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**Route To:**

**Subject:** Addendum to Supplemental Information Report for the Grand Targhee Resort Peaked Lift  
**To:** Project File

## INTRODUCTION

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Grand Targhee Resort (GTR) submitted a letter requesting authorization to proceed with construction of a previously approved chairlift on Peaked Mountain to replace its current Snow Cat skiing operation and complete the development of lift-served skiing in this area. The Peaked chairlift was previously approved in 1994 and has since been affirmed by subsequent environmental review, including a 2017 Supplemental Information Report (SIR).

Since the original approval of the Peaked lift (analyzed as Peaked #6 in the 1994 EIS) and the 2017 SIR, further design, and engineering of the planned lift have been developed. This addendum to the 2017 SIR has been prepared to document final implementation details and assess resource conditions in light project components that have been modified since the time of previous review and approvals. The majority of the analysis from the 2017 SIR is relevant to the current review, and is included as Appendix A. Additionally, The May 28<sup>th</sup> construction request letter submitted by GTR, and associated plans are included as Appendix B. Both appendices will be incorporated by reference, as necessary.

## Background

In April 1994 then Targhee National Forest Supervisor William LeVere issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on the *1994 Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement* (1994 EIS). Supervisor Levere identified the Selected Alternative as, “Alternative 4 including some features of Alternative 6 with respect to Peaked Mountain lift development” as described and analyzed in the 1994 EIS. Among other projects, the Selected Alternative authorized a “downsized” detachable quad chair to the top of Peaked Mountain (1994 ROD, p. 5).

In 2004 an Environmental Assessment (2004 EA) analyzed the construction of “Ski Trail 6A,” which would be served by the previously approved Peaked lift. In analyzing the environmental effects of Trail 6A, many of the environmental impacts that were disclosed in the 1994 EIS were substantiated with updated studies of the Peaked Mountain area. Following the review of the 2004 EA a *Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact* (2004 DN/FONSI) was issued by then Forest Supervisor Brent Larsen, approving the proposed Trail 6A under an updated assessment of the environmental conditions.

Further detail for the previously approved Peaked lift was provided in the accepted *2011 Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan* (2011 MDP), which reflects the ski trails which were cleared within the Peaked area in 2008. The 2011 MDP disclosed that, “the resulting impacts to vegetation from construction of the Peaked #6 lift and trail pod, based on new planning, were quantified to be substantially less than envisioned in the 1994 ROD—approximately 57 acres” (2011 MDP, p. V-3). Although the Peaked lift has yet to be constructed, all of its associated trails are now in existence and complement the Snow Cat skiing that currently utilizes the Peaked Mountain area. The accepted 2011 MDP also expands on the changes and features that will be necessary to convert the existing 170 acres of



Intermediate through Expert terrain on Peaked Mountain from Snow Cat Skiing to lift-served skiing (2011 MDP, p. VI-2). An updated assessment of GTR's Comfortable Carrying Capacity, which is disclosed as 2,830 skiers, is also included in the MDP (2011 MDP, p. IV-14).

In addition to prior formal environmental review which analyzed and subsequently approved/accepted the Peaked lift, further documentation has regarded the Peaked lift as approved for construction. In an April 2014 letter from then Caribou-Targhee National Forest Supervisor, Brent Larson, to the Wyoming Business Council it was stated that, "Under this proposal Grand Targhee Ski Resort will submit a request to construct the Black Foot and Peaked ski lifts on National Forest Lands. Both of these lift proposals have been analyzed and approved through the National Environmental Policy Act and are approved." The letter goes on to say that, "Once Grand Targhee Ski Resort is ready to initiate construction the Forest will review the design and construction plans prior to final authorization."

Despite previous approval and advancement of trail construction on Peaked Mountain, GTR has yet to implement the Peaked lift. Skier demand and financial success in recent years have positioned GTR to move forward with the construction of the Peaked lift following the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Supervisor's approval of the documentation included in this SIR.

### **Decision to be Made**

To determine whether additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis must be conducted, the potential impacts of the improvements as finally designed must be compared against the potential impacts as analyzed in prior NEPA documents. Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Handbook – (18.1) directs Deciding Officers to review "new information or changed circumstances relating to the environmental impacts of a proposed action" that occur after a decision has been made, but prior to completion of the approved project in order to determine whether a Supplemental EA is necessary. FSH 1909.15(18.1) goes on to state:

*If, after an interdisciplinary review and consideration of new information within the context of the overall program or project, the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to an environmental document is not necessary, implementation should continue. Document the results of the interdisciplinary review in the appropriate program or project file. This documentation is sometimes called a supplemental information report (SIR) and should conclude with whether or not a correction, supplement, or revision is needed, and if not, the reasons why.*

In compliance with FSH 1909.15(18.1), this SIR has been prepared to document the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Supervisor's determination of "...whether or not the new information or changed circumstances are within the scope and range of effects considered in the original analysis." The changed circumstances that are evaluated in this SIR include the existing conditions at GTR in terms of both the affected environment and infrastructure/trail network since initial review in 1994, and subsequent review in 2004. These changed circumstances are discussed in detail below.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PEAKED LIFT ANALYZED DURING PRIOR NEPA ANALYSIS**

### **1994 Environmental Impact Statement**

The 1994 ROD denotes the selection of Alternative 4 as the approved action, including "... some features of Alternative 6 with respect to Peaked Mountain lift development." (1994 ROD, p. 4). Included in the

approved alternative was increased development on Peaked Mountain, which among other improvements, included the construction of a chairlift. This chairlift, referenced as “Peaked #6” throughout the ROD and EIS, was approved as a new detachable quad chairlift with “downsized” capacity. The “downsized” detachable quad chairlift was noted to be a product demanded by the skiing public and went on to say that, “Although it would be a high-speed lift, it would be designed and built to operate at a lower capacity. Specific mitigation has been added to the FEIS to prevent capacity increases” (1994 ROD, p. 5). At the time of approval, the ROD stated that, “Overall capacity [of the resort] will remain at 5,130 skiers at one time (SAOT) and is consistent with Alternative 4 in the DEIS. I do not believe expansion beyond that level is warranted, because 5,130 SAOT provides enough capacity to accommodate expected demand for the next 25 to 30 years” (1994 ROD, p. 5).

The ROD went on to clarify additional changes associated with the approval of the Peaked lift and its associated infrastructure, “Construction plans will be required to implement specific projects such as buildings or lifts. These documents will be reviewed and approved by the Forest Service prior to construction” (1994 ROD, p. 12). Another condition that was made clear in the 1994 ROD was that once lift-served skiing became available, “Snow Cat skiing on Peaked Mountain would be eliminated” (1994 EIS, p. II-16).

## **2004 Environmental Assessment**

In the 2004 EA, GTR proposed to construct the previously approved but un-built ski Trail 6A. In its analysis of ski Trail 6A, the 2004 EA references the previously approved Peaked lift and provides an updated assessment of environmental conditions in the Peaked Mountain area. The updated environmental conditions and impacts that would occur as a result of the proposed ski trail were approved in the DN/FONSI and provide a more current inventory of the Peaked Mountain area that can be used parallel to the findings of 1994 EIS.

## **2017 Supplemental Information Report**

As previously mentioned, the 2017 SIR is included as Appendix A. At the time of the 2017 SIR, a quad chairlift was envisioned to be implemented and a summary description of each discrete project that was described in the 2017 SIR follows:

### **Chairlift Installation**

- Chairlift specifications: slope length 4,860 feet; vertical rise 1,840 feet; hourly design capacity 2,000 people per hour (PPH), anticipated effective capacity 1,900 PPH
- Maintaining the hourly capacities specified above, the chairlift would be installed as either a fixed-grip four-place with the future option to convert to a detachable, or will be installed as a detachable four-place chairlift
- Estimated number of towers: 15 to 18 towers
- Lift motor/drive location: top terminal; tension location at bottom terminal
- Power supply: buried cable to top terminal; buried cable to bottom terminal
- Communications line: buried cable to top terminal; aerial cable along lift towers to bottom terminal

- Area of ground disturbance at terminals: top terminal 2.1 acres (includes area for ski patrol cabin); bottom terminal 1.6 acres (includes tie-in with bottom of ski Trail 6A)
- Operator huts at top and bottom terminals: estimated size 8 feet by 12 feet
- Construction of a toilet building/maintenance facility at the bottom terminal location
- Construction of a toilet building/facility adjacent to the top terminal and ski patrol cabin

### **Power Supply**

- Buried power line trenched in existing road from top terminal of Sacajawea to top terminal site of the planned Peaked lift
- Top terminal power line approximate length: 4,600 feet
- Transformer installed on concrete pad (5 feet by 5 feet) adjacent to lift terminal
- Power supply for lift motor, operator hut lights and heat, ski patrol cabin lights and heat
- Buried power line trenched in existing road from Dreamweaver trail to bottom terminal site of the Peaked lift
- Bottom terminal power line approximate length: 5,700 feet
- Transformer installed on concrete pad (5 feet by 5 feet) adjacent to lift terminal
- Power supply for operator hut lights and heat, future warming hut lights and heat

### **Communications Lines**

- Buried communication line trenched in existing road from top terminal of Sacajawea to top terminal site of planned Peaked lift
- Top terminal communication line approximate length: 4,600 feet
- Aerial communication line strung along lift towers from top terminal to bottom terminal (standard on all chairlifts)
- Bottom terminal communication line approximate length: 4,900 feet

### **Terrain Enhancements**

- Tree removal and/or trimming, as necessary, for adequate lift clearance width
- Tree removal and/or trimming to improve skier circulation lanes and skier safety across Peaked Mountain
- Brush removal and/or trimming and tree limbing to improve glade skiing opportunities throughout the terrain pod
- Grading at terminal locations (described above) to blend terminal pads and milling areas into surrounding slopes
- Build ski Trail 6A as per EA; tree removal for this project has already been completed, lower trail grading still to be completed
- Removal of boulders, stumps, debris, etc. throughout the terrain area to reduce the snow depth required for skiing and increase skier safety—only done where excavator access is possible

without road construction or excessive damage to the existing vegetation and other sensitive resources

- Maintenance of the Peaked skiing terrain may necessitate the use of a winch-cat groomer; GTR would install several small winch anchors within the skiing terrain

### **Ski Patrol Cabin**

- Ski patrol cabin built adjacent to, and south of, the Peaked lift top terminal
- Purpose of the cabin is to provide full-time, immediate ski patrol rescue dispatch to the Peaked area, and for storage of rescue, avalanche control and other ski area operations equipment
- Approximate size of cabin: 25 feet by 30 feet (750 square feet)
- Cabin would be equipped with electric lights and heat, but not water or rest rooms

### **DESCRIPTION OF PEAKED LIFT AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED**

The following description of the Peaked lift focuses on changed conditions from what was previously described in the 2017 SIR. Specifically, this includes:

- The configuration of the Peaked chair as a six-person chair rather than a quad chair;
- The routing of power in an overland route rather than being buried in roads;
- Burial of the lift communication line rather than hanging the line along lift towers; and
- Retention of ski patrol cabin at the top of Sacajawea lift.

### **Chairlift Configuration**

With the exception of the Peaked Lift's seating configuration, the *Chairlift Installation* discussion in the previous section (also included in the 2017 SIR as Appendix A) remains unchanged. GTR currently plans to proceed with a detachable six-person chairlift rather than the detachable quad lift that was described in the 2017 SIR. Although the seating configuration has changed, the approved hourly design capacity of 2,000 PPH would be maintained by installing fewer chairs on the lift line. The "capacity" of the lift would be exactly as approved. We understand that the primary reason for this change is increased loading efficiency (chair spacing is wider allowing increased time for guest to load/unload) and less susceptibility to wind as chairs would be heavier.

Disturbance footprints associated with the top and bottom terminals are currently planned at 1.06 acres and 1.31 acres, respectively. This is within the previously approved 2.1 acres previously approved (includes area for ski patrol cabin) for the top terminal and 1.6 acres for the bottom terminal (includes maintenance and storage facility).

### **Power Alignment**

Power lines will be buried to top and bottom terminals; however, we understand that GTR intends to install power in a modified alignment from what was previously approved. The current alignments are depicted within the May 28<sup>th</sup> construction request letter submitted by GTR (refer to Appendix B) and are more direct, and shorter, than previously planned (approximately 1,000 feet less). To further reduce disturbance associated with the modified alignment, GTR will install the powerlines in the overland alignments with a vibratory plow (aka: stinger).

Should it not be possible to install the powerline in the overland alignments via vibratory plow, GTR will install the powerline in the road alignments as described in the 2017 SIR using conventional trenching techniques. At the time of this letter, it has been confirmed that installation via vibratory plow is technically feasible, although we understand that GTR is working to secure the necessary equipment to take this approach.

### **Communication Lines**

Due to rime ice issues that persist at GTR, it has been determined that the previously described aerial alignment for communication lines will not suffice. Current plans include plowing the communication line in along the lift alignment rather than hanging the line in an aerial alignment along the lift towers. The alignment of communication line, as currently planned is shown on in GTR's construction request letter that was submitted on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (refer to Appendix B).

Ongoing operations at GTR have proven that this approach is necessary as the communications line on the Dreamcatcher lift had to be buried after a series of failures and temporary closures due to rime ice events. It is extremely challenging to bury a communication line after lift towers are already installed and current plans are intended to address rime ice challenges proactively. Further, this modification from the previous approval will reduce the need to staff repairs during potentially hazardous weather events, and will be achievable with minimal disturbance.

### **Ski Patrol Cabin**

As previously approved, GTR would construct a ski patrol cabin adjacent to, and south of, the Peaked lift top terminal. In addition to this cabin, we now understand that GTR plans to retain the existing ski patrol cabin at the top of the Sacajawea lift. The ski patrol cabin at the top of the Sacajawea lift was previously described as being removed following the construction of the new cabin at Peaked.

The primary reason for retaining both facilities is guest safety. This configuration of facilities will allow GTR to respond to safety related incidents most effectively and efficiently in different areas and aspects of the mountain. Additionally, there will be times when the Sacajawea lift is open, while the Peaked lift would be closed. This could occur during early season, weather events, or maintenance related times of closure. During these times, GTR would be able to stage ski patrol personnel atop the Sacajawea lift area. In instances, as described, when the Peaked lift is closed, it would not be possible to station ski patrol personnel atop the Peaked lift to respond to guest needs within the Sacajawea terrain area, posing a potential threat guest safety.

All other aspects of the previously approved ski patrol cabin remain unchanged. The location of the Peaked cabin is depicted in GTR's construction request letter that was submitted on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (refer to Appendix B).

## **EVALUATION OF CHANGED CONDITIONS FROM THOSE PREVIOUSLY ANALYZED**

It is possible that conditions have changed since the Peaked lift was analyzed in the 1994 EIS and the 2004 EA. Both of the previous NEPA reviews will be used to evaluate how the currently proposed project is consistent with or differs from what has previously been analyzed. It is the goal of this section to determine whether additional NEPA analysis must be conducted by comparing the potential impacts of the project as currently proposed against the potential impacts as analyzed in prior NEPA documents.

It is important to note that the 1994 EIS specifically analyzes the Peaked lift while the 2004 EA analyzes the Peaked Mountain area for ski Trail 6A. Surveys conducted for ski Trail 6A overlap portions of the project area and provide an updated assessment of disturbance in the area. Supplemental information will also be provided by the analysis completed for MDPs that were prepared after these approvals. The evaluation of changed conditions will consider both previous analyses (while referring to MDP information as necessary) in reaching a determination as to whether or not the project, as currently proposed, is within the scope of what has been approved. Various biological reports associated with other proximate NEPA analysis will be referred to as necessary for biological resources

***For each evaluation of changed conditions, the “determination” from the 2017 SIR is included. A subsequent “determination - 2021 conditions” is provided under each heading to assess how modifications to project components that have occurred since 2017 may or may not change the previous determination.***

## **General Project Components**

### **Purpose and Need**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed still meet the intent of the original purpose and need as previously analyzed in 1994?*

#### ***Determination:***

The original purpose and need statement provided in the 1994 EIS, which analyzes the approval of an updated MDP, is as follows: “The purpose of the new MDP is to guide expansion of skiing and year-round resort facilities at Targhee to meet the steadily growing need for such activities” (1994 EIS, p. I-1). The purpose and need section went on to support this statement with data showing high demand for expanded facilities at GTR that were similarly reflected in the market as a whole. The Peaked lift and associated infrastructure as currently proposed are fully compatible with the stated purpose of the 1994 EIS, and reflect a single component of the alternative selected to meet the objectives of the project as originally intended.

#### ***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

### **Forest Plan Consistency**

*Is the Peaked lift as currently proposed being analyzed under the same Forest-wide and Management Area standards and guidelines as were previously analyzed for past projects?*

#### ***Determination:***

A Revised Forest Plan for the Targhee National Forest was completed in 1997. The goals and objectives of the GTR’s Prescription Area (4.2) are consistent with previous NEPA analysis, which was completed under the same management prescription of the 1997 Targhee National Forest Plan.

The goals of Prescription Area 4.2-Special Use Authorization Recreation Sites, are as follows:

1. Provide recreation opportunities that are best managed by the private sector to meet an identified public need, ensure quality experiences, and complement Forest settings and resource objectives.
2. Provide quality interpretive facilities and programs for use by the public.
3. Strive to incorporate opportunities for watchable wildlife.

All standards and guidelines outlined to achieve these goals as detailed in the 1997 Forest Plan for the Targhee National Forest are considered in this analysis of the Peaked lift, which has been determined to be consistent with the goals of Prescription Area 4.2-Special Use Authorization Recreation Sites.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

**Resource-Specific Project Components**

**Air Quality**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact air quality resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS analyzed impacts to air quality resulting from the Peaked lift through its review of Alternative 4. The primary area of concern was Grand Teton National Park, which is approximately 4 miles east of the GTR base area and classified as Class I Airshed. The EIS disclosed that the proposed projects would result in a reduction of air quality and an increase in emissions in Primary Impact and Class I areas, however emission levels were determined to be well below that capable of affecting the classification of a Class 1 Airshed (1994 EIS, p. IV-45). The 2004 EA did not analyze any impacts to Air Quality. There are no changed conditions that would result in air quality impacts that were not disclosed under prior analyses. Furthermore, as a singular component of the alternative approved by the 1994 EIS, construction of the Peaked lift will likely have negligible impacts compared to those previously analyzed. Chairlifts are electrically powered and do not constitute a stationary emissions point. Minor short-term emissions would be associated the operation of heavy equipment throughout the construction period.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR. Further, there are no changes in air quality resource conditions that have been identified.

**Cultural**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact cultural resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS reported that previous cultural surveys conducted in 1988 and 1990 found no indication of cultural sites in the current permit area (1994 EIS, p. III-43). The 1994 EIS also stated that the Wyoming State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with this finding in their letter to the Forest Supervisor dated January 21, 1992. The 2004 EA cited the same 1998 and 1990 surveys, affirming the

lack of cultural sites present in the permit area, and proceeded without further analysis of cultural resources as they related to the construction of ski Trail 6A. Given that the Peaked lift is contained within the same permit area as was previously analyzed, it is reasonable to conclude that there are no changed conditions that would result impacts to cultural resources that were not disclosed under prior analyses.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

The 2021 modifications to project components would result in minor modifications to the project footprint in the areas of the power and communication lines; however, these changes are still captured within the previous cultural survey area. As these surveys have not identified cultural resources within this project area, it is reasonable to conclude that there are no further changed conditions that would result impacts to cultural resources that were not disclosed under prior analyses. Further, due to the low impact techniques and minimal disturbance associated with the modified power and communication alignments it would be possible to avoid unforeseen impacts should a previously unidentified cultural resource be encountered. The area of grading necessary for the planned lift terminals is not affected by whether the chairlift is constructed as a quad or a six place, or as a detachable or fixed grip.

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR. There are no reasons to believe that resource conditions have changed as past survey information is still relevant and the temporal scale of this resource's formation is not one that would result in the potential for new resources since last analyzed.

**Socioeconomic**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact socioeconomic resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS evaluated the impact of lift-served skiing on Peaked Mountain, as well as a multitude of other projects in its review of Alternative 4. The 1994 EIS did not find any adverse effects to socioeconomic resources, and noted that the impacts of expansion would be realized over a span of time ranging from 25 to 30 years. The 2004 EA did not analyze socioeconomic resources.

Projects that were analyzed alongside the Peaked lift have been implemented since the approval of the 1994 EIS and have had a socioeconomic effect in the communities surrounding GTR. Provided and that this project is a standalone component of the alternative approved by 1994 ROD it is unlikely that Peaked lift and its associated infrastructure would have any discernable impact on the communities surrounding GTR. Aside from the incremental implementation of other projects at GTR, there are no changed conditions that would result in socioeconomic impacts that were not disclosed under prior analyses.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

The 2021 modifications to project components that could impact the determination for socioeconomic resources would be limited to the chairlift configuration; however, as the capacity would not be altered under the currently planned configuration, there would not be changes to visitation from what was previously analyzed. As the current plans would not alter the resort's capacity beyond what was previously analyzed, it is anticipated that the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

## **Soils**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact soil resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

### ***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS identified areas of mass instability in the GTR's permit area. The Peaked Mountain area was classified as primarily low instability; however, there are areas of moderate and high instability. Lifts and ski runs that were analyzed in this area were disclosed as occurring on soils with a moderate to high soil erosion rating. The selected Alternative 4 was recorded as having the following disturbances to various soil and mass instability types (for all projects, not just those on Peaked Mountain):

**Table-1:  
Actual Acres Disturbed- Soil Erosion Classes & Mass Instability Potential**

<b>Acres of Ground by Soil Erodibility Potential</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (acres)</b>
Low	23.00
Moderate	24.60
High	73.00
<b>Acres of Ground by Mass Instability Potential</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (acres)</b>
Low	111.00
Moderate	9.60
High	0.00

Ground disturbing activities that were analyzed in the 1994 EIS include: removal of trees, stumps, and other vegetation; grading for roads, parking areas and ski runs; excavation for lift structures, support/base facilities and private/public buildings; and trail construction for summer activities. Potential impacts that were disclosed related to these activities include shallow slumping, downslope creep and solifuction, and shallow failures. The 1994 EIS required that adequate mitigation measures be employed to minimize any adverse effects to soils.

The 1994 EIS disclosed that ski Trail 6A would be developed on an area identified as having a mass instability concern, and stated that further site investigations were needed within this area. As a result, soil characteristics along proposed ski Trail 6A were surveyed in 2002 as part of the 2004 EA to identify the stability and erosive nature of the soils. As disclosed in the 2004 EA, the survey revealed that no unstable soils were documented in the ski Trail 6A area and recommended mitigations that included erosion control measures and revegetation of disturbed areas to minimize adverse effects to soils. The survey described the soil erosion rating as ranging from moderate if undisturbed to high if disturbed, with mass instability rated as low throughout the area. The 2004 EA went on to say that, "if winter logging is used for tree removal, very little detrimental soil disturbance would be expected, as was observed with the use of this method on the Sacajawea Run" and that, "effects would be even less than analyzed in the FEIS [1994 EIS]" (2004 EA, p. 17).

An updated grading plan was completed for the 2016 MDP and shows that a total of 4.0 acres of grading would occur around the Peaked lift terminals (1.6 acres for the bottom terminal and tie-in with bottom of

ski Trail 6A; 2.4 acres for the top terminal and unloading area).<sup>1</sup> Since both previous NEPA analyses have occurred, there have been ground disturbing activities in the Peaked Mountain area, primarily related to the construction of the Peaked skiing terrain which was cleared in 2008 to complement the Snow Cat skiing operation. Outside of the incremental project implementation that has occurred, there are no changed conditions that would result in impacts to soils that were not disclosed under prior analyses.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

The 2021 modifications to project components would result in slight changes to the project footprint. While the changes to the project footprint could inherently result in impacts to soils with different erodibility and mass instability potential than those previously disclosed, it is anticipated that the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

As previously described, the area of grading necessary for the planned lift terminals is not affected by whether or not the chairlift is constructed as a quad or a six pack, or as a detachable or fixed grip. The top terminal grading plan shows that the area of disturbance for the top terminal is 1.06 acres, which is well below the approved 2.1 acres described in the 2017 SIR. The bottom terminal would be constructed within the previously approved footprint. Ancillary facilities associated with the top and bottom terminals would be constructed within these previously approved footprints (e.g., ski patrol facility and maintenance/storage facility).

Due to the low impact associated with “plowing in” the power and communication lines in modified alignments, there are not anticipated to be soil impacts beyond those previously disclosed. The currently proposed alignment is approximately 1,000 feet shorter and would result in minimal disturbance as traditional trenching would not be required. Following installation, the area of construction would be revegetated to restore natural conditions and promote soil function. Further, GTR would be required to adhere to design criteria and best management practices to ensure that effects to soil (within those previously analyzed) would be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR. There is also no reason to believe that resource conditions have changed as the temporal scale at which this resource evolves naturally is not one that would result in the potential for new conditions since last analyzed.

**Transportation**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact transportation beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS analyzed the proposed project effects to transportation by assessing changes to average daily traffic on the two main roads that provide access to GTR: Idaho State Highway 33 which begins at Teton Pass on the Idaho-Wyoming state border and connects the communities of Victor, Driggs, and Teton; and Forest Development Road 025 (Fred’s Mountain Road) which provides access from Driggs, Idaho. Disclosed impacts related to all of the analyzed alternatives included increased pressure to park on

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the project description, the area of ground disturbance for the Peaked lift’s top terminal and ski patrol cabin as currently proposed is 2.1 acres. Although the 2016 MDP grading plan depicts 2.4 acres of grading around the top terminal of the Peaked lift, site specific planning for the project as currently proposed has revealed that only 2.1 acres of ground disturbance would be necessary.

the portion of Fred’s Mountain Road within the boundaries of the then Targhee National Forest and increased traffic volumes on Idaho State Highway 33, both correlating to higher ski area visitation. Considering that the Peaked lift was only a single component of the selected alternative, it is unlikely that on its own the planned Peaked Chairlift would have any contributions to increased traffic in the area. There are no changed conditions that would result in transportation impacts.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

The 2021 modifications to project components that could impact the determination for traffic resources would be limited to the chairlift configuration; however, as the capacity would not be altered under the currently planned configuration, there would not be changes to visitation from what was previously analyzed. As the current plans would not alter the resort’s capacity beyond what was previously analyzed, it is anticipated that the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

**Vegetation**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact vegetation resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS analyzed the impacts to vegetation related to the Peaked lift through its review of Alternative 4. The 1994 EIS disclosed that glading and overstory removal would occur for the development of new lifts and runs on Peaked Mountain. The 1994 EIS went on to state that the successional stage of the vegetation community within the cleared areas would be set back to early stages and retained at these early successional stages for the life of the resort. Development within the Peaked Mountain conifer stand was limited to the northern edge to minimize effects to vegetation. At the time of the analysis, the disturbance associated with Alternative 4 (for all projects, not just those on Peaked Mountain) was estimated as follows:

**Table-2:  
Estimated Acres of Overstory Tree Removal & Grading by Community Type**

<b>Overstory Tree Removal Vegetative Community</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (acres of disturbance)</b>
Aspen Woodlands	23.0
Seedling/Sapling-Mature	24.6
Mature	73.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76.2</b>
<b>Grading Vegetative Community</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (acres of disturbance)</b>
Grassland (Xeric/Mesic)	25.4
Riparian	2.3
Alpine Fell-fields	0.0
Shrublands	7.0
Aspen Woodlands	11.3
Seedling/Sapling	31.6
Mature Timber	20.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>98.1</b>

At the time of the environmental review, the 1994 EIS stated, “There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant Species on the Targhee National Forest. However, there are several species with “candidate” status that could eventually be listed. There are many sensitive species on the Region 4 Sensitive Species List that could occur in the permit area since the habitat does exist for these.” (1994 EIS, p. III-16). The entirety of the proposed development area was surveyed for sensitive species and none were located.

Another field survey was conducted in 2002 for the proposed ski Trail 6A in the 2004 EA. Two sensitive plant species that occur within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest were identified as being potentially capable of occupying the project area: Green spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes-ramosum*) and Payson’s bladderpod (*Lesquerella paysonii*). Neither of these species were found during the 2002 field survey. The 2004 EA also identified Ute ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), a threatened species, as potentially occurring within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. The 2004 EA determined that the habitat for Ute ladies-tresses does not exist within the proposed action area and no Ute ladies’-tresses were observed during the 2002 survey.

Due to the dynamic nature of plant species listings an updated biological report was referenced to assess the most up to date inhabitants of the project area. In 2013 a Biological Assessment (Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate Plant Species) and Biological Evaluation (Forest Service Sensitive Plant Species) was prepared for the *Grand Targhee Resort Summer Trails Project* (2013 BA/BE). This report analyzed the effects of proposed downhill mountain biking, hiking, multi-use trails, and horseback riding trails. While the projects analyzed in this report differ from the Peaked lift as currently proposed, a portion of the trails were on Peaked Mountain and could provide an updated scope of the changed conditions.

The 2013 BA/BE determined that Whitebark Pine were the only federally listed threatened or endangered species that occupied the project area, but determined that the project would have no effect to the species, as they could be avoided. The following support for the determination was provided, “there are no suspected direct, indirect or cumulative effects expected to the long-term persistence of Whitebark Pine in the area. Trail use and construction is not an identified threat to the species. The Caribou-Targhee Streamlining Team concurred with a “**No Effect**” determination for the Candidate species; this also implies a “No Impact” determination as a Forest Service Sensitive species.” (2013 BA/BE, p. 14). The report went on to state that both GTR and Forest service have been invested in protecting this species and would designate trees of this species to be left in place. Whitebark Pine is still the only federally listed threatened or endangered plant species known to occur in the project area.

In terms of Forest Service Sensitive species the 2013 BA/BE also determined that there was one herbaceous sensitive plant species, Payson’s bladderpod (*Lesquerella paysonii*) which is known to occur in the project analysis area; and one sensitive plant, sweet-flowered rock jasmine (*Androsace chamaejasme* var. *carinata*) that has suitable habitat in the project area, but no known occurrences. For both of the sensitive species a determination of, “**may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend toward Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species**” was reached (2013 BA/BE, p. 15). This decision was made because suitable habitat for the species occurred within the permitted area and trails could potentially have a direct and indirect impact on the species habitat, thus a “No Impact” determination would not be appropriate; however due to the area and the large extend of potential suitable habitat that would not be impacted the determination was made.

The following Forest Service Sensitive Plant Species were also analyzed in the 2013 BA/BE and received a determination of No Impact: Pink agoseris (*Agoseris lackschewitzii*), Meadow milkvetch (*Astragalus diversifolius*), Payson's milkvetch (*Astragalus paysonii*), Dainty moonwort (*Botrychium crenulatum*), Centennial rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus parryi* ssp. *montanus*), Welsh rockcress draba (*Draba globosa* [*D. densifolia* var. *apiculate*]), Marsh's Bluegrass (*Poa abbreviata* ssp. *marshii*), Salmon twin bladderpod (*Physaria didymocarpa* var. *lyrata*), Alkali primrose (*Primula alcalina*).

### **Currently Proposed Vegetation Clearing**

Beyond specifying a total of 12 trails (with centerlines) and a detachable quad chairlift, the 1994 EIS did not analyze or disclose the acreage of associated vegetation impacts. In the 2016 MDP, mountain planners reassessed the 1994 EIS in conjunction with current plans to develop Peaked Mountain to re-create, or approximate, the trail acreages that were approved in the 1994 ROD. This exercise revealed that approximately 98 acres of trails were approved.

The 2007 planning exercises for the Peaked lift and trails resulted in a slightly modified plan for development of Peaked Mountain (compared to that which was originally analyzed in the 1994 Final EIS and depicted in 1995 MDP); however, it borrowed from the basic trail layout. The resulting impacts to vegetation from construction of the Peaked lift and trail pod, based on new planning, were quantified to be substantially less than envisioned in the 1994 ROD—approximately 57 acres. GTR constructed most of the Peaked trails in 2008, which have complemented the Snow Cat skiing operation since that time.

Incremental project implementation has occurred since the Peaked lift was last analyzed. While much of the area has already been cleared for the existing Peaked ski trails constructed in 2008, a final survey for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species should be conducted immediately prior to construction to identify any species that might be potentially impacted and determine necessary mitigation measures as maybe warranted.

### ***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

The 2021 modifications to project components would result in slight changes to the project footprint; however, there would be no difference in vegetation clearing from what was previously approved. Therefore, this determination of 2021 conditions will focus on threatened and endangered and sensitive plant species rather than the removal of overstory vegetation. Accordingly, the 2013 BA/BE determination that the project would have no effect to Whitebark Pine would still stand.

In terms of Forest Service Sensitive species, 2013 BA/BE determinations would also remain relevant. Changes to power and communication alignments could result in impacts occurring in different areas, but the findings related to the overall Peaked Mountain area and species that could be affected would remain applicable. It is possible that these changes in alignment specifically could impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend toward Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Additionally, the currently proposed power alignment is approximately 1,000 feet shorter and there would be essentially no disturbance width as trenching would not be required. It is unlikely that the project as currently configured, would be capable of impacting more plant species than was described in the previous approvals. Further, there are no changes to the proposed project that would result in the broader area's abundance of potential suitable habitat being compromised.

For these reasons, it does not appear that there is potential to impact Forest Service Sensitive species beyond what was previously analyzed. Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

### **Visuals**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact visual resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

#### ***Determination:***

Visual resources were analyzed in the 1994 EIS, which specifically mentions the visibility of the Peaked Mountain developments from certain important viewpoints. In particular, the 1994 EIS states that the Peaked lift would be visible from inside the Jedidiah Smith Wilderness (in particular the trailless area to the south known as the Badlands). It was disclosed that as portions of the runs or lift lines pass through more dense stands of timber at the mid or lower slopes it would be more difficult to meet VQO's of *Retention* or *Partial Retention*. It was also noted that even if slightly visible, very few people use this portion of the Wilderness due to its rugged terrain and limited access. The 1994 EIS determined that the development of runs and lifts would not be visible from the Grand Teton National Park as long as top lift terminals were not situated directly on top of the ridge. Mitigation measures were designed for the 1994 EIS to minimize effects of the proposed projects in order to achieve VQOs of *Retention* and *Partial Retention*.

The 2004 EA did not carry visual resources forward for analysis and no additional studies were completed. Since these previous analyses the developed nature of the ski area has incrementally increased, likely making the visual effects of the Peaked lift less than were originally analyzed. There are no changed conditions that would result in visual impacts that were not disclosed in prior analyses.

#### ***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

There are minor differences associated with the infrastructure for different types of lifts. For example, the particular infrastructure associated with the six-person lift currently planned for Peaked includes towers that are generally several inches wider at the base than other products (these lift towers are wider at the base and taper up). Tower height is not affected by the type of lift (six-person compared to quad).

The chairs on the lift line would be wider; however, there would also be less chairs hung on the line, which will be less visually obtrusive than the width of the chairs themselves. Infrastructure that will be installed at either terminal location will follow color and reflectivity guidelines, and meet VQOs for the project area. This information will be reviewed during a Forest Service design review process prior to the second construction season and once final lift engineering is completed. We anticipate the new Peaked lift will employ the same color and materials pallet that was reviewed, approved, and used for our recent installation of the Blackfoot lift.

As it relates to the maintenance and storage facility planned at the bottom terminal, it appears that the minor differences in the infrastructure would not result in measurable impacts to visual resources. Six-person lifts require 100 square feet of storage per chair and quads require 75 square feet of storage per chair; however, the difference in storage size is the same as the percentage at which the number of chairs would be reduced to maintain a capacity of 2,000 pph with a six-person configuration. Therefore, the size of storage facility is not affected by whether or not the lift is configured as a six-person system or a quad. There is no difference in lift shacks for either lift configuration. Lift shacks simply provide an indoor

space for the operator and the lift's control systems. Additionally, the planned ski patrol facility is consistent with the previous approval in terms of size and scale.

As has been discussed in this document, the power and communication lines would result in a modified project footprint from that which was previously analyzed. While different in terms of location, disturbance associated with these project components would be negligible as it relates to visual resources. Due to the low impact associated with "plowing in" the power and communication lines there would be minimal disturbance as trenching would not be required. Further, GTR would be required to revegetate all disturbed ground. As it relates to the top terminal site, GTR will be required to utilize onsite soil, sod, and other native material to the greatest extent possible to create the most natural appearance and ensure the success of revegetation. GTR will import material (topsoil) if determined necessary by the Forest Service administrator.

In summary, there are minor modifications associated with the infrastructure currently planned for the Peaked lift compared to what was previously approved. There would also be minor changes to the project footprint. For reasons described in the previous paragraphs, these changes would not result in visual impacts beyond those previously disclosed. VQOs of *Retention* and *Partial Retention* would be achieved under currently proposed plans and the overall scenic character of project area from relevant viewpoints would not be altered. Strict adherence to revegetation design criteria is anticipated to be helpful in addressing the visual impacts associated with project disturbance and has been bolstered with new techniques since the time of previous approval.

### **Watershed**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact water resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

#### ***Determination:***

Both water quantity and quality were analyzed in the 1994 EIS. In terms of water quality, the 1994 EIS discloses that there is a potential for an increase in sediment within water sources because of the change in ground cover associated with all alternatives. Also included is the disclosure of lift terminals within Papoose Creek, which was determined to be allowable following strict adherence to mitigation measures. The Peaked lift would include one of these terminals, and will require updated mitigation measures prior to implementation to ensure that potential impacts are within what has previously been analyzed. The majority of the potential water quality impacts, which were related to the Peaked Mountain portion of the project analyzed in 1994, were in regard to increased sediment production from mechanical disturbances.

In terms of water quantity, the 1994 EIS disclosed that all alternatives would be capable of changing the local hydrology in areas that were paved or made impervious to percolation. As it relates to the Peaked lift this would include areas to be cleared of trees. It was disclosed that the potential increase in run-off could have the potential to increase streamflow and degrade stream channel stability during storm events. It was disclosed that Alternative 4 could potentially have low to moderate impact to channel stability.

The 2004 EA reviewed the impacts disclosed in the 1994 EIS confirming the locations and potential impacts to affected waterways. However, the 2004 EA did not carry any water related issues forward for analysis.

Provided that the Peaked Mountain area already is heavily used for recreation and has experienced mechanical disturbances in the past when trail clearing was completed in 2008, many of the disclosed

impacts related to water quality in the 1994 EIS are negated. Furthermore, the Peaked lift's associated infrastructure would also be located in previously disturbed areas, or areas to be disturbed as a result of lift construction, minimizing the potential for sedimentation beyond what was previously analyzed. There are no changed conditions that would result in impacts to water resources beyond those disclosed in prior analysis. Additionally, there is no increase in water usage associated with the Peaked lift and associated infrastructure which would extend beyond GTR's existing capacity to support these facilities.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR. Further, there are no changes in watershed resource conditions that have been identified.

**Wetlands**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact wetland resources beyond what was previously analyzed?*

***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS analyzed wetlands and identified a number of wetlands within the planning area. Of primary concern in this analysis were, "wetlands in greatest risk of potentially being impacted by expansion activities in Mill Creek, Rick's Basin, and the vicinity of base facilities" (1994 EIS, p. III-11). As disclosed in the environmental consequences section of the 1994 EIS, "Parking lots, ski runs, buildings, and facilities adjacent to wetlands may negatively affect their functioning through possible contamination, or diverting water into or away from these areas" and that, "mitigation measures such as design, location, or avoidance could mitigate most of these effects." Furthermore, the EIS stated that Alternative 4, in which the Peaked lift was analyzed, would have no direct impacts to wetlands and that only the buildings and sewage lagoons, parking lots, ski runs, and summer use components of the selected alternative would have indirect effects to wetlands (1994 EIS, p. IV-21). The Peaked lift is never explicitly mentioned as having any relation to wetlands impacts, direct or indirect.

The 2004 EA dismissed wetlands from detailed analysis stating that, "no jurisdictional wetlands occur in the project area" and determined that impacts to hydrology associated with the construction of ski Trail 6A would be minimal (2004 EA, p. 8). There are no changed conditions that would result in wetland impacts that were not disclosed under prior analyses.

Provided that the human use and machinery associated with the Snow Cat skiing operation is present in the Peaked Mountain area, it is unlikely that there are any changed conditions that would result in impacts that to wetlands that were not disclosed under prior analyses.

As the top and bottom terminal final site/grading plans are prepared for Forest Service review and approval, any necessary drainage or water management requirements for the site will be addressed.

***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR. Further, there are no changes in wetland resource conditions that have been identified.

## **Wildlife**

*Does the Peaked lift as currently proposed have potential to adversely impact wildlife beyond what was previously analyzed?*

### ***Determination:***

The 1994 EIS analyzed effects to Threatened and Endangered species, and through the FEIS Appeals Resolution process, it was required that a monitoring program assessing effects of human activity on wildlife be implemented at GTR. Since this decision, GTR and the Forest Service have been monitoring wildlife in the permit area, including Peaked Mountain. In concurrence with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7, the Biological Assessment (BA) prepared for the 1994 EIS was submitted to the Wyoming chapter of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In a letter dated August 26, 1994, USFWS concurred with the determination from the BA that the project would "not likely to affect" threatened or endangered species. The letter from USFWS went on to state that, "Based on the biological information available at this time, actual construction of the expanded facilities itself is not expected to have adverse effects on listed or candidate species in the project area, nor does it appear to constitute an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources." (Refer to the attached letter for more detail).

In 2003, the Teton Basin Ranger District developed a new BA to address potential effects to federally listed threatened and endangered species, and a Biological Evaluation (BE) to address potential impacts to Forest Service Region 4 sensitive species, for the construction of Ski Run 6A. Both the BA and BE disclosed recent monitoring results, and the BE analyzed impacts to species added to the sensitive species list since the previous analysis was conducted. The BA and BE found that no adverse effects to any of these species would occur from the construction of Ski Run 6A.

Both the 1994 EIS and the 2004 EA determined that there would be no adverse impacts to wildlife (threatened, endangered, or sensitive) warranting the rejection of projects on Peaked Mountain. These reports made determinations for specific listed species; however, due to the dynamic nature of these species and their habitats, more updated analysis has been used to make species determinations for the installation and operation of Peaked Lift (as currently proposed).

During review of the Peaked project in the 2017 SIR, an updated BA was prepared. This document tiered to the 1994 and 2004 analyses and incorporated these documents by reference. The following paragraphs summarize the findings of the 2017, which has been concurred upon by the USFWS.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

A BA was prepared in 2012 for the Grand Targhee Resort Blackfoot Lift Realignment Project (2012 BA). This BA analyzed the impacts to federally threatened and endangered species from the installation of a ski lift. The species analyzed included: grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), wolverine (*Gula gulo*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), and greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). The potential effects to federally listed species from the construction and operation of the proposed Peaked Lift would be very similar to the effects identified in the 2012 BA for the Blackfoot Lift.

In 2014, a BA was prepared for the Grand Targhee Resort Summer Trails Project (2014 BA). The 2014 BA analyzed the potential effects of constructing and utilizing downhill mountain biking, hiking, multi-use, and horseback riding trails would have on federally listed wildlife species. The species analyzed included: grizzly bear, Canada lynx, wolverine, greater sage-grouse, and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). While the project analyzed in the 2014 BA differs from the Peaked Lift as currently

proposed, many of the wildlife determinations made during this assessment are applicable throughout GTR's permit area.

### *Grizzly Bear*

The 2014 BA for the Grand Targhee Resort Summer Trails Project provided a determination of *may affect, not likely to adversely affect* grizzly bear in the project area, which was the same determination made in the 1994 EIS. The BA noted a significant change from the 1994 EIS, which was the increase in the grizzly bear population in the area, but goes on to say that the direct and indirect effects of the proposed project would be insignificant and short-term. The BA also stated that the proposed project would "not significantly add to the cumulative effects on grizzly bear or their habitat in the long-term."

The 2012 BA for the Grand Targhee Resort Blackfoot Lift Realignment Project made the same determination as the 2014 BA for almost identical reasons. Additionally, the 2012 BA stated that an incident with grizzly bears is discountable because the lift would only be in use until approximately April 15<sup>th</sup>, missing most of the bear's active season.

For the most part, it is reasonable to conclude that the Peaked Lift, as proposed, would have similar effects to grizzly bears as documented in the 2012 BA and the 2014 BA. The construction, maintenance, and operation of the proposed Peaked Lift could result in grizzly bear habitat displacement and human-bear conflicts. Construction of Peaked Lift is likely to occur from July through December. Construction and maintenance activities would generate noise and overall human disturbance that could cause individual grizzly bears (during the active season) to avoid suitable habitat within close proximity to the activities. After construction of Peaked Lift is complete, the new lift would result in an increase in use on Peaked Mountain (the southern and southeastern ends of the ski boundary) during the ski season (in comparison to the current Snow Cat operation). The increase in use and disturbance could result in individual grizzly bears avoiding habitat in the immediate vicinity of the southern and southeastern ends of the ski boundary. Although most grizzly bears are likely to avoid the Peaked Lift area when the lift is in operation, there is always the chance of a human-grizzly encounter due to attractants (e.g., garbage) in the area. The likelihood of habitat displacement and human-bear conflicts from the operation of Peaked Lift is low, however, since Peaked Lift would only be in use until sometime mid-April and therefore miss the majority of the bear's active season, (as also stated in the 2012 BA for the Blackfoot Lift).

In conclusion, the Peaked Lift, as proposed, would extend the area of influence for winter recreation at Grand Targhee Ski Resort farther south and southeast compared to the current Snow Cat operation. However, since the lift would be constructed in an area that is already disturbed, the lift would be active until about mid-April (missing the majority of the bear's active season), and there is abundant secure habitat near the Grand Targhee Ski Resort, a *May Affect, but not Likely to Adversely Affect* determination is made for the Peaked Lift, as proposed.

### *Canada Lynx*

The Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction amendment is new direction since the 1994 decision. The relative standards and guidelines from that amendment have been addressed numerous times for other projects at the resort. The 2014 BA analyzed the Canada lynx in the context of the proposed summer trails, determining that the project would have a *May Affect, not Likely to Adversely Affect* on Canada lynx. The rationale behind this decision was that the new trails would be confined within the resort boundary that is already disturbed and not occur on any ridge lines. The document went on to state that the areas surrounding the project (e.g., Jedediah Smith Wilderness and roadless areas) provide higher

quality habitat. The document also stated that the effects of the project to lynx and their habitat should be minor due to the available habitat within the Teton Creek and Badger Creek Lynx Analysis Units (LAU) and the adherence to NRLMD objectives, standards, and guidelines.

As it relates to chairlift installation, the 2012 BA provided a determination of *May Affect, not Likely to Adversely Affect* Canada lynx in the project area. The 2012 BA noted that new disturbance would be minimal when compared to the large area available to Canada lynx in the Teton Range (2012 BA, p. 9). The report went on to state that, "While the construction of the project and the use of the lift when completed may affect lynx in the area due to disturbance, it is not likely to result in adverse effects. The low densities of lynx in the area and the existence of an established disturbance area make the chances of displacing any lynx discountable, and the abundant secure, high quality habitat in the area would make the effects to any displaced lynx unmeasurable and insignificant." (2012 BA, p. 9). The Peaked Lift, as proposed, would occur within the boundaries of the Teton Creek LAU. Although the proposed lift would not occur in suitable habitat, suitable habitat would occur immediately adjacent to the structure. As a result, Canada lynx have the potential to inhabit the area.

Construction of Peaked Lift is likely to occur from July through December, which would create noise and overall disturbance that could displace Canada lynx from utilizing suitable habitat in the immediate vicinity of the activities during the period of active construction. This construction has the potential to impact some individuals but will not impact the population within the LAU due to the amount of secure, quality habitat near the project area ( e.g., Jedediah Smith Wilderness, roadless areas, etc.).

By switching from a Snow Cat operation to a lift operation (with the potential of 2,000 pph) there will be an increase in noise and human presence on Peaked Mountain (the southern and southeastern boundaries of the Grand Targhee Ski Resort). This increase in disturbance could affect individual lynx habitat use in close proximity to the southern and southeastern boundaries of the resort. Although there is the potential to further displace some individuals, the Peaked Lift, as proposed, is not expected to have any detectable or measurable impacts on the population within the LAU due to the amount of abundant secure, high quality habitat (e.g., Jedediah Smith Wilderness) nearby.

Similar to the 2012 BA and 2014 BA, the determination for the Peaked Lift, as proposed, is a *May Affect, not Likely to Adversely Affect* the Canada lynx within the Teton Creek LAU. Also, like the 2012 BA, the rationale for the determination is that the area within and around the proposed lift is already disturbed and experiences heavy human use, and there is an abundance of high secure habitat near the Grand Targhee Ski Resort. Therefore, the likelihood of displacing any lynx is discountable, and the abundant secure, high quality habitat in the area would make the effects to any displaced lynx unmeasurable and insignificant.

#### *Wolverine*

The wolverine is currently proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act as threatened, but was analyzed in the 2012 BA as a candidate species that could potentially be listed during the lifetime of the project. The 2012 BA determined that, "While the construction of the project and the use of the lift when completed may affect wolverines in the area due to disturbance, it is not likely to result in adverse effects." (2012 BA, p. 13). The existence of an established disturbance area makes the chances of displacing any wolverine discountable and the abundant secure, high quality habitat adjacent to GTR's permit area would make the effects of any displacement too small to measure and insignificant. (2012 BA, p. 13).

Construction and maintenance of Peaked Lift would create noise and overall disturbance that would likely displace wolverines from utilizing habitat in close proximity to the activities. The construction and maintenance activities have the potential to impact some individuals but will not impact the population due to the amount of secure, quality habitat in the vicinity of the project area (e.g., Jedediah Smith Wilderness).

Installing the Peaked Lift, as proposed, and consequently switching from a Snow Cat operation to a lift operation (with the potential of 2,000 pph) would result in an increase in noise and human presence on the southern and southeastern boundaries of the Grand Targhee Ski Resort. The increase in use and disturbance could make individual wolverines more likely to avoid habitat in the immediate vicinity of the southern and southeastern ends of the ski boundary (compared to the current Snow Cat operation). Although there is the potential to further displace some individuals, the Peaked Lift, as proposed, is not expected to have any detectable or measurable population impacts due to the amount of abundant secure, high quality habitat (e.g., Jedediah Smith Wilderness) nearby (particularly to the east).

Similar to the 2012 BA, the determination for the Peaked Lift, as proposed, is a *May Affect, not Likely to Adversely Affect* the wolverine. Also like the 2012 BA, the rationale for the determination is that the area within and around the proposed lift (especially to the south and north) is already disturbed and experiences heavy human use, and there is an abundant of high quality, secure habitat close to the Grand Targhee Ski Resort.

#### *Yellow-Billed Cuckoo*

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo became listed as threatened in October of 2014 and was addressed in the 2014 BA. However, it was not brought forward for further analysis in the document, since habitat for the species was not present in the project area or on the Teton Basin Ranger District. Therefore, the Peaked lift is not anticipated to impact the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

#### *Additional Species*

There have been no other species known or with potential to occupy the project area added to the threatened and endangered species list since analysis was completed in 2014.

### **Region 4 Sensitive Species**

Forest Service Region 4 sensitive species were analyzed in both the 1994 EIS and the 2004 EA. Determinations for sensitive species for the proposed Peaked Lift, however, relied upon a more updated BE (2013 *Grand Targhee Resort Summer Trails Biological Evaluation*) and current analysis.

The 2013 BE determined that the proposed project would have no impact on the following Region 4 sensitive species: northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), flammulated owl (*Psiloscops flammeolus*), boreal owl (*Aegolius funereus*), great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*), trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), common loon (*Gavia immer*), harlequin duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*), spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), fisher (*Martes pennanti*), wolverine, three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*), greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), and boreal toad (*Bufo boreas*). As mentioned above, the proposed projects that were analyzed in this evaluation included a variety of downhill mountain biking, hiking, multi-use trails, and horseback riding trails in areas including Peaked Mountain.

The construction and operation of the Peaked Lift, as proposed, would have no impact on the trumpeter swan, common loon, harlequin duck, spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, pygmy rabbit, bald eagle, boreal toad, and flammulated owl, due to the fact that suitable habitat is not present in the project area for these species.

#### *Fisher*

Habitat with some potential to support fishers occurs within 0.5 mile to the west of the proposed lower lift terminal, though the likelihood of a fisher in the area is low. This is because the closest report of a fisher is about 24 miles away on the north side of the Big Hole Mountains, and there are only a few documented fisher on the Targhee Forest. There are no direct impacts expected to fisher, since no suitable habitat would be altered from the construction of the lift. Noise and disturbance resulting from construction and maintenance activities could impact fisher habitat use (if they were to occur) near the southern terminal during periods of active construction and maintenance. Also, the expected increase in winter recreational use could also alter fisher habitat use in close proximity the southern terminal. However, the aforementioned effects have the potential to impact some individuals but would not be expected to have any impact on populations. This is due to the facts that abundant more high quality, contiguous habitat (due to less disturbance) exists to the west of the proposed lift, and the fisher population within the entire Targhee Forest is thought to be very low (due to very few historical detections). Therefore, constructing and operating the Peaked Lift, as proposed, *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species.*

#### *Gray Wolf*

The gray wolf was analyzed in both the 2012 BA and the 2014 BA. Both of these documents noted that the wolf population had exceeded its recovery goals since 2002. The 2012 BA determined that the Blackfoot Realignment would not be expected to jeopardize the continued existence of the experimental population because of the following factors: the revised lift line would be within the permitted area; the project would not be expected to impact deer, elk or moose, the predominant prey species for the wolf; the proximity of abundant secure habitat for potentially displaced wolves; and the area's wolf population appearing to be steady with detections across the Teton Range (2012 BA, p. 14). The 2014 BA made the same determination for similar reasons.

Potential impacts to gray wolves from the construction, maintenance, and operation of the proposed Peaked Lift include the loss of habitat and habitat displacement. The construction of Peaked Lift would result in approximately 3.7 acres of ground disturbance. This permanent direct loss of habitat is not expected to have any measurable impact on wolf populations or their prey base, since the area encompassing the proposed lift has already been disturbed and experiences heavy recreational use. Construction and maintenance of the lift would create noise and overall disturbance that would extend beyond the area of construction/maintenance. This could result in individual wolves and their prey avoiding the secure habitat in closest proximity to the proposed lift (the habitat to the east, northeast, and southeast of the top terminal and to the west of the lower terminal) during periods of construction and maintenance. When in use, the Peaked Lift would result in more winter recreation use on Peaked Mountain than currently provided by the existing Snow Cat operation. This increased recreation could displace some individual wolves that currently utilize the secure habitat closest to the proposed lift site (during periods of winter use). Both the construction activities and increased winter use may displace some individual wolves, but will not have any impacts on the overall population due to the abundant secure habitat near the Grand Targhee Ski Resort. As a result, the Peaked Lift, as proposed, *May Impact*

*Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species.*

#### *Bighorn Sheep*

The project area and greater vicinity function as spring, summer, and fall bighorn sheep habitat. Due to the amount of current disturbance in the area of the proposed Peaked Lift, the location currently functions as marginal bighorn sheep habitat. Construction and maintenance activities (during the duration of the activities), and the overall increase in recreation from switching from a Snow Cat operation to a lift operation, could further displace bighorn sheep that utilize habitat surrounding the Grand Targhee Ski Resort. Due to the amount of suitable habitat in the greater vicinity of the resort, constructing and operating the Peaked Lift, as proposed, *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species.*

#### *Northern Goshawk, Boreal Owl, Great Gray Owl, and Three-toed Woodpecker*

The area in which the Peaked Lift would be constructed does not function as suitable nesting habitat for these species. Habitat that could potentially serve as nesting habitat does occur within 0.5 mile to the west of the proposed bottom terminal, though the habitat adjacent to the site is marginal. This is due to the facts that habitat characteristics adjacent to the proposed southern terminal are not ideal, and disturbance levels in and around the site are at their highest during the times in which these species are establishing their nest sites.

Construction and maintenance activities have the potential to disturb nesting and foraging activities. Specifically, construction/maintenance activities could alter the foraging behavior of some individuals, but would not impact populations due to the amount of foraging habitat within two miles of the project area. Since the area in close proximity to the proposed bottom terminal does not function as the highest quality nesting habitat, and the mitigations measures listed below for peregrine falcons would be implemented, impacts are not expected to nesting northern goshawks, boreal owls, great grays owls, and three-toed woodpeckers. Further, almost all tree removal activities in the project area have previously occurred for the existing snowcat operation and remaining tree removal associated with lift installation would be minor.

Switching from a Snow Cat operation to a lift operation on Peaked Mountain would result in an increase in winter recreation use in the area (up to 2,000 pph). This increase in use has the potential to impact foraging birds. However, since Peaked Mountain already receives a high amount of use, and there is abundant habitat to the west of the proposed bottom terminal, the increase in use from switching to a lift operation may impact some individuals but would not be expected to impact populations.

Due to the abundant amount of higher quality nesting and foraging habitat to the west of the bottom terminal, constructing and operating the Peaked Lift, as proposed, *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species.*

#### *Peregrine Falcon*

Due to the degree of public concern, the 2004 EA specifically analyzed impacts to peregrine falcons. Concerns were in regard to disturbance in the form of construction and maintenance, impacts by hikers and other recreationalists during summer months, and impacts to prey availability. The 2004 EA outlined the existing conditions and habitat of peregrine falcons within Caribou Targhee National Forest, which is

noted as providing important nesting and hunting habitats. Within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Teton Canyon and the southwestern side of Peaked Mountain (outside the permit area) were analyzed as nest areas relevant to the proposed Ski Run 6A. As disclosed in the 2004 EA, the BE and the survey data show that there is a natural variability in peregrine use of Teton Canyon. Falcons have been observed on both sides of the canyon and in different areas. They have successfully fledged in years when Snow Cat skiing has taken place on Peaked Mountain and have been absent in years where no activity has taken place on Peaked Mountain. The 2004 EA determined that, "potential impacts to peregrine falcons from the use of Ski Run 6A are anticipated to be minimal due to the current proximity of the eyries to ongoing activities at GTR and in Teton Canyon" and that, "Existing trails within the permit area are not located in the vicinity of peregrine nesting locations and summer use of Peaked Mountain is not expected to increase as a result of the construction of Ski Run 6A" (2004 EA, p. 20). It should also be noted that the 2004 EA stated that potential impacts from construction of ski Trail 6A would be mitigated by timing the construction to occur outside of the sensitive time period for peregrines.

Construction of the Peaked Lift, as proposed, is planned from July through December. The approximate distance between the nearest known nest site and the proposed Peaked Lift is around 0.5 miles. In order to prevent disturbance to nesting peregrine falcons, the following mitigations would be implemented:

- Pre-disturbance surveys would occur in suitable habitat to verify the presence/absence of nesting falcons if construction activities (that could disturb nesting falcons to the point of nest failures) are planned before July 31.
- Construction related activities ( e.g. the use of a helicopter) that could disturb nesting peregrine falcons to the point of a nest failure would not occur until after July 31.

There is the potential that peregrine falcons would alter foraging behavior as a result of construction activities during the periods of active construction. However, this potential alteration of foraging behavior would not have any measurable impacts on the population since:

- there is abundant foraging habitat within and around the Teton Canyon Area,
- Teton Canyon experiences heavy recreation during the summer months ( dispersed camping, hiking, etc.), and the birds have still successfully fledged young multiple years, and
- peregrine falcons can travel great distances to hunt (most hunt within 9 miles, but distances of 15 miles or more have been recorded) (Luensmann 2010).

Switching from a Snow Cat operation to a lift operation on Peaked Mountain would result in an increase in winter recreation use in the area (up to 2,000 pph). There is the potential that this increase in recreation could disturb the nesting peregrine falcons in Teton Canyon when the Apostles cliff area nest site is used. In order to prevent the increased winter recreational use from impacting nesting success, the nest site would continue to be monitored on an annual basis. If the increase in winter use appears to be disturbing nesting falcons, and breeding success could be altered, the following mitigation would be implemented:

- Recreation activities in the vicinity of the cliff sites on Peaked Mountain shall be restricted if necessary to prevent disturbance to nesting peregrine falcons as early as March 15. For example, runs near the nest site could be closed early, or grooming could be stopped to ensure reproductive success of the nesting peregrine falcons.

Altering the timing of construction activities and potentially restricting winter recreation activities adequately addresses impact concerns to nesting peregrine falcons from the project. As a result, the Peaked Lift, as proposed, *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species*.

The abovementioned mitigations ensures that the project is consistent with the guideline stated in the 1997 Revised Forest Plan for the Targhee National Forest (Page 111-20), which states the following:

- For proposed projects within two miles of known falcon nests consider such items as 1) human activities (aircraft, ground and water transportation, high noise levels, and permanent facilities) which could cause disturbance to nesting pairs and young during the nesting period March 15 to July 31, 2) activities or habitat alterations which could adversely affect prey availability (G).

#### *Additional Species*

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 prohibits the take of protected migratory bird species and is intended to ensure the sustainability of these populations; therefore, migratory bird species are considered here. As the majority of tree removal activities in the project area have previously occurred for the existing snowcat operation and remaining tree removal associated with lift installation would be minor, it will be possible to keep tree removal activities to outside of the nesting season, May 1 – July 15. Tree removal will be completed either prior to the start of nesting season (over the snow) or afterwards. Where possible, trees with cavities should be retained for future nesting sites. As a result, it is anticipated that this project would have minimal to no impact on nesting migratory birds.

There are no additional R4 sensitive species warranting analysis, as those analyzed in the 2013 BE reflect the most current sensitive species that could potentially occupy the project area.

#### ***Determination - 2021 conditions:***

Including the 2021 modifications to project components, the currently proposed project remains consistent with the determination made in 2017 SIR.

It is important to note that since the 2017 SIR, wolverine have not been listed as threatened, and are currently considered a sensitive species. Therefore, a determination of *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species* would be more appropriate than *May Affect, not Likely to Adversely Affect*. This determination remains appropriate as wolverine activity has been observed in the project area over the past two years. Additionally, the greater sage-grouse is no longer listed and should be considered as a sensitive species as well. It has been determined that greater sage-grouse are not present within the project area and no impact is anticipated for this species.

Since the time of the 2017 SIR, winter ram habitat has been mapped in the Peaked area. The 2017 SIR only included discussion spring, summer, and fall habitats; however, a determination *May Impact Individuals or Habitat, But Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species* remains appropriate for bighorn sheep.

Lastly, since the time of the 2017 SIR, the Monarch butterfly has been added to the Region 4 sensitive species list. It has been determined that here is no breeding habitat in the area of construction and there will be no impacts to this species.

There are no other changes in wildlife species listings that would warrant the consideration of additional species in this analysis.

### **SUMMARY FINDING**

Based on my review, as documented in this addendum to the 2017 SIR, and through consultation with my staff, I have concluded that the previously approved/modified projects are within the scope and range of effects considered, documented and disclosed within the previous NEPA documents. The environmental effects related to constructing a chairlift with associated infrastructure on Peaked Mountain and skier services facilities are either consistent with, or less than, the overall amount and intensity of those disclosed and approved in previous documentation. Therefore, the changes between the projects approved in the 1994 ROD and 2004 DN/FONSI, and those planned to be implemented are not significant in nature, and I am not requiring that any corrections, revisions, or supplements to the previous analysis be prepared. Therefore, no further analysis under NEPA is necessary.

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Affirmed by:  
MEL BOLLING  
Forest Supervisor  
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

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Date