



July 1, 2023

Re: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort Recreation Enhancements Project - 2023

Location: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Teton County, Wyoming. The resort is located adjacent to Teton Village, Wyoming.

Dear Interested Public:

Early in 2022, Bridger-Teton National Forest (Bridger-Teton) formally accepted a revised mountain master development plan (development plan) submitted by Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (JHMR). This was the seventh revision of the development plan since the original submitted in 1963. In June 2023, Bridger-Teton accepted an amendment to the 2022 development plan. JHMR requested that the Bridger-Teton initiate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process necessary to potentially authorize a group of projects slated for implementation within the next six years. Those projects constitute the proposed action addressed in this scoping letter. We anticipate preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for this project. This letter invites public comment on the proposal and the scope of the EA. We invite you to inform us of any concerns you may have about these projects and their potential environmental impacts.

The proposed action includes projects in the following categories:

- Lift replacement.
- Ski run, traverse, and terrain park construction and modification.
- Construction and modification of visitor service facilities.
- Development of new summer recreation opportunities.
- Fuels reduction at the wildland-urban interface.
- Avalanche control.

All proposed projects are within the special use permit boundary at JHMR. See “Proposed Action” below for detailed project descriptions.

Our acceptance of JHMR’s development plan and amendment does not pre-dispose Bridger-Teton to final approval of these projects. Approval of the projects requires analysis of environmental effects as required by NEPA, which is initiated by this scoping and comment outreach, and determination of consistency with the Bridger-Teton Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and pertinent laws and regulations.

Based on the analysis in the EA, I will decide whether, and with what conditions, to authorize any or all of the proposed projects. My decision will be documented in a Decision Notice. In accordance with the Forest Service’s pre-decisional objection process (36 CFR 218), I will issue a public draft of the Decision Notice prior to signing. This will allow us to work with the public to resolve any objections to my decision before it is finalized. I anticipate release of the draft Decision Notice in Fall 2023.

This opportunity to comment meets both NEPA’s scoping requirement and the Forest Service’s notice and comment requirements that are part of the pre-decisional objection process (36 CFR 218). This will be your only opportunity to comment if you want to establish eligibility to object to the draft decision that will be released following completion of this EA. To establish eligibility, written comments must be submitted during the 30-day period beginning when the legal notice of this opportunity to comment is published in the *Casper Star-Tribune*, the federal paper of record. See the last section of this letter for instructions on submitting comments.

Purpose and Need for Action:

Two emerging developments in the mountain resort industry underlie the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. First, extensive customer surveys conducted by JHMR and other resorts indicate that visitors are increasingly seeking a more diverse range of recreational activities, particularly for families, that includes year-round opportunities and more adventurous activities. The Forest Service response to this trend includes our 2012 introduction of the *Framework for Sustainable Recreation* (FFSR), which sets goals for providing a diverse array of recreational opportunities aimed at connecting people with the outdoors and promoting healthy lifestyles, in partnership with other public and private recreation providers.

Second, passage of the *Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011* provides direction on the types of summer activities the Forest Service should consider authorizing to round out the range of opportunities provided to the public at permitted mountain resorts.

Reflecting these considerations, the purposes of this proposed action are:

- To maintain and improve winter sports infrastructure on National Forest System lands that is JHMR's cornerstone (Forest Plan Goal 2.2 (a)).
- To provide new and innovative forms of year-round outdoor recreation for residents and visitors to Jackson Hole, using existing resort infrastructure as the hub.
- To capitalize on the established relationship between Bridger-Teton and JHMR that connects visitors with the natural environment and supports the quality of life and the economy of the local community (Forest Plan Goal 1.1 (f)).
- To enhance defensible space for private and permitted infrastructure within and adjacent to JHMR (Forest Plan Fire and Fuels Prescription).

To achieve these purposes, JHMR needs to address aging and normal wear and tear of operational and visitor-service infrastructure, increase terrain accessibility for beginner to intermediate skiers, meet growing demand for diverse summer recreational activities, and respond to climate changes, particularly diminishing snowpack, that impact resort operations as well and visitor and staff safety. How the proposed projects would meet these needs is outlined below.

Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action includes 35 projects summarized below. Projects are numbered consecutively and locations are shown on the attached map. If you are interested in detailed description of each project, please review the document named, *JHMR 2023 Scoping - Detailed Project Information.pdf* in the scoping folder on the project website, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=64355>.

Sublette Lift Replacement

1. Sublette is an older, fixed-grip chairlift. Repairs are increasingly difficult, and it does not meet current visitor expectations for ease of loading/unloading or speed. Its low-capacity limits skier access to Cheyenne, Bernie's, and Laramie bowls. Additionally, lift evacuation would be challenging in the "Chutes" area. To alleviate these constraints, the existing lift would be replaced with a high-speed detachable quad chair. Both top and bottom terminals would be shifted slightly, and the project would include a larger unload area, replacement of the summer access road, and a new skier traverse/access to Tensleep Bowl.

Ski Run, Traverse, and Terrain Park Construction and Modifications

JHMR is well known for its expert and extreme ski runs, but such challenging terrain does not match the ability profile of today's skier market. Efforts to address this constraint are ongoing, and this proposed action includes creation of new ski runs, widening and smoothing existing runs, reducing pinch points, and adding snowmaking to facilitate skier circulation and flow. Rocks and trees that impede skier flow would be removed, and steep drops and cross slopes would be modified, especially in areas prone to skier accidents. The snowmaking system would be expanded to cover areas where low-snow conditions limit safe circulation. The proposed improvements would increase utilization during low-snow cycles and make the ski runs easier for lower ability level skiers to navigate safely. At terrain parks, additional features are desired, and contouring of the existing terrain would reduce the amount of snow needed to construct the parks. Projects in this category include:

2. Alta Chutes
3. North Hoback Woods
4. Upper Sundance Run Realignment
5. Slalom Run Upgrade
6. Gros Ventre Run Upgrade
7. Werner Trail Widening
8. Lower Ashley Ridge Upgrade
9. Grand Run Upgrade
10. Gondola Base Area Access Traverse
11. Togwotee Pass Traverse Realignment
12. Cirque Traverse Upgrade
13. Stash Park Upgrades
14. Terrain Parks Summer Grading
15. Union Pass Traverse Snowmaking

Construction and Modification of Visitor-Service Facilities

Existing visitor-service facilities do not meet current demand in terms of capacity, siting, and variety of services, particularly special events year-round. With the replacement of the Sublette lift, the ski patrol building at the top of the lift will need to be replaced with a new structure at a different location. Projects in this category include:

16. Sublette Patrol Station
17. Bear Flats Café Expansion
18. Rendezvous Lodge Addition
19. Rendezvous Event Site Upgrade
20. Casper Event Site

Development of New Summer Recreation Opportunities

Demand for a variety of summer recreational opportunities suitable for visitors of diverse ages and ability levels continues to increase. Hiking and mountain biking are mainstays of summer use, and proposed development includes new hiking, biking, and multiple-use trails as well as creation of spurs off existing trails to allow uninterrupted use during construction of proposed ski run improvements. Educational and interpretive components, gathering areas, and signage designed for multi-generational users would enhance the experiences of trail users. New diversions for kids would be provided, and additional rock-climbing

routes equipped with fixed cables and metal steps would allow more visitors to safely experience rock climbing. Specific projects include:

21. Paradise Lost Multi-Use Trail
22. Wildflower Spur Hiking Trail
23. Elk Alley Hiking Trail
24. Wildflower-Solitude Access Hiking Trail
25. Far Drift Multi-Use Trail
26. Jackson Woods Downhill Trail
27. Beaver Tooth/ Ashley Downhill Trail
28. Elevated Walkway
29. Ball Track
30. Summit Viewing Platform
31. Via Ferrata Additional Routes and Repelling Stations

Fuels Reduction at Wildland-Urban Interface

32. The frequency and intensity of wildfires has increased dramatically in recent years, and the threats they pose to people and property are a major concern. The proposed tree thinning along the southern edge of the JHMR's special use permit boundary would reduce exposure of the resort base area and enhance the ability of firefighters to contain a fire entering or exiting the resort and adjacent private property.

Avalanche Control

JHMR traditionally used artillery pieces to trigger starting zones that are difficult and risky to reach on the ground. Since the artillery program was discontinued, JHMR has been investigating alternative technologies to deliver explosives to starting zones, using alternatives to explosives, and protecting infrastructure from avalanche damage. Proposed projects involving these technologies include:

33. Explosives Trolleys
34. Avalanche Exploders
35. Avalanche Control Fencing

Implementation Timing:

Construction of these projects would begin in spring of 2024 with completion of all project installations expected by 2030.

How to Submit Comments:

This comment period provides those interested in or affected by these projects an opportunity to make their concerns known. A copy of this letter is also available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=64355>. The comment period will close on Monday, July 31, 2023.

It is important that respondents provide comments in such a way that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the EA and draft decision. Comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the respondent's concerns and issues related to the proposed action. Specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. The Forest

Service will consider cited references if the articles are submitted with the comment letter and if the respondent identifies the relevance of the findings to specific actions and effects of this proposed action.

The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a respondent's ability to participate in subsequent administrative or judicial review. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing in subsequent administrative or judicial reviews.

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed action during a public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection under §218.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the legal notice in the *Casper Star-Tribune* per the provisions of 36 CFR 218. The publication date in the *Casper Star-Tribune* is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. For objection eligibility each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

Please address any form of comments as attention: JHMR 2023 Jackson Hole Mountain Resort Recreation Enhancement Project - 2023. Written comments must be submitted to: Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson Ranger District, P.O. Box 1689, Jackson, WY 83001, attention Todd Stiles. Comments may be hand-delivered to 340 N. Cache St. between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=64355>.

For further information on the proposed action or the NEPA process, contact Mariah Radue, Environmental Coordinator, 208-223-4366 or mariah.radue@usda.gov. Please feel free to pass this letter on to others you think may have an interest or concern with this proposed action.

Sincerely,



TODD STILES
District Ranger

Attachment: Map of Proposed Action

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov .

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MAP PROJECT LIST:

LIFTS:
1. SUBLETTE LIFT REPLACEMENT

SKI RUNS/TRAVERSES/TERRAIN PARKS:

- 2. ALTA CHUTES
- 3. NORTH HOBACK WOODS
- 4. UPPER SUNDANCE RUN REALIGNMENT
- 5. SLALOM RUN SUMMER GROOM
- 6. GROS VENTRE RUN UPGRADE
- 7. WERNER TRAIL WIDENING
- 8. LOWER ASHELY RIDGE UPGRADE
- 9. GRAND RUN UPGRADE
- 10. GONDOLA BASE AREA ACCESS TRAVERSE
- 11. TOGWOTEE PASS TRAVERSE REALIGNMENT
- 12. CIRQUE TRAVERSE UPGRADE
- 13. STASH PARK UPGRADES
- 14. TERRAIN PARKS SUMMER GRADING
- 15. UNION PASS TRAVERSE SNOWMAKING

SKIER SERVICE FACILITIES:

- 16. SUBLETTE PATROL STATION
- 17. BEAR FLATS CAFE EXPANSION
- 18. RENDEZVOUS LODGE ADDITION
- 19. RENDEZVOUS EVENT SITE UPGRADE
- 20. CASPER EVENT SITE

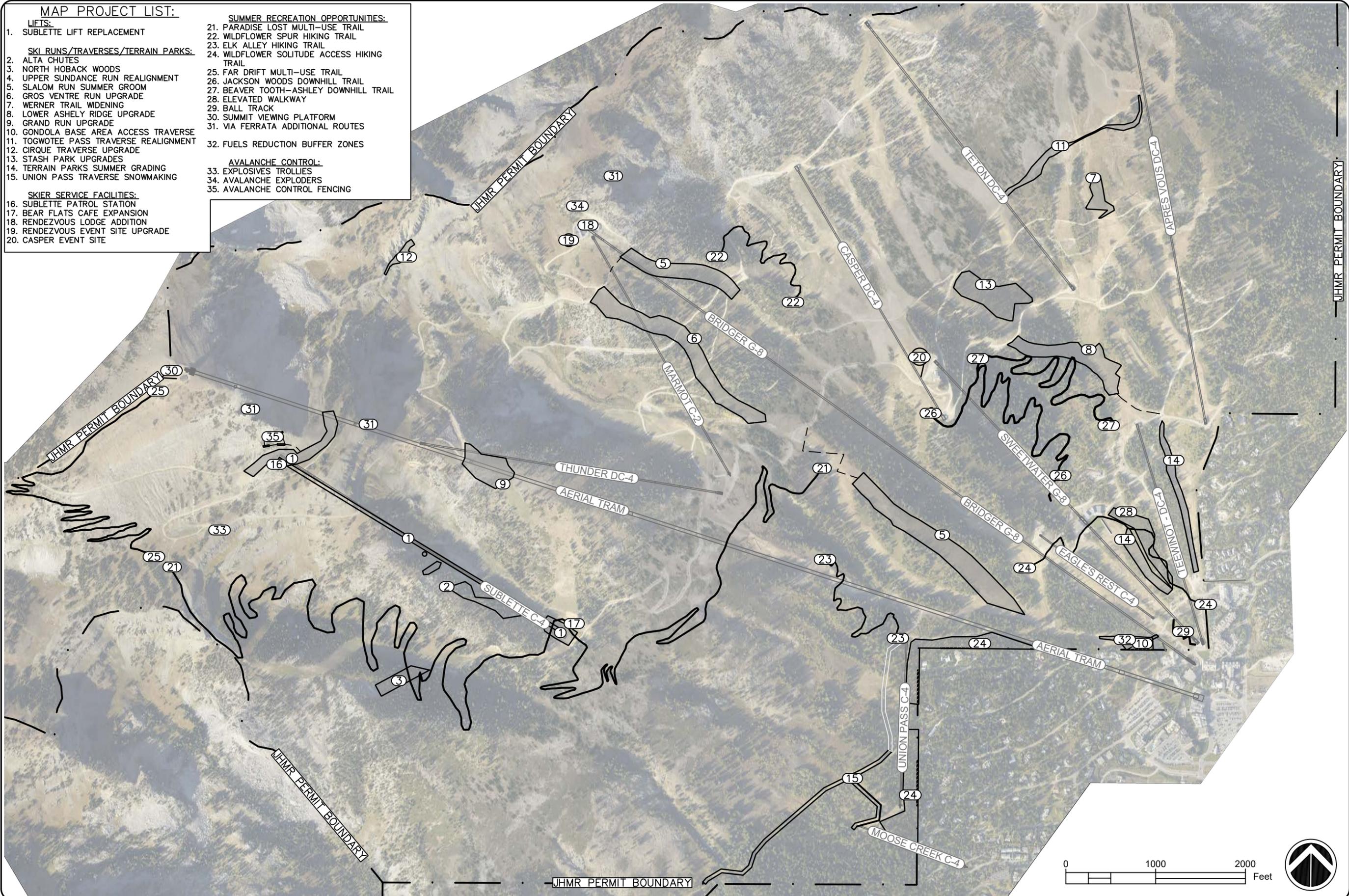
SUMMER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES:

- 21. PARADISE LOST MULTI-USE TRAIL
- 22. WILDFLOWER SPUR HIKING TRAIL
- 23. ELK ALLEY HIKING TRAIL
- 24. WILDFLOWER SOLITUDE ACCESS HIKING TRAIL
- 25. FAR DRIFT MULTI-USE TRAIL
- 26. JACKSON WOODS DOWNHILL TRAIL
- 27. BEAVER TOOTH-ASHLEY DOWNHILL TRAIL
- 28. ELEVATED WALKWAY
- 29. BALL TRACK
- 30. SUMMIT VIEWING PLATFORM
- 31. VIA FERRATA ADDITIONAL ROUTES

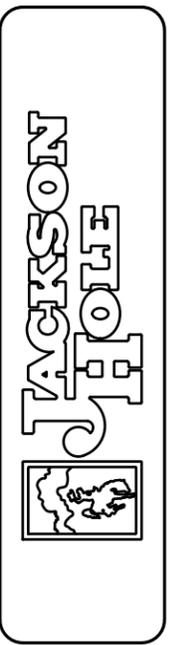
32. FUELS REDUCTION BUFFER ZONES

AVALANCHE CONTROL:

- 33. EXPLOSIVES TROLLIES
- 34. AVALANCHE EXPLODERS
- 35. AVALANCHE CONTROL FENCING



ORIGINAL SIZE = 11" x 17"



PREPARED FOR: JACKSON HOLE MOUNTAIN RESORT

OVERVIEW MAP

PROPOSED MOUNTAIN PROJECTS

2023 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

TETON COUNTY WYOMING

SCALE: 1" = 1000'

DATE: 06/26/23

SHEET: 1 OF 1

WG: 5900-6001

