permit is issued by the Sawtooth National Forest and Twin Falls District BLM and held by the Sun Valley Company. It was renewed in 2007 and terminates in 2047.

The 3,411 acre Bald Mountain Ski Area comprises of a mosaic of wildlife habitats and vegetation communities. Elevations within the area range from approximately 5,500 feet to over 9,000 feet. Existing wildlife habitat conditions have been influenced by past natural and human-caused modifications including, timber harvest, wildfires, road construction, ski area development, and other developed recreation. There are 8 designated hiking and mountain biking trails on Bald Mountain.

Vegetation in the Bald Mountain Ski Area is represented by mixed-age conifer forest stands of Douglas fir and subalpine fir communities. Lodgepole pine, aspen, and whitebark pine also occur within portions of the ski area. Shrub and grass communities of sagebrush, bitterbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, and various forbs are typically found on ski trails, though upper elevations contain natural herbaceous communities. Wildlife observed in the area include summering mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, black bear, pileated woodpeckers, red-naped sapsuckers, great horned owls, red squirrels, etc.

Preliminary Issues

Following is a list of preliminary issues the BLM Shoshone Field Office has identified. These are issues that will likely be addressed in the environmental analysis. Issues can be addressed through stipulations or mitigation, or through environmental analysis and disclosure.

Migratory Birds: The proposed project area likely provides habitat for 12 bird species of conservation concern that are not listed as BLM Sensitive species. The 12 migratory landbird species are: boreal owl; great gray owl; golden eagle; American three-toed woodpecker; black-backed woodpecker; Williamson's sapsucker; red-naped sapsucker; mountain chickadee; red-breasted nuthatch; pygmy nuthatch; mountain bluebird; green-tailed towhee.

Threatened or Endangered Animal Species: The listed, proposed or candidate species that may occur in the proposed project area are: Canada lynx; yellow-billed cuckoo; greater sage-grouse; wolverine.

Threatened or Endangered Plant Species: Bugleg goldenweed (*Pyrrocoma insecticruris*) is a BLM Special Status Species Plant that may occur within the permit area.

Invasive, Non-native Species: The following noxious weeds and invasive plants are found in the permit area: cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is widespread, while medusahead wildrye (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) is just beginning to appear and establish. Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*) is scattered throughout the project area, concentrated along roads.

Recreation: The proposal is within the Bald Mountain Ski Area Permit boundary and the BLM Bald Mountain Special Recreation Management Area where ski area management is the primary

resource use of the area. The proposal would change current summer visitor use patterns on Bald Mountain therefore these changes and potentially displacing users needs to be addressed.

Socio-economics: Implementation of the proposal has the potential to increase summer visitor use of the ski area especially since the trails are designed to increase ski area lift assisted mountain biking opportunities. This in turn has the potential to increase Sun Valley Company revenue as well as contributions to the local economy.

Soils: Soils within the project area are most likely highly erosive yet well drained. Mitigation measures need to reduce the potential for increasing soil erosion.

Wildlife Including Special Status Species: The proposed project area may provide habitat for: bald eagle; peregrine falcon; northern goshawk; flammulated owl; white-headed woodpecker; Lewis' woodpecker; calliope hummingbird; olive-sided flycatcher; willow flycatcher; gray wolf; fisher; spotted bat; Townsend's big-eared bat; fringed myotis, and; rocky mountain bighorn sheep.

Preliminary Alternative Development

The BLM will consider the No Action alternative. The No Action consists of denying the Sun Valley Company approval to construct the proposed trails.

Decision to be Made

The BLM Shoshone Field Manager will decide whether to approve or deny construction and use of the proposed trails.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action and preliminary issues. Comments made on this proposal should be received by December 6, 2013. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Written comments must be submitted to:

Beth Maclean
Shoshone Field Manager
400 West F Street
Shoshone, ID 83352.

The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 AM – 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to blm_id_baldmntntrailsea@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual

or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is John Kurtz, Outdoor Recreation Planner, (208) 732-7296.