United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Bridger-Teton National Forest** **340 North Cache Street Jackson, WY 83001**

File Code: 2720; 1950
Date: August 3, 2018

Re: Snow King Mountain Resort On-mountain Improvements Project Proposal

Dear Interested Party:

On June 5, 2018, Snow King Mountain Resort (Snow King) submitted a proposal to the Bridger-Teton National Forest (Bridger-Teton) to initiate the environmental review process for improvements proposed in Snow King's master development plan on National Forest System lands. The Bridger-Teton accepted the proposal and is initiating a review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We anticipate preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) using a third party consultant.

The proposal was finalized by Snow King after a multi-year public input process that culminated in a facilitated community stakeholder group organized by the Town of Jackson. This group developed four scenarios of different combinations of improvements, and ultimately Snow King selected a combination of elements that the ski area believed best fit the needs of the resort and the community's desires.

The purpose of this letter is to invite public comment on the scope of the EIS – that is, on the issues and alternatives it will address. We invite you to inform us of any concerns you may have about potential environmental impacts of this project and any design features that might reduce those impacts. This scoping letter states the purpose and need of the proposed project, describes Snow King's proposed action in detail, and provides instructions for submitting comments.

The Forest Service's predecisional objection process (36 CFR 218) provides the opportunity for you to object to the draft decision that will be released following completion of the EIS. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project during a public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection (see *How to Submit Comments* below). This scoping period will be your first opportunity to comment. To establish eligibility to object, comments must be submitted during the 30-day period beginning when the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS is published in the *Federal Register* or during a subsequent designated opportunity to comment.

Our acceptance of Snow King's master development plan does not pre-dispose the agency to final approval of this project. I will decide whether to authorize any or all of the proposed elements, and with what conditions, based on analysis of the environmental effects and consistency with the 1990 Bridger-Teton National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and other relevant laws, policy, and regulations. My decision will be documented in a Record of Decision. If my decision is to authorize Snow King's proposed project, in whole or in part, I would modify their existing special use permit.

As part of the Forest Service's predecisional objection process (36 CFR 218), I will issue a draft EIS for public comment, then a final EIS with a draft of the Record of Decision prior to signing my decision. This will allow us to work to resolve any objections before my decision is finalized. I anticipate release of the draft EIS in winter of 2019, a final EIS and draft decision in late summer of 2019, and a signed decision in fall of 2019.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION:

In addition to the foundational direction provided in the Forest Plan, two emerging developments in the mountain resort industry underlie the purpose and need for the proposed action. First, extensive customer surveys conducted by the ski industry indicate that visitors are increasingly seeking a more diverse range of recreational activities, particularly for families, that includes year-round opportunities and activities that are more adventurous. The Forest Service response to this trend includes our 2012 introduction of the *Framework for Sustainable Recreation*, 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.

Specific to the Bridger Teton National Forest, the Forest Plan provides direction for the Forest to contribute to community prosperity and provide high-quality developed recreation facilities to serve Forest visitors (Goal 1.1 and Goal 2.2 pp. 112–114). Forest Plan Objective 1.1(f) is to "Provide areas for alpine skiing and commercial ski and snowmobile operations." Objective 2.2(a) is to "Retain, improve and add developed sites" and Objective 2.2(b) is to "Design facilities for people of all ages and abilities."

Reflecting these considerations, the <u>purposes</u> of the proposed Snow King Mountain Resort On-mountain Improvements Project are to:

- Maintain and improve the winter sport infrastructure on National Forest System lands at Snow King,
- Provide new and innovative forms of year-round outdoor recreation for residents and visitors to Jackson Hole, using the existing resort infrastructure as the hub, and
- Capitalize on the partnership between the Bridger-Teton and Snow King to connect visitors with the natural environment and support the quality of life and the economy of the local community.

The <u>needs</u> for action include:

- Improve and increase beginner and intermediate ski terrain, lifts, and facilities to serve as the primary ski resort in Jackson Hole to introduce and recruit new skiers to the sport.
- Expand snowmaking on the mountain to enable an early November opening for ski race training, provide coverage to the upper mountain, and aid in fire prevention.
- Introduce high-quality guest service facilities to attract and retain local and destination skiers, serve as an event venue, and provide an outdoor education center for Jackson residents and visitors.

- Provide access to a wide range of year-round activities catering to a variety of visitors passing through the Town of Jackson.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Snow King's proposed action includes the following elements to address the purpose and need. Each element and its rationale are described in more detail below and shown on the attached maps. A description of the proposed action is also available at http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54201.

- A new ski school/teaching center on the ridgeline west of the Snow King summit.
- Development of skiing in the natural bowl on the back side, south of the Snow King summit. This southernmost portion of the current special use permit area is suitable for development of low-intermediate and intermediate level ski terrain, complementing the summit teaching center.
- A 67-acre permit boundary adjustment on the front side, east of the existing permit area, to accommodate part of a summit access road/novice skiway, intermediate-level terrain lower on the slope (including groomed runs and tree and glade skiing), and a novice route down from Rafferty lift (via the access road/novice skiway).
- An 89-acre permit boundary adjustment on the front side west of the existing permit area to accommodate a summit teaching center, another part of the summit access road/novice skiway, and expert-level tree and glade skiing.
- New ski terrain totaling about 97.5 acres (groomed runs and teaching terrain).
- Upgrading the existing Summit lift to a gondola, and installation of one new chair lift, two teaching area conveyors, and one surface lift.
- On-mountain facilities (the summit restaurant/guest services building and ski patrol facility, a temporary ski patrol building at the top of Cougar, an observatory and planetarium at the summit, a wedding venue west of the summit building, and a year-round yurt camp at the southern point of the permit area).
- 147.1 acres of added snowmaking (with few exceptions, all existing and proposed runs).
- Improved and expanded lighting for night skiing.
- Front-side mountain bike trails and a back-side mountain bike zone.
- Hiking trails between the summit and the west base, west of Exhibition run.
- A zip line from the summit to the west base area, paralleling the Summit lift.

BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

Snow King proposes adjustments to both their operating boundary and their special use permit boundary. The existing boundary includes 142.5 acres south of the Snow King ridgeline. The proposed action would expand winter and summer operations, including lifts, ski runs, and a mountain bike park (see details below), into to this currently permitted area.

The permit boundary adjustments would resolve the current lack of terrain for beginner, novice, and low intermediate skiers. Snow King currently offers 17.1 acres in these three categories, and as detailed below this proposal would add 37.7 acres. Attracting, accommodating, and advancing beginning skiers is critical not only to Snow King but also to the community. Local ski school programs, the Jackson Ski and Snowboard Club, and the Doug Coombs Foundation's effort to involve underprivileged children in mountain recreation would not be feasible without Snow

King, but they remain severely limited by this lack of low-ability-level terrain. To meet Snow King's desire in sustaining these programs and the desire to meet public recreational needs, a quality teaching center and appropriate terrain to support efficient, step-wise skier progression are essential.

From a planning standpoint, topography and past development preclude development of these terrain types within the existing operational boundary. Based on thorough analysis, development of terrain along the ridgeline west of the Snow King summit and on the back side is the only feasible option. The base area is already fully developed, and other than the ridgeline and back side, appropriate, low-angle terrain does not exist within or adjacent to the current permit boundary.

Development of the summit and back-side terrain would require, at a minimum, a beginner-friendly and downloadable lift accessing the summit, a skier-service and ski patrol building on the summit, an access road to build and maintain summit facilities, and a safe, "easy way down" to the base area in the event of lift failure.

As discussed in more detail below, the proposed teaching area and associated infrastructure would require new special use permit terrain both east and west of their existing front-side operations. Those additions, in turn, set the stage for other improvements not directly associated with the teaching center that are included in the proposed action and discussed below.

The eastern permit boundary adjustment would add approximately 67 acres. In addition to accommodating a segment of the required summit access road/novice skiway, this area would provide three new short intermediate runs, intermediate-level glade skiing between these runs, and a novice route down from the top of Rafferty lift via the summit access road/skiway.

The western boundary adjustment would add approximately 89 acres to Snow King's permit area, for a total adjustment of 156 acres. In addition to allowing development of the critical teaching center on the ridge, it would accommodate another segment of the summit access road/skiway. Glading would open the forested area between the westernmost access road/skiway switchbacks to expert tree skiing.

Snow King visitors increasingly venture into this currently unpatrolled and unmaintained western area. Including this area in the permit would allow Snow King to control and patrol it, making it safer for guests of Snow King and the Bridger-Teton. Together, these proposed boundary adjustments would expand the permit area from 338 to 495 acres.

TERRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Ski run development within the expanded ski area boundary (i.e., current and adjusted permit boundary and private land) would add the following acreage by ability level:

- Beginner – 3.9 acres
- Novice – 29.7 acres
- Low Intermediate – 4.1 acres
- Intermediate – 25.2 acres

- Advanced – 16.2 acres
- Expert – 18.4 acres

These new runs would total 97.5 acres. They would be cleared of trees and tall shrubs then graded to remove terrain irregularities and allow winter grooming. These additions would bring Snow King's total terrain distribution to slightly higher than the industry standard for beginner and novice terrain (6 and 25 percent, respectively, compared to industry standards of 5 and 15 percent), less for low intermediate and intermediate terrain (14 and 29 percent, respectively, compared to 25 and 35), about even for advanced terrain (13 compared to 15 percent), and higher than the standard for expert terrain (13 percent compared to 5).

Tree removal (both stands and individual trees) for safety, recreational, and forest health purposes would open new terrain to tree and glade skiing off the groomed runs. By reducing fuels, tree removal would also help reduce the spread of catastrophic wildfires at wildland/urban interface. Proposed terrain development is described in more detail below.

Teaching Center Terrain

Snow King has a deficit in beginner and novice terrain, and dedicated teaching terrain is insufficient. Currently, lower ability level skiers are limited to a small amount of suitable terrain around the base area, mostly on private land. This restricts Snow King's capability to introduce and recruit new skiers to the sport. The inability to visit Snow King's summit also limits beginner skiers' recreational experience and their exposure to National Forest System lands visible and accessible from the summit.

Development of the summit teaching center would add 3.9 acres of beginner terrain (Figure 1, Runs Lift-B and Lift-C) on the ridge, immediately west of the gondola terminal and summit building. Once beginners had the basic ability to move on their skis, they would have ready access to 29.7 acres of novice terrain from the summit. This includes Runs 16 and 23 on the back side and Runs 14 and 6, the access road/skiway providing and easy way down from the summit to the base area.

This terrain combined with gondola access and the proposed conveyor carpets (discussed below under Lifts), and with the nearby summit building providing guest services and housing the ski school (discussed below under Summit Building), would vastly improve the experience Snow King provides to beginner and novice skiers. The proposed development would benefit the learning progression and the instructors' teaching abilities, would maximize new skiers' recreational access and exposure to National Forest System resources, and would bolster visitors' connection to their public lands. Developing teaching terrain at the summit would extend the season for beginner and novice skiers and would keep them from dealing with ski soft and variable snow conditions at lower elevations late in the ski season. The proposed teaching terrain is effectively separated from higher ability level terrain, avoiding the potential problems of mixing skiers of differing ability levels.

Ski Runs

The next step is low intermediate terrain, and Runs 4, 5, and 7 would provide 4.1 addition acres in the eastern adjustment area, accessed from the summit or the top of Rafferty lift via the access road/skiway. About 25.2 acres of intermediate terrain would be developed, primarily in the back-side bowl (Runs 18, 19, 20, and 22). This would add to the terrain progression available from the summit learning area.

New advanced terrain would total about 16.2 acres, comprising Runs 17, 21, and 24 on the back side and Runs 3 and 8–13 on the front side between the summit ridge and proposed skiways accessing the base area.

A small amount of clearing (less than 0.1 acres) would take place on the uphill margin of the existing Old Man's Flats run.

Clearing and grading of 2.7 acres in four patches in the Summit pod would improve skier circulation and allow intermediate/advanced skiers access to portions of the Bear Cat, Bear Cat Glades, and Exhibition expert runs.

Gladed Ski Terrain and Forest Health Maintenance

Two factors converge in regard to use and management of forested portions of Snow King's special use permit area. First, the northern exposure of the front side and extensive forest cover result in excellent opportunities to develop intermediate-level to expert-level tree and glade skiing. This type of off-piste skiing is growing rapidly in popularity, and the proposed permit area adjustment, upgrade of the Summit lift, and development of back-side infrastructure create the potential to respond to that demand.

Second, maintaining a desirable vegetation mix and character within the permit area, consistent with preserving or enhancing recreational opportunities and experiences, is a Bridger-Teton management objective. To pursue that objective, Snow King worked with the Bridger-Teton to develop the 2015 *Snow King Mountain Resort Vegetation Management Plan* (Vegetation Management Plan). The plan's objectives specifically include development of increased tree and glade skiing, as well as tree removal to reduce hazard to visitors, reduce disease and pathogens, and reduce fire risk by breaking up fuel continuity.

Together, these factors set the stage for creation of glades in all forested areas within the permit boundary, particularly where skier access is practical and where forest health conditions indicate that active management action is required. This proposal includes glading on the back side (18.0 acres) and the east and west expansion areas on the front side (14.4 and 3.6 acres, respectively).

Glading prescriptions would be developed in conjunction with the Bridger-Teton and included in annual summer operations plans subject to Bridger-Teton approval prior to any additional glading. Glading prescriptions are discussed in the Vegetation Management Plan, and the general goal for gladed terrain is a spacing of 15 to 18 feet between trees. In many cases, this may not require much tree removal, but it would certainly involve brushing and limbing, as well as removal of any diseased or hazard trees.

Grading Existing Trails

In addition to the grading and leveling required for the development of the new runs, some grading of existing runs is needed to enhance ski race training lanes and decrease snowmaking requirements. The grading would occur on a total of 5.5 acres in nine areas:

- The top of Flying Squirrel would be graded to remove a prominent knob that impedes skier flow. This would involve 1.0 acres.
- The area between Grizzly and Kelly's Alley, where Karen's Way is located, would be regraded to eliminate the road and improve skier flow, involving 0.9 acres.
- An area at the top of the Lower Grizzly run would be regraded to improve the transition below a service road, involving 0.7 acres.
- Two areas would be regraded on the Old Man's Flats run. Material would be cut from the lower area and used to fill the upper area. This would involve 1.1 acres.
- A 0.9-acre area between the Lower Elk and Bison runs would be regraded to fill erosional depressions.
- Three areas near the confluence the Bison and Old Man's Flats runs would be regraded to remove a high spot and smooth the transition near a summer trail. This would involve a total of 0.9 acres, including 0.6 acres on National Forest System land.

SUMMIT ACCESS ROAD/NOVICE SKIWAY

Proposed development on the summit would require an access road for construction, operations, maintenance, and emergency services. As discussed above, a novice skiway from the summit to the base is essential to get beginner skiers from the summit to the base area in the event of a lift failure. This element of the proposal would meet both needs. In addition, it would provide an easy way down from the top of Rafferty lift, which does not currently exist.

As demonstrated in the master development plan, options considered during the planning process attempted to keep the access road/skiway within the existing permit area or in either the eastern or western permit boundary adjustment areas. However, the best solution to providing appropriate grades for both construction access and a novice skiway, and to minimize the amount of ground disturbance to achieve these goals, is the current proposed alignment.

The proposed alignment follows the gentle grades down the ridge west from the summit to a point near the western boundary of the adjusted permit area. From there it turns eastward, traversing across the front side of the mountain in one continuous span to the top of the Rafferty lift (Run 14), then continues on to near the eastern boundary of the adjusted permit area (Run 6). At that point, it would turn back to the northwest to tie into the existing road and run network near the northern boundary of the current permit area. This section would be bench cut to achieve a running surface width of 16 feet. Cut and fill areas would widen the area of disturbance to an average of about 90 feet.

This alignment significantly improves on-mountain safety and circulation, and creates minimal impact in terms of disturbance area, visual effects, and impacts on existing ski terrain, since it simply crosses the face without any switchbacks within the current permit boundary.

Several existing mountain access roads would be unnecessary once this access road/skiway was complete. These would be abandoned and restored.

LIFTS

Summit Gondola

As discussed above, a beginner-friendly and downloadable lift access to the summit is a requirement for developing the new teaching area. An upgraded lift would also help serve the added front-side ski terrain and provide summit access for non-skiing winter and summer activities (e.g., dining and events at the proposed summit building and proposed summer recreation and educational activities, including mountain biking). The top terminal would be incorporated into the summit building described below.

The Summit lift would be upgraded to a 1,500 person-per-hour (pph) gondola, which would: provide two-way summit access for beginner skiers and pedestrians year-round, including evenings; improve overall ski terrain access; and reduce waiting time in the lift line. With the installation of the gondola, the bottom terminal of the existing Summit lift would be removed, as would the pumphouse adjacent to it. The new lift would extend about 200 feet farther downhill to improve access to the terminal.

Lift A

As depicted on Figure 1, Lift A would service novice, intermediate, and advanced terrain on the back side. This top-drive, fixed-grip, four-person chairlift would have a slope length of approximately 3,015 feet and a capacity of 1,800 pph. From the top terminal, skiers would have access to one novice run, four intermediate runs, three advanced runs, and six expert runs. Utilities would be provided via connections from the summit building. There is existing road access to the bottom terminal. Some maintenance work on the road may be necessary.

Teaching Center Lifts (Lifts B and C)

Two conveyor carpets (Lift B and Lift C) at the summit would serve the new beginner terrain on the ridge west of the summit building. Lift B would be 363 feet in length and Lift C would be 506 feet in length. Each would have a capacity of 600 pph. These lifts would be located in close proximity to the proposed summit building. Power would be extended from the summit building.

Surface Tow D

Lift D would be a surface tow (e.g., a platter or T-bar type) to take skiers from the Lift A pod back to the summit building. Following Run 23, it would be 679 feet long, with a capacity of 300 pph. Power would come from the summit building.

BUILDINGS

Summit Building

Guest services (e.g., food/beverage service, restrooms, and basic retail sales), ski patrol functions, and ski school functions are proposed on the summit to support development of a quality learning area, and gondola access to the site would open a range of year-round recreational possibilities. The summit building is proposed as a state-of-the-art, LEED-certified, on-mountain resort facility to meet the changing desires and expectations of Snow King, community, and regional markets.

This facility would provide multiple functions, including: gondola terminal, gondola cabin storage, ski school, food service (dining/cafeteria/bar/lounge), restrooms, planetarium, ski patrol (headquarters, patient assessment space, warming area, and limited equipment storage), employee space/storage, and ticketing for summer activities. These functions are currently not provided on-mountain, and the proposed facility would take Snow King to a new level in terms of guest services and experience. To include all of these functions, the summit building would be 20,000 – 25,000 square feet in size. It would be a single story and not on the skyline, and it would be designed and built in accordance with the Forest Service's *Built Environment Image Guide* and its stipulations for the Rocky Mountain Province.

This development would also require a septic line to the summit area, which would be collocated with the buried snowmaking line running up Exhibition run. Snow King currently has water and power connections to the summit.

Observatory

An observatory building approximately 500 square feet in size would be located south of the summit building. It would be used year round for stargazing, research, and educational purposes.

Cougar Ski Patrol Facility

Until the new ski patrol facilities in the summit building were completed, a small, temporary, pre-built, pull-on structure would be installed at the top of the Cougar lift as a base for the ski patrol operations during night skiing. This would allow the patrol to station people at the top of the lift for rapid response when only the lower portion on the mountain was open. Some leveling may be done, but no foundation would be necessary. Power would come from the top of Cougar lift. It would be designed and built consistent with the *Built Environment Image Guide* stipulations and would be removed once the summit building was complete.

Saddleback Yurt Camp

A new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant yurt camp would be constructed at the far south end of the existing permit boundary. A 1-mile ADA compliant trail connecting to the summit of Snow King would access this facility. The yurt camp would consist of approximately six yurts for sleeping and three multi-use cooking/dining/gathering yurts. These yurts would range in size from 20 to 30 feet in diameter with additional deck space. This year-round camp would serve backcountry skiers, hikers, bikers, and a wide range of groups. In winter, guided

backcountry skiing, snow safety courses, and snowshoe hikes would be offered out of the yurt camp in conjunction with the Snow King Mountain Sports School. This offering of a wilderness-like experience only a short walk/ski from civilization would attract a wide range of visitors seeking a unique activity during their visit to Jackson. This facility would be unique in the region due to the ease of access, spectacular setting in the National Forest, and number of activities offered.

Night Skiing

At present, Snow King offers night skiing on approximately 73.8 acres of night skiing on the lower two-thirds of the mountain, in the Rafferty and Cougar pods. This is primarily intermediate ability-level terrain, with some advanced and beginner terrain. Until recently, approximately 50 lights were mounted on a variety of structures including trees, lift towers, light poles, and buildings. Coverage was limited, and the technology was obsolete. This was a particular impediment to race training, which occurs in the evening after school hours. Good lighting is an important safety factor in race training. A general system upgrade was implemented in 2015 and remains underway, replacing lighting fixtures with more efficient models designed to increase lighting of the snow surface but reduce light pollution (glare and sky glow).

Under this proposal, Snow King would expand lighting coverage using this upgraded technology (see Figure 2). Additional lighting would be provided on the racing lanes in the Cougar pod, and lighting would be extended to the top of the Rafferty pod (Flying Squirrel and Moose runs), the top of Upper Elk run, and the proposed access road/skiway. Overall, this proposal would increase system coverage by 27.3 acres across all skier ability levels to meet demand for this unique experience and provide for safe and effective race training.

SNOWMAKING

Snow King's snowmaking system covers approximately 90.4 acres of the ski area, in the Rafferty and Cougar pods, as well as to the top of Elk run. This system is served by two 1,000-gallon-per-minute (GPM) pumps in the main pump house and is fed by domestic water provided by the Town of Jackson.

To provide more consistent, season-long snow coverage over a wider area, Snow King proposes to expand coverage on both existing and proposed runs (see Figure 3). Coverage would be added on all existing front-side runs except East and West S Chutes, and all proposed front-side and back-side runs, except Run 9. This would result in approximately 147.1 acres of additional snowmaking coverage.

Water lines would be installed on the upwind side of covered runs, in excavated trenches approximately 4 feet deep. Snowmaking hydrants would be plumbed in adjacent to these main snowmaking lines. Snowmaking guns or hose lines would be attached to these hydrants. All water would continue to be supplied by the Town of Jackson.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The Snow King master development plan documents the "activity zone" analysis completed as part of their planning process, in compliance with the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011. The following proposed summer activities would not change or compromise existing winter snow sports, nor exceed the level of development required for snow sports, but are designed to integrate with and supplement the primary purposes of the ski area. Hiking and biking trails would generally not be collocated with ski runs but may intersect them. Year-round use of the summit building, observatory, and other support facilities would complement these activities. See Figure 4.

Zip Lines

Expanding on current summer operations, Snow King proposes a zip line from the proposed summit building to the base area, paralleling the Summit lift. This project is consistent with the 2013 Jackson Town Council amendment to Snow King's land use lease to include "additional recreational uses related to ski areas such as zip lines, mountain bike trails and other outdoor amenities." This would be an attractive amenity, as guests would quickly descend approximately 1,555 vertical feet, over a distance 3,900 linear feet, at a 48 percent grade to the base area. Guests would ride the new Summit gondola to reach the summit station of the proposed zip line and terminate at the west base area.

Mountain Bike Trails

Lift-served downhill mountain biking is arguably the fastest growing summer activity at mountain resorts in the U.S. and abroad. Not surprisingly, demand for this activity is particularly high in the Jackson area. To meet this demand, Snow King proposes to develop a system of lift-served trails on the front side and a more consolidated mountain bike park-type "mountain bike zone" on the back side.

The front-side trails would include an advanced and an intermediate trail angling down from near the top of the Summit lift to near the top of the Rafferty lift. These would be smooth, excavated trails with a 4-to-5-foot tread. Spurs of narrower hand-built, single-track trail with constructed terrain features would depart from the excavated trails and drop more directly down the slope. At about the elevation of the top of cougar lift, these upper-mountain trails would merge into a beginner and an intermediate-level excavated trail. These two trails would subsequently merge into a single beginner-level excavated trail crossing the toe of the slope down to the west base area.

The front-side bike trail system would total about 6.5 miles, including approximately 1.9 miles of advanced trail (all on National Forest System land), 2.6 miles of intermediate trail (2.4 miles on National Forest System land), and 2.0 miles of beginner trail (0.9 miles on National Forest System land).

On the back side, a skills park and a network of trails of differing types and ability levels would be developed within a roughly 110-acre mountain bike zone. This area would be accessed via the Summit lift, and uphill transit within it would be provided by the proposed Lift A.

These trail designs are conceptual. The exact locations of trails may change when developed to achieve desired grade and location with respect to existing, site-specific, terrain features.

Hiking Trails

Due to Snow King's close proximity to a fairly populated, residential area of the Town of Jackson, Snow King has observed a developing interest by local residents for an uphill hiking trail. To accommodate this interest on National Forest System lands, Snow King proposes to improve the Stairway Trail, including portions in the western permit boundary adjustment area. A direct ascent route to the summit would be created in the trees along Exhibition run to eliminate erosion problems associated with community trails that have been created in this corridor. This 0.6-mile trail (0.4 miles on National Forest System land) would cater to the many trails users who demand the toughest or most direct workout ascending the mountain. In the winter months, this route would serve as the designated direct boot-pack ascent route.

In addition, a new 1.5-mile uphill hiking trail would be developed just west of the Stairway Trail in the Bear Cat glades area, extending into the western permit expansion area near the top. With an approximate grade of 13 percent, it would create an improved experience for hikers seeking to ascend the mountain via a less direct route. This trail would route trail users off the face of the mountain where service roads provide access to the summit and create potential safety concerns. In winter months, this trail would serve as the primary designated uphill ski route. Taking uphill skiers off the main ski runs in winter would reduce conflicts between uphill and downhill skier traffic, as well as limit the interaction between uphill skiers and grooming operations at night.

Wedding Venue

In conjunction with the summit building, a wedding venue is planned to be constructed a few hundred feet west of the new building. This would be an in-ground facility, constructed with stone benches/tiers in a semi-circle around a raised platform.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Construction would begin in the construction season following authorization, anticipated to be summer of 2020. Completion of the proposed action is projected by October 2025.

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS:

While comments will be accepted any time during the process, to be most useful in the preparation of the EIS and to establish eligibility to file an objection, comments must be provided during a designated opportunity for public comment. This scoping period, starting with the date of publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register and continuing for 30 days, is the first designated opportunity to comment.

Comments should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns about potential environmental impacts of this project and any alternatives or design features that might reduce those impacts. We will consider references provided by commenters if the cited articles are submitted with the

comment letter, and if the letter identifies the relevance of the findings to specific actions and effects of this particular project.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record and available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not allow the respondent to have 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 all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner. 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 36 CFR 218. Specific written comments, as defined by 36 CFR 218.2, should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*, per the provisions of 36 CFR 218. The publication date in the *Federal Register* 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: Snow King On-mountain Improvements Project. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-jackson@fs.fed.us. Written comments must be submitted to: Bridger-Teton National Forest - Jackson Ranger District, P.O. Box 1689, Jackson, WY 83001 – attention District Ranger Mary Moore. Comments may be hand-delivered to 340 N. Cache St. between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

An objection period, if required, will follow regulations found in 36 CFR 218.7. For objection eligibility (36 CFR 218.5), only those who have submitted timely, specific written comments during a designated opportunity for public comment may file an objection. Issues raised in future objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (36 CFR 218.8(c)).

Additional information on this project is available on the project webpage: http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54201 . If you would like more information or have questions relating to this project, please contact Mary Moore, Jackson District Ranger, by email at marymoore@fs.fed.us, or by phone at 307-739-5410.

Please feel free to pass this letter on to others you think may have an interest or concern with this project.

Sincerely,



PATRICIA M O'CONNOR
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: Snow King Area Maps
cc: Ryan Stanley, General Manager, Snow King Mountain Resort
Tyler Sinclair, Planning Director, Town of Jackson
Mark Newcomb, Chair, Teton County Board of Commissioners
Mary Moore, Jackson District Ranger
Derek Ibarguen, Deputy Forest Supervisor

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