



File Code: 2720; 1950
Route To:

Date: June 6, 2017

Subject: Supplemental Information Report for the Grand Targhee Resort Peaked Lift

To: Teton Basin District Ranger

INTRODUCTION

Grand Targhee Resort (GTR) is currently proposing to construct a chairlift on Peaked Mountain to replace its current Snow Cat skiing operation and complete the development of lift-served skiing in this area. This Supplemental Information Report (SIR) documents the Forest Service's past environmental review and previous approval (1994) granted to GTR for the construction of a chairlift on Peaked Mountain, which has since been affirmed by subsequent environmental review. Since the approval of the Peaked lift (analyzed as Peaked #6 in the 1994 EIS), further detail on the specifics of the planned lift and accompanying terrain pod have now been developed. To date, all of the associated ski trails in the Peaked area that would become lift served through the installation of the Peaked lift have been cleared/constructed and are currently being used by the existing Snow Cat skiing operation. This SIR also includes a review of the past analyses, identifies changes in the regulatory environment, evaluates changes in the proposed project and potential effects, and concludes with my findings relative to the aforementioned information.

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 following the 2015/16 winter season 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. The recently accepted *2016 Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan* (2016 MDP) includes an updated analysis of the Peaked lift. As a supplement to previous environmental review, the 2016 MDP serves as a reference for the most up-to-date conditions at GTR.

Determination 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.

DESCRIPTION OF PEAKED LIFT AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED

Below is a description of the Peaked lift, as currently proposed. For additional information see the attached Figures 1–3 which include site, grading and infrastructure plans for the chairlift.

GTR seeks to replace its current Snow Cat skiing operation on Peaked Mountain with chairlift service to approximately 450 acres of existing skiable terrain on the westerly flanks of Peaked Mountain. The previously approved project would involve installing a quad chairlift from the current site of the Snow Cat skiing lunch tent to a point about 550 feet west-northwest of, and 130 feet vertically below, the summit of Peaked Mountain. The top elevation of the planned lift would be 9,700 feet, and the base elevation would be 7,860 feet.

The ski trails served by the planned chairlift have previously been established (cleared) for developed skiing have been used for Snow Cat skiing operations for almost a decade. With higher skier traffic volumes resulting from the chairlift installation, the planned Peaked lift project would include various levels of ski terrain enhancement, ranging from additional thinning of glade areas, to isolated tree

removal, and the grading of a skiway (e.g., "ski Trail 6A"). The lift installation would include various related infrastructure projects including power supply and communication cable, lift operator huts at the bottom and top lift terminals, and construction of a ski patrol dispatch cabin at the lift's top terminal location to provide for public safety. Construction of the two lift terminals would require moderate levels of excavation (balanced cut and fill) to create the appropriate queuing/loading and unload ramp/milling areas. An existing road system extends from the existing ski area (Sacajawea area) to the site of both lift terminals. Some road maintenance/refurbishment will be required to prepare these roads for use by necessary construction equipment. The following is a summary description of each discrete project that will be included in the overall Peaked lift project:

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

Hereinafter these project components will be referred to as “Peaked lift” or “Peaked lift and associated infrastructure” denoting the inclusion of all these project components. Initial analysis in the 1994 EIS covered the necessary infrastructure associated with the Peaked lift. A skier services building will be further detailed in the additional project components section.

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.

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 the 2011 and 2016 MDP. The evaluation of changed conditions will consider both previous analyses (while referring to the MDP for 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.

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.

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 Caribou-Targhee National Forest was completed in 1997; full analysis of the Peaked lift has not been completed under this Forest Plan. However, the goals and objectives of the GTR's Prescription Area (4.2) are consistent with previous NEPA analysis, which was also completed under the same management prescription.

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 Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou-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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Acres of Ground by Soil Erodibility Potential		Alternative 4 (acres)
Low		23.00
Moderate		24.60
High		73.00
Acres of Ground by Mass Instability Potential		Alternative 4 (acres)
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).¹ 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.

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 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.

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

¹ 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 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

Overstory Tree Removal Vegetative Community	Alternative 4 (acres of disturbance)
Aspen Woodlands	23.0
Seedling/Sapling-Mature	24.6
Mature	73.0
Total	76.2
Grading Vegetative Community	Alternative 4 (acres of disturbance)
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
Total	98.1

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 since the individual trees can be avoided. 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 was determined to be warranted for federal listing, but preclude from listing (Federal Register 2011). Under the ESA, candidate species have no legal protection and candidate status does not kick in any additional regulatory requirements. However, the FWS does advise federal agencies to evaluate potential effects to candidate species that may occur in the project area. Should the species be listed, this may expedite section 7 consultation under the Act.

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.

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 trail-less 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.

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.

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 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.

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).

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 (*Gulo 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). This is the most recent wildlife BA performed within GTR's permit area, serving as an update to the existing wildlife determinations made in the 1994 EIS and 2004 EA. 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 15th, 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. Jebediah 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.

Similarly 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 has 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).

Similarly 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.

Forest Service 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 (*Centrocerus 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 measureable 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.

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

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.

Additional Project Components

The 1994 EIS analyzed a wide range of skier services and facilities, which included the development of Peaked Mountain. In the 1994 ROD it was stated that, "skier services will be phased to support mountain capacity as shown in Appendix L to the FEIS. This schedule represents a logical sequence and balanced approach." (1994 ROD, p. 6). Due to changes in existing infrastructure that have occurred since the 1994 EIS, this schedule may not specifically reflect the timing of skier service facilities on Peaked Mountain. However, it implies the development skier services would accompany the installation of lift-served skiing on Peaked Mountain.

Consistent with the intentions of the 1994 EIS, and as outlined in the 2016 MDP (2016 MDP, pp. 6-26) is the development of skier services on Peaked Mountain. Specific components of this project are as follows:

Skier Services

- In conjunction with the development of lift services and enhancements to the skiing terrain, GTR would install all associated trail signage (trail names, ability ratings, directions), necessary boundary lines (posts, ropes, signs, etc.) to ensure a safe guest experience.
- As the Peaked terrain is relative distant from base area conveniences, GTR additionally would install toilet facilities at the base of the planned lift. This would be in the form of vault (or similar) toilets located in a small building (roughly 25 x 30 feet). With construction of the facility, GTR would likely incorporate operations storage/maintenance in the lower level of the building (along with the necessary toilet tanks).

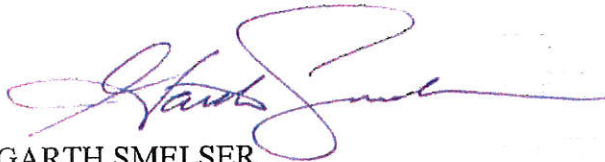
While the 1994 EIS did not specifically review these project components, they were referred to in the approval of Alternative 4. They are considered additional project components because of the level of

detail provided at this time, and are necessary to support the Peaked lift, associated necessary infrastructure, and to provide for requisite public health and sanitation on the National Forest.

SUMMARY FINDING

Based on my review, as documented in this 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 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.

Implementation may proceed upon submittal and approval of GTR's project-specific Construction Implementation Plan. The Construction Implementation Plan will contain the necessary project design criteria and best management practices, as determined by Forest Service resource specialists, to minimize impacts during construction. Construction of the project must adhere to these conditions.



GARTH SMELSER
Forest Supervisor



LEGEND

- Proposed Grading
- New Ski Lift
- Proposed Run CL
- Existing Stream

Peaked Lift SIR

Figure 1:
Peaked Lift
Lift Alignment Plan

Date: September 2016
Contract Number: 10





Peaked Linn
Ski Patrol Facility
Lift Operator Building
D-1



Peaked Linn SIR

Figure 2:
Top Terminal Plan

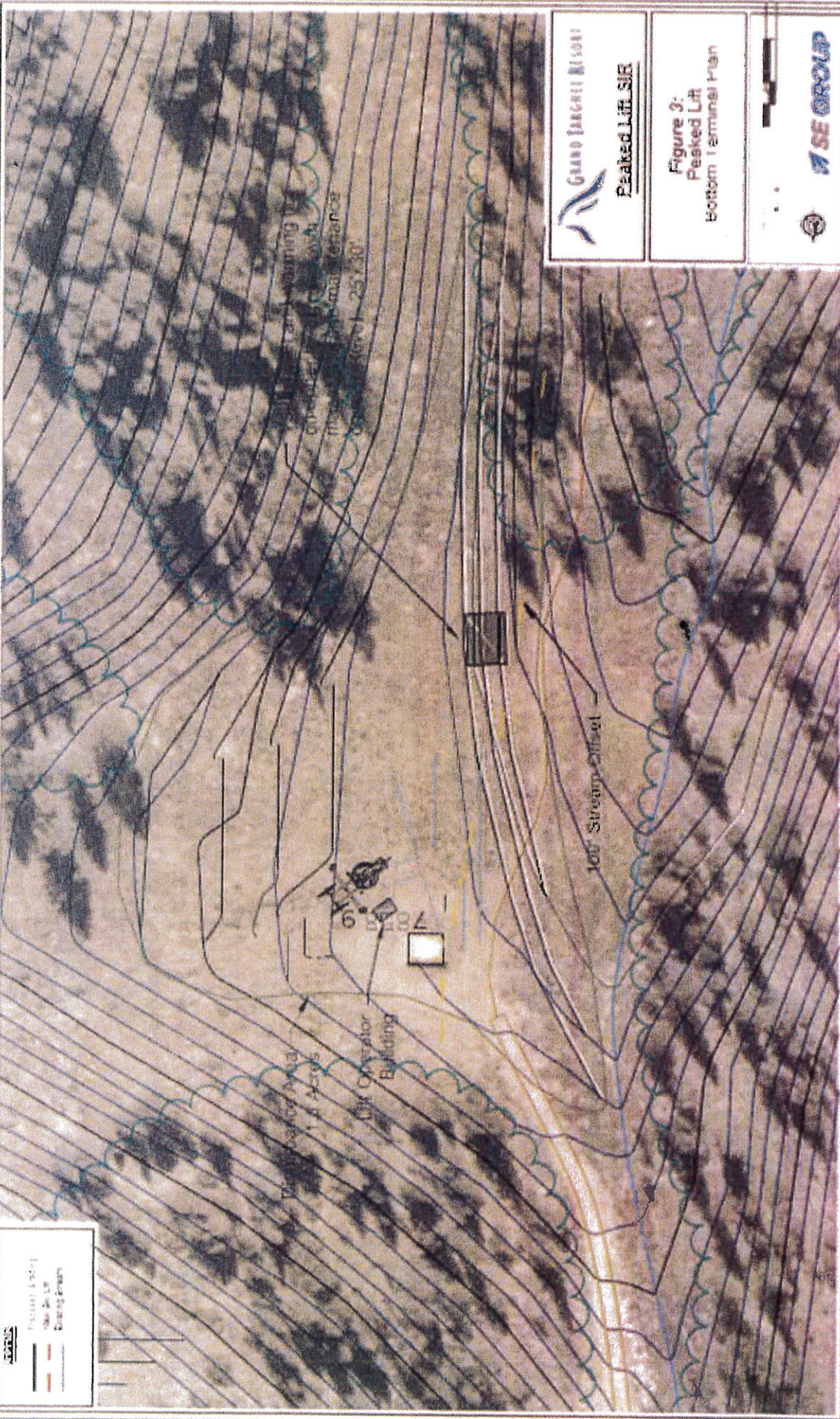


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SE GROUP

ASR-25

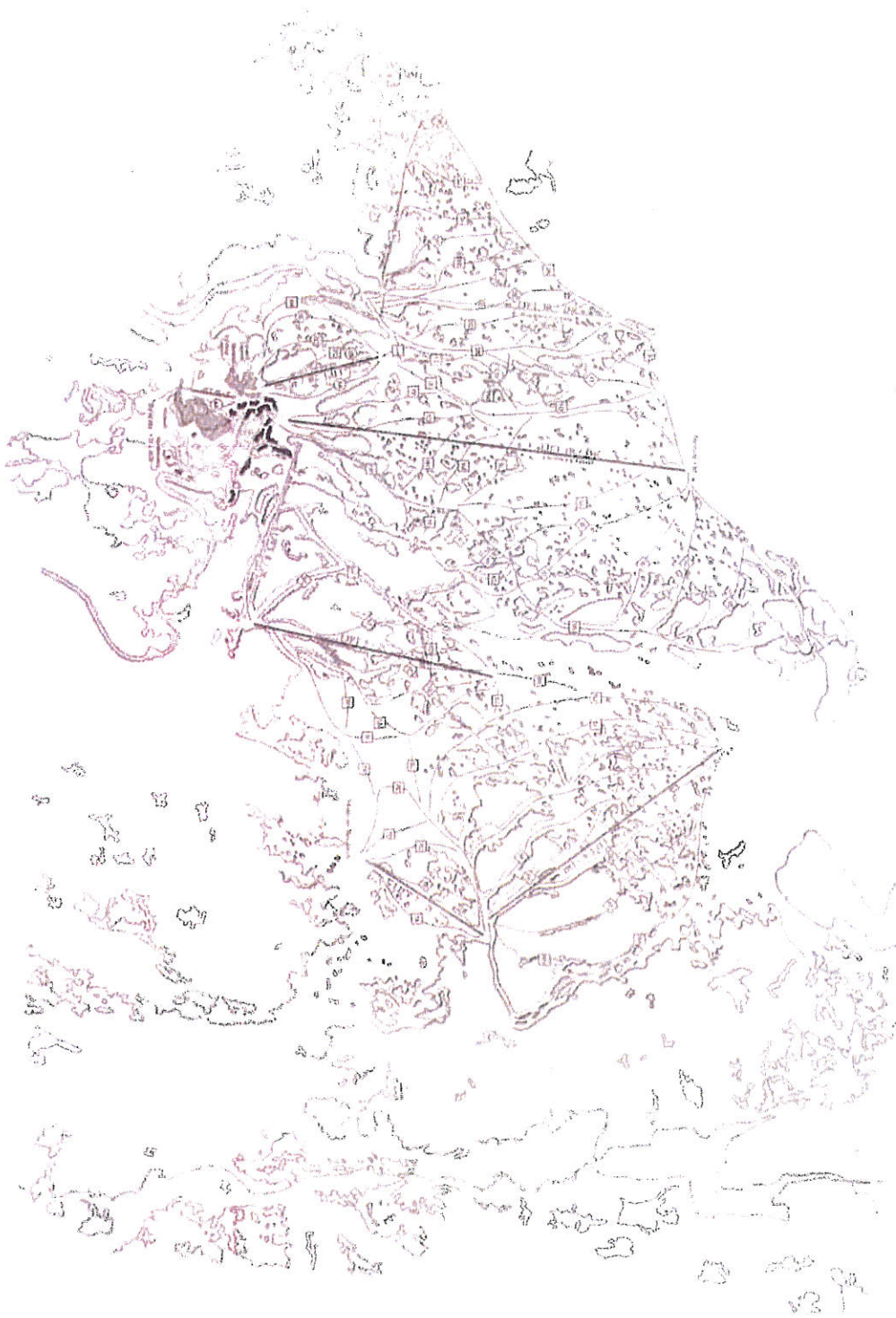
Peaked Lift SR
100' Stream Offset
Easing Profile



Grand Inland Alaska
Peaked Lift SR

Figure 3:
Peaked Lift
Bottom Terminal Plan

SE GROUP



LEGEND

Ski Trail Ability Levels

easy

more difficult

most difficult

see text for lift and trail details

Phase 3 Lifts

Phase 4 Lifts

Phase 5 Lifts

Skiering

Figure 4:
1994 MDP. The
Peaked lift is
lift 6 in this
figure.

RESORT AREA MASTER PLAN

Nov 95 IV 2.0

ecosign

9

