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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Arapahoe Basin Ski Area Master Development Plan, Arapaho National Forest, Summit County, CO

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environment impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) has received a Master Development Plan from Arapahoe Basin Ski Area (A-Basin) to update the 1982 plan presently in effect. The Master Development Plan outlines a number of ski area modifications and new facilities, including limited snowmaking and a mid-mountain lodge. A-Basin is located in Summit County and operates on Arapaho National Forest under a Special Use Permit issued by the Forest Service. The Forest Service is initiating the process of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose the effects of the proposed Master Development Plan and alternatives. Potential alternatives have not yet been identified.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by September 7, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Tere O'Rourke, District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box 620, 680 Blue River Parkway, Silverthorne, Colorado, 80498. FAX comments to Tere O'Rourke at (970) 468-7735. Oral comments will also be accepted.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kent Sharp, Winter Sports Administrator, (970) 468-5400. FAX (970) 468-7735.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Arapahoe Basin Master Development Plan (MDP) was recently completed to update the 1982 Arapahoe Basin Ski Area Master Plan (1982 Plan). The 1982 Plan currently guides the Forest Service in their administration of the ski area's Special Use Permit. A majority of the

upgrades describes within the 1982 Plan have been implemented, with the exception of the proposed snowmaking facilities. Given the age and status of the 1982 Plan, the Forest Service and A-Basin determined that an updated plan would be appropriate at this time. The MDP includes the following features:

- Snowmaking capabilities on 84 acres of terrain (17% of the total developed terrain) potentially to extend the ski season to September 1 annually
- Potential construction of a one-acre foot capacity pond for water storage for the snowmaking facilities
- Facility upgrades and modifications including: rental shop upgrade; additional parking and access through a highway underpass; a utility corridor (for water, wastewater, electricity, and phone); a mid-mountain day lodge; and alpine slide; Norway lift modifications; and patrol headquarters building
- Mountain biking trails
- Hiking/interpretive trails

Details pertaining to these proposed modifications are included in the MDP, on file at the Forest Service offices in Silverthorne, Colorado and at the Silverthorne and Frisco libraries. The MDP does not include expansion of the Forest Service permit boundary, new lifts, new ski terrain, or an increase in capacity or skiers-at-one-time (SAOT).

The purpose of and need for the proposed MDP are as follows:

- Update the 1982 Plan which is outdated (almost 15 years old). Most of the improvements described in the 1982 Plan have been implemented. In addition, new ski area technologies, planning strategies, and environmental philosophies have emerged during this time which warrant consideration in an updated plan.

• Increase summer recreational opportunities at A-Basin, potentially to include year-round alpine skiing, mountain biking, interpretive trails, and an alpine slide. Additional recreational opportunities would enhance economic activity and employment within Summit County. In addition, providing for increased recreational opportunities at A-Basin would be consistent with the White River National Forest Plan and Forest Service policies encouraging additional opportunities for summer and winter recreation on National Forest System land, including the summer use of ski area facilities, where appropriate.

- Provide year-round public skiing opportunities and race camp

experiences for young racers through the employment of snowmaking to cover approximately 17% of the developed terrain at A-Basin. It would also provide for fall training facilities for the U.S. Ski Team. Currently, young racers and U.S. Ski Team members must travel out of state or out of the country to obtain appropriate training experiences.

- Update and improve restaurant, parking, patrol headquarters, and other facilities at the resort. The proposed facility improvements would address current deficiencies and enhance the quality and safety of the resort experience at A-Basin.

- Encourage year-round use of the facilities while maintaining the resort character.

The decision to be made is whether or not to approve and accept the proposed MDP as a portion of the existing special use permit.

Preliminary issues associated with the MDP include water quality and quantity; instream flow maintenance; fisheries; wetlands; wildlife; and recreational compatibility.

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "404 Permit" for dredging and filling waters and/or wetlands may be required. The Forest Service will request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to cooperate in the environmental analysis, and may request cooperation from other State and Federal agencies.

The Forest Service invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis to be included in the draft environmental impact statement. In addition, the Forest Service gives notice that it is beginning a full environmental analysis and decision-making process for this MDP so that interested or affected people may know how they may participate in the environmental analysis and contribute to the final decision. The public scoping meetings are scheduled for Monday August 12, 1996 from 7:30-9:30 pm at the Silverthorne Recreation Center, 430 Rainbow Drive, Silverthorne, Colorado; and Tuesday, August 13, 1996 from 7:00-9:00 pm at the Forest Service Regional Office, 740 Simms Street, Golden, Colorado. The purpose of these meetings is to learn what issues and concerns members of the public or interested agencies have that are associated with the proposal and should

be considered. Knowledge of these issues and concerns will help establish the scope of the Forest Service environmental analysis and define the kind and range of alternatives to be considered. Forest Service officials and the proponent will describe and explain the proposed actions and the process of environmental analysis and disclosure to be followed in evaluating the MDP. The Forest Service welcomes any public comments on the MDP.

The Responsible Official: Sonny LaSalle, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest, P.O. Box 948, Glenwood Springs, CO. 81602.

We expect to publish the draft environmental impact statement in late 1996 or early 1997, to ask for public comment for a period of 45 days, and to complete a final environmental impact statement in mid 1997.

The 45-day public comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will commence on the day the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a "Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553, (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc., v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the

adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. (Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provision of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.) Please note that comments you make on the draft environmental impact statement will be regarded as public information.

Dated: August 2, 1996.

Veto J. LaSalle,

*White River National Forest, Forest Supervisor.*

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### **Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96, Boise National Forest, Idaho**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Lowman Ranger District of the Boise National Forest will prepare an environmental impact statement on a proposal to treat 22,910 acres within the 44,552 acre Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 Project Area through timber harvest, precommercial thinning and/or prescribed fire. The proposal would reduce stand densities and alter tree species composition to favor densities and tree species which are resistant and/or resilient to wildfire, insect attack, and disease.

It is believed that density reduction and reintroduction of fire will improve the resistance and resilience of stands. Through treatment, these stands would be maintained in the early seral state. Stands in early seral condition have a high proportion of shade intolerant tree species which are resistant to insect and disease attack and capable of withstanding catastrophic fire.

The proposal includes construction of 11.2 miles of road within the Deadwood Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA).

The Deadwood River drainage is located in the west-central mountains of Idaho, in Boise and Valley Counties, Townships 9-11 North and Ranges 6-8 East, Boise Meridian. Preliminary analysis has demonstrated that large numbers of stands are at risk from insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic wildfires. The Deadwood Ecosystem Analysis '96 timber sale proposes to treat timber stands in the southern portion of the Deadwood River drainage to reduce densities and increase stand diversity and, as a by-product of this

vegetative manipulation, provide wood fiber to the local economy.

Stands in the southern portion of the Deadwood River drainage were chosen for priority treatment because they are warmer and drier than stands in the northern portion. The southern portion has been identified by the Boise National Forest Hazard and Risk Assessment as at risk to catastrophic wildfire. Fire suppression and a limited amount of logging have been concentrated in this area. As a result, the stands (which previously had a fire return interval of approximately 20 years) have not burned as frequently as necessary to maintain resistance and resilience. In an effort to maintain ponderosa pine, an early seral species, within this ecosystem, stands capable of growing ponderosa pine have been selected for treatment. Additional stands which would not normally contain ponderosa pine will be treated to break up dense overstories and reduce stress, increasing growth rates and reducing the threat of insect attack and diseases and reducing the potential for catastrophic fires.

### **Proposed Action**

Prescribed Fire Only—3,690 acres—to reduce on the ground fuels and stand densities. Burning would be at low intensity designed to stay on the ground and kill smaller trees. Some openings would be created, and a few areas may burn at moderate intensity, killing some larger trees. This includes 1,840 acres of the eligible Wild and Scenic river corridor.

Sanitation Salvage then Prescribed Fire—9,230 acres—to salvage dead, dying, insect infested and diseased trees. Dense pockets of trees in these stands would be thinned from below to remove the least fire resistant trees followed by prescribed fire.

Sanitation/Salvage with Precommercial Thinning Favoring Ponderosa Pine then Douglas-fir—900 acres—Dwarf mistletoe or bark beetle infested Douglas-fir stands would have the overstory removed except for those trees necessary for wildlife or large woody debris. There may be 1/2 to 3 acre openings created in heavily mistletoe infected and root rot affected areas. The understory will be precommercially thinned at a spacing which will range from 12 to 20 feet, depending on tree size. This precommercial thinning will retain ponderosa pine trees whenever available. If possible, fire will be used after the treatment.

Approximately 7,530 acres will be treated by selecting leave trees to create an uneven-aged stand primarily occupied by relatively large ponderosa