

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

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

Finding of No Significant Impact

Bald Mountain Bike Trails

NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2013-0025-EA

The Sun Valley Company (SVC), holder of the joint U.S. Forest Service (USFS)/BLM Bald Mountain Ski Area Special Use Permit (SUP), submitted an authorization request to construct or reconstruct about 19 miles of summer nonmotorized trail to increase lift-assisted mountain biking recreational opportunities within the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area. The USFS authorized 11 miles of the project on June 10, 2013 on USFS land within the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area. The remainder of the proposed trail are on public lands managed by the BLM (7.5 miles) and private land owned by SVC (1.1 miles). The proposed construction of trails would occur within the BLM-administered portion of the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area, near Ketchum, Blaine County, Idaho. The project is located in T. 4 N, R. 17 E., Section 24 of the Boise Meridian, Idaho. The ski area permit is administered through a jointly issued SUPs and totaling approximately 3,338 acres (2,045 of which are administered by the Sawtooth National Forest and 1,295 of which are administered by the BLM's SFO). The permit, issued to SVC, was renewed in 2007 and terminates in 2047.

The BLM completed the Bald Mountain Bike Trails EA (DOI-BLM-ID- T030-2013-0025-EA) which analyzed and disclosed environmental impacts of implementing the Proposed Action consisting of the construction, use, operations, and maintenance of about 7.5 miles of new and reconstructed mountain bike trails within the BLM-administered portion of the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area. The Proposed Action is located entirely within the existing Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area for the Sun Valley Ski Resort, operated by Sun Valley Company (SVC).

The proposed action is in conformance with the 1981 Sun Valley Management Framework Plan, although it is not specifically provided for. In addition, the Sun Valley Analysis Unit management philosophy is to manage the area for recreation, local government needs, and open space, including intensive recreation development.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternative documented in the Bald Mountain Bike Trails EA (DOI-BLM-ID- T030-2013-0025-EA). I have also reviewed the project record for this analysis and the impacts of the proposed action and alternative as disclosed in the alternatives and environmental impacts sections of the EA. Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a

major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area.

I have also reviewed the ten Intensity Factors for significance listed in 40 CFR 1508.27 and have determined that the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action affecting the quality of the human environment or causing unnecessary or undue degradation of the natural environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement has not been prepared. Because there would not be any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

Implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of effects. ‘Significant’, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both context and intensity. The bold and italicized text are repeated from 40CFR 1508.27 for completeness and an explanation follows for relevance to the decision.

Context -This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27):

The 3,338-acre Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area comprises a mosaic of wildlife habitats and vegetation communities. Elevations within the ski area range from approximately 5,500 feet to more than 9,000 feet. The vegetation is represented by mixed-age conifer forest stands of Douglas-fir and subalpine fir communities. Shrub and grass communities and various forbs are typically found on ski trails, though upper elevations contain natural herbaceous communities. 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. Eight designated hiking and mountain biking trails are currently on Bald Mountain and within the boundaries of the ski permit area, four of which are located in whole or in part on BLM-administered lands. Under the Proposed Action, the new and existing mountain bike trails would be constructed or reconstructed within the 1,295-acre, BLM-administered portion of the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area.

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions would be limited in context and local in nature and that construction, operations and maintenance of the 7.5 miles of mountain bike trails within the existing ski permit area boundary are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

Intensity -This requirement refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.27):

1. The activities described in the proposed action do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)). The beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed. The EA documents potential for the construction, use, operation and maintenance of the trails to increase erosion potential within an

initial construction corridor of up to 25 feet wide and a final trail tread width of up to 9 feet wide (Section 3.1 Soils). Trail design, monitoring, Project Design Criteria and Best Management Practices identified in the EA (Appendix A and B) would be implemented to minimize erosion and mitigate adverse impacts anticipated to be localized to the trail construction or trail tread corridors. In addition, no surface water is located within the project area and construction would be phased over four to six years, thereby reducing runoff potential and minimizing the overall extent of disturbance at any point in time. As the proposed action would occur within currently developed areas of the Bald Mountain Ski Area, visual impacts of the proposed action seen from the Town of Ketchum would be within the non-forested areas (grassland-shrubland and talus vegetation communities) of the existing ski area. Scars from initial construction would lessen over time with successful site rehabilitation and revegetation and the effects would not attract attention of a casual observer.

The proposed action would affect vegetation and wildlife habitat resources within the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area along the trail corridors. A total of 5.7 miles of trail would be constructed within coniferous forest, 1.3 miles within previously mapped grassland/shrubland, and 0.5 miles of trails within rock/talus vegetation communities. The EA discloses about 3 miles (40%) of the proposed trails would be constructed or reconstructed within existing ski runs and the maximum area of disturbance to mapped vegetation communities is less than 2% of the overall BLM-administered portion, and less than 1% of within the entire BLM/USFS portion, of the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area (Section 3.3 Vegetation Including Special Status Plant Species). The proposed action may result in the introduction of noxious weeds to the ski permit area, however Project Design Criteria (Section 3.4 Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants) would be implemented to minimize the impacts to noxious weeds within the project area.

The proposed action would have a potential long-term impact along linear trail corridors of up to a combined 22.7 acres of wildlife habitat, 40% of which occurs on existing ski slope terrain. The wildlife habitat impacts would occur within or near areas of past alteration of the natural environment associated with development of the current ski area and currently have varying levels human activity during the course of existing trail and ski area operations. Wildlife occurring in this already-impacted area are likely to be habituated to human activity in the area, and therefore, when coupled with wildlife Project Design Criteria (Section 3.5 Wildlife Including Special Status Wildlife Species), adverse impacts are likely to be minor.

The proposed trails would provide new recreational opportunities and result in changes to the existing patterns of trail access and use, however no trail users would lose access to Bald Mountain and a sustainable trail route in this area would be provided and maintained for all current uses. The relative value or significance of impacts to the recreational experience is a personal and subjective judgment based on the preferences and expectations of each individual trail user and as recreational opportunities would be increased, the larger public benefit of additional recreational opportunities outweighs localized, individual adverse impact to the recreational experience. Finally, the proposed action would increase the economic activity within the region, but as it would complement existing summer amenities within the ski resort area, the impact is anticipated to be minor.

2. The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)). The environmental analysis documented no major effects on

public health and safety from the Proposed Action described in the EA. As part of the operations and maintenance of the trails under the Proposed Action, tree snags and windfall that may present a public safety risk for trail users would be removed by SVC, who would monitor and manage the trail conditions.

3. *The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern.*

There are no unique historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, known caves, wild and scenic rivers, Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern located within the BLM-administered portion of the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area. The environmental analysis documented no major effects on unique geographic features of the area.

4. *The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).* The effects of the construction, use, operations, and maintenance of the mountain bike trails in the proposed action are similar to those currently occurring on the adjacent USFS lands on which 11 miles of similar trails have been or are planning to be constructed under the 2013 USFS approval. In addition, existing mountain bike trails cross the area of the proposed action and are located throughout the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area and the operation, monitoring, and management of such trails is not an uncommon activity for the SVC.

There has not been any controversy regarding the proposed action or alternative in response to the scoping efforts described in the EA.

5. *The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).* The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks because the BLM jointly manages the Bald Mountain Ski Permit Area SUP with the USFS, on which numerous biking and hiking trails currently exist. There are no known effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

6. *My decision to implement these activities does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).* The actions are within the scope of current regulations and are not expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration because the decision is in line with the existing recreational land use decisions for the Bald Mountain Ski Area Permit SUP.

7. *The effects of the construction, operation, use, and maintenance of the mountain bike trails would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).* The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions are considered and disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant impact were identified nor are any anticipated.

8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)). The area has been previously inventoried for cultural resources. Non-eligible historic debris has been previously recorded in Section 24, but there would be no impact to cultural resources from the proposed action.

9. The proposed activities are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). As summarized in the EA (Section 3.3 Vegetation Including Special Status Plant Species and Section 3.5 Wildlife Including Special Status Wildlife Species) and presented in the included the USFS Biological Assessment/Biological Opinion (EA, Appendix B), the proposed action will not affect endangered or threatened species or habitats for the yellow-billed cuckoo, Bliss Rapids snail, Banbury Springs limpet, Snake River physa snail, greater sage-grouse, or wolverine and may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Canada lynx.

10. The proposed activities will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)). The proposed action is consistent and compatible with all known Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, or requirements imposed for protection of the environment (EA Section 1.4).

APPROVED:

/s/ Codie Martin

Codie Martin
Field Manager
Shoshone Field Office

10/22/15

Date