



December 30, 2014

Re: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (JHMR) Recreation Enhancement Projects.

Location: 110° 49' 31" W and 43° 35' 54" N -to- 110° 52' 4 W and 43° 35' 46" N, north portion of JHMR, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Teton County Wyoming. JHMR is located adjacent to Teton Village, Teton County, Wyoming.

Dear Interested Public:

The Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) is proposing to authorize JHMR to construct several new lifts, trails and buildings-and install snow-making/avalanche hazard reduction equipment and summer attractions. This is a public scoping notice for proposed work within the Special Use Permit (SUP) boundary at JHMR. This scoping notice provides the public an opportunity to comment on the scope of the environmental analysis that will be conducted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please inform us of the potential environmental impacts of the proposal that are of concern to you. Those who may wish to object to the subsequent draft Decision Notice (DN) on the proposed projects must provide comments during the 30-day comment period that will begin upon publication of the legal notice in the *Casper-Star Tribune* per the provisions of 36 CFR 218.

Scoping of the project and the decision to be made:

JHMR has been operating a year-round resort since 1965 on a Special Use Permit (SUP) area encompassing 2,412 acres authorized on Nation Forest Service (NFS) land by the BTNF. Many improvements to the resort have been implemented over the past 49+ years under provisions of the Master Development Plan (MDP) and required permitting processes. The December 2013 revision (update) of the MDP was reviewed and formally accepted by the BTNF. It includes proposals for new infrastructure designed to promote summer and year-round recreation activities. Many of the other projects proposed in the 2013 MDP were previously outlined and analyzed under previous MDPs.

JHMR has submitted a list of projects from the 2013 MDP which they would like to implement over the next three years. The projects are all located within the existing SUP boundary. The Forest Service (FS) is required to disclose anticipated environmental impacts that would be expected in association with implementation of these proposals in addition to studying alternative means of meeting the purpose and need of the projects. The acceptance of JHMR's MDP does not pre-dispose the agency to final approval of any of these projects; although initial indications are that the projects are or can be made consistent with the BTNF Forest Plan. Currently, it is expected that the Proposed Action will be analyzed within an Environmental Assessment (EA), which will provide full disclosure of potential impacts to the environment.

Based on the analysis in the EA, I will decide whether to authorize the projects presented here or some modification of these projects. I could also decide not to authorize some or all of the projects. If I authorize projects, my decision will be documented in a Decision Notice (DN). Following the FS pre-decisional objection process (36 CFR 218), I will issue a public draft of the DN prior to signing; this will allow eligible parties to file objections if desired. I anticipate release of the draft DN this coming spring.

Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action:

The primary purpose of the proposed action is to enhance the recreational opportunities both in the winter and the summer at the JHMR. Extensive customer surveys conducted by JHMR indicate that visitors are consistently seeking a more diverse range of recreational activities particularly for families. This also now extends to people seeking more adventurous activities year-round. The FS Introduced the *Framework for Sustainable Recreation* in 2012(FFSR). The FFSR includes 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 recreational providers. Implementation of the projects proposed in the 2013 MDP has the potential to help fulfill the FFSR goals.

The need for action by the FS is to respond to JHMR's proposal to implement activities for enhanced alpine skiing and activities consistent with the *Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011* (SAROE). Based on this premise, the Purpose of the Action is to:

1. Provide new and innovative forms of year-round outdoor recreation on NFS lands for visitors to the Jackson Hole valley.
2. Utilize existing lifts and mountain facilities to support new services and recreational activities.
3. Capitalize on the relationship between the BTNF and JHMR to connect visitors with the natural environment.

Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action includes the following (projects), each of which is explained in subsequent text:

- Sweetwater gondola installation
- Eagle's Rest triple chair installation
- Solitude conveyor lift installation
- Casper restaurant remodel/expansion
- Ski Patrol station at the top of the Bridger gondola
- Ashley Ridge run upgrade and realignment with skier overpass
- Wide Open run expansion
- Solitude run development
- Washakie and Grizzly run development
- Snow-making system expansion
- GazEx® avalanche system completion
- Hiking/Biking trail network redevelopment and expansion
- Via Ferrata installation
- Zip-line installation with modified alignment

Sweetwater gondola installation (8 passenger gondola)

To provide more out of base capacity in the morning and throughout the day, the FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to remove the existing Eagles Rest and Sweetwater chair lifts and replace them with a new eight passenger gondola. This lift, called Sweetwater, would include a mid-station unload/load function, which would service the Solitude Cabin/tent facility. This mid-station would also provide the Mountain Sports School (MSS) additional operating space which would reduce congestion in the base area. The lift would have a capacity of 2000 people per hour and a length of approximately 4,500 feet. Its vertical rise would be approximately 1,300 feet.

The proposed gondola base terminal would be located immediately adjacent to the Teewinot base terminal and the top terminal would be located just downhill of the existing unload area of the current Sweetwater chair lift and at an elevation equal to that of Casper restaurant (see attached Figure 1). This new gondola would also provide access to the Casper restaurant in the summer time.

This new lift would require the removal of a few hundred trees and grading at the base, mid and top terminal locations. All disturbed areas would be reclaimed as required by the FS. A new gondola cabin storage facility would be installed adjacent to the mid-station. Heated plaza areas (hardscapes) would be installed at the base, mid and top terminal areas.

An optional location for the top terminal is also being reviewed (see attached Figure1). It would be located between Ashley Ridge and Kemmerer trails at an area known as The Crossing. This alternative alignment would provide more space for skier circulation and better access to the Casper and Teton lift loading areas. The mid-unload station would remain in the same location for either alignment option but would require a bend (angle) in the alignment. This option would also provide access to the Solitude facility during summer and winter seasons. Long term a new restaurant similar to the Bridger

Restaurant would be constructed adjacent to the top terminal. This new facility would be operated in the evenings much like the existing Bridger Restaurant.

Eagle's Rest chair lift installation (fixed grip triple)

There is a very limited amount of low intermediate terrain at the JHMR. For this reason, it has always been a challenge for the Mountain Sports School (MSS) to provide effective classes for low ability ski and snow boarders. To reduce this shortfall in low intermediate terrain, the FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to relocate the existing triple chair lift to the south edge of the Eagles Rest run (see attached Figure 1). The lower terminal of the lift would be located approximately 800 feet uphill from the base of the resort. Access to the lift would be provided by both the new Sweetwater gondola and the Teewinot chair lift. The lift would have a capacity of 1,200 persons per hour and have a vertical rise of approximately 280 feet. The top portion of the Eagle's Rest run would be re-graded to create new terrain with a grade of approximately 25 percent.

Solitude conveyor lift installation (Carpet)

To provide more capacity for beginner and novice classes in the MSS, the FS is proposing to authorize the installation of a new conveyor (moving carpet) type of lift. It would be approximately 300 feet in length, covered and be located just downhill from the mid-station of the Sweetwater gondola. The terrain around the lift, consisting of approximately four (4) acres, would be cleared and graded accommodate this new lift installation. This conveyor lift would also be accessible by the Teewinot chair and also used by the MSS (see attached Figure 1).

Casper restaurant (remodel/expansion)

With the continued growth in skier visits over the past decade, there is now a shortage of on-mountain restaurant seating capacity. The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to remodel and expand the existing Casper restaurant over several phases. Phase one consists of adding a three story addition to the south (downhill) side of the building and the second phase would include redeveloping the existing servery by expanding the footprint of the north side of the existing building and adding a second floor (see attached Figure1)

The redeveloped Casper restaurant would have up to a total of 675 seats and a total floor area of up to 28,000 sq. ft. The existing sewer and water systems would be expanded to accommodate the proposed increased capacity of the building.

Storage facility

JHMR has outgrown all of its storage facilities. There currently is considerable miscellaneous equipment stored outside in the existing operations storage area (bone yard). The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to construct a new two story building approximately 80 feet wide by 40 feet deep (3,200 sq. ft. footprint - 6,400 gross floor area). It would be approximately 28 feet tall with a gable roof and dark brown siding and would be located along the north side of the access road to the bone yard (see attached Figure 1). There is a need to remove approximately ten aspen trees to make room for the building. Once the building is constructed, all disturbed areas would be reclaimed.

Ski patrol station

In order to provide more on-mountain seating, JHMR has replaced its existing retail space and Ski Patrol station at the Bridger Restaurant with additional seating. However, there is the need to provide more operational space for the growing demands for the Ski Patrol operations. The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to provide new space for the Ski Patrol operations at the top of the Bridger gondola. A 675 sq. ft. addition is proposed to be added to the end of the existing gondola cabin storage facility (see attached Figure 2). This single story addition would match the look of the existing facility which includes painted metal siding and colored trim.

Ashley Ridge trail:

JHMR has always had limited egress routes to the base of the resort. This is due to the steep portion of terrain located between the elevations of 6,700 and 7,400 feet. This is especially true in the Casper and Apres Vous section of the resort. Currently Werner run is the main route off the mountain in this area of the resort. The existing Ashley Ridge trail is an

alternative route but it is an expert run and is never groomed due to large rocks and its cross slopes. The upper section of Ashley Ridge run is considered intermediate terrain and is skied quite regularly.

The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to upgrade and widen the upper portion of the trail and realign the lower portion of the run below South Pass traverse (see attached Figure 1). This redevelopment would require substantial tree removal and slope grading. It has been designed to have a nominal width of 150 feet and a maximum grade of 55 percent. To reduce skier conflict where the upgraded run would intersect with South Pass traverse, it is proposed to construct a skier overpass so Ashley Ridge run can cross over South Pass traverse. It will be constructed out of concrete and have a width of approximately 120 feet. The bottom of the run would be extended downhill and would tie into the top of the existing Antelope Flats trail. This design would allow advanced skiers to access the base area on a trail other than the crowded Lower Werner run.

The area of the project is approximately fourteen (14) acres and includes some riparian areas near the bottom of the project. No filling or grading would occur in riparian areas. A temporary access road would need to be installed near the base of the project and on a portion of Werner run to provide construction access at the middle of the project. These temporary access construction roads would be reclaimed upon completion of the project.

Wide Open run:

With the installation of the new Teton lift there would be the need to create additional advanced intermediate trails. To accomplish this, the FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to extend the existing Wide Open run uphill and connect it to the top of the unload area at the top of the Teton lift (see attached Figure 2). This new section of the trail is rocky and would need to be graded smooth (summer groomed). The size of the project is approximately six (6) acres and there are no riparian areas within the boundary of this project.

Washakie run:

This new run would follow the fall line from a point just east of top of the Teton lift down to Togwotee Pass Traverse (see attached Figure 2). Initially this run would be extensively gladed and utilized for several seasons to determine whether more improvement to the run is warranted. The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to clear and glade a new trail with a width of up to 160 feet. The trail involves seven (7) acres and would require moderate tree removal. Based on previous surveys, there are no riparian areas within the boundary of the project.

Grizzly Glade run:

With the installation of the Teton chairlift, it is desired to provide more skiing terrain on Moran Face by glading this area. The concept behind this project is to connect existing treeless openings with one another while keeping the natural look of the area. This would be accomplished by selectively removing trees in dense stands and brush cutting. The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to perform moderate glading of the area (200+ trees) and perform selective rock blasting/removal as warranted (see attached Figure 2).

Solitude run:

To provide additional advanced intermediate terrain served by the new Teton lift, the FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to create a new trail adjacent to the existing Moran run (see attached Figure 2)). This run would also be accessible from the Apres Vous lift. A moderate amount of tree removal and grading is required to make an acceptable ski trail. There are seasonal stream channels that run within the boundary of the project but they would be left undisturbed. The proposed trail would involve approximately seven (7) acres.

Snow-making system expansion:

With the desire by JHMR to open the resort by Thanksgiving day each year and to complete making snow operations prior to the holidays on all major trails, JHMR is continually upgrading and expanding its snow-making system. With generally warmer temperatures and increased levels of business, it has become more important to have snow-making coverage at mid mountain elevations. For these reasons, JHMR is proposing to install snow-making systems on Wide Open, Ashley Ridge, Solitude and Easy-Does-It runs (see attached Figures 1 and 2). The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to expand its snow-making system coverage area from 222 acres to 248 acres (a 12% increase).

The expansion requires the installation of underground pipelines and electrical lines. Most construction activities would occur in locations that have been previously graded (disturbed).

GazEx® system expansion:

Portions of the terrain at JHMR are located in active avalanche zones. The Ski Patrol has previously installed an avalanche hazard reduction system called GazEx® on the area of the resort called Headwall. This system has proven to be very effective in reducing the occurrence of major avalanches in this area. It also reduces the risk of injury to Ski Patrol personnel.

The GazEx® system would consist of five “exploders”, a propane/oxygen bottle storage shelter, buried 1” diameter gas lines connecting the exploders to the shelter and buried communication lines. The system is installed without the installation of any additional construction roads. All foundation excavations are dug by hand. Building materials (concrete), the exploders, the shelter and gas bottles are all flown into place by helicopter. All disturbed areas (estimated at 0.3 acre) are reclaimed following guidelines set by the FS. The exploders are manufactured out of metal and range in model size from the 0.8 cu. meters to 1.5 cu. meters. They are approximately 12 feet tall once installed.

With the installation of the Teton lift (previously called Craggs), the FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to expand its GazEx® system into the Craggs area of the resort above the top terminal of both the Teton and Casper lifts (see attached Figure 2). This area has several known slide paths and is currently managed by the use of a 105 mm Howitzer. The Howitzer would no longer be usable in this area once the Teton lift is installed.

Hiking/Biking trail network expansion:

The current hiking (multipurpose) trail network within the SUP consists of fourteen (14) miles of trails. The trail system dedicated specifically to downhill mountain bike riding has a total length of approximately five (5) miles. Total exiting trail network length at JHMR is approximately nineteen (19) miles.

The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to construct an additional 13.6 miles of hiking/biking trails to its existing trail network. 7.9 miles of trails are designed to provide downhill mountain biking from the Casper and Teewinot chair lifts along with trails accessed by the planned Sweetwater gondola. The remaining 5.7 miles are proposed as hiking trails. They are proposed to be accessed by the Bridger and Sweetwater gondolas. Additional hiking trails are proposed for access to Via Ferratas located in the Casper Bowl area and the cliffs below Tram tower #4 and #5 (see attached Figures 1 and 2).

The trails are constructed either by hand or with a very small “walking” backhoe or mini excavator. For this reason, there is no need to remove any trees larger in diameter than three inches. Bike trails would include banked turns and manmade features. Brush is removed along the route of the trails and the trail is graded to a width ranging from 24 to 60 inches. All disturbed areas adjacent to the new trails would be reclaimed. Total area of disturbance is approximately ten (10) acres. Seasonal streams would be crossed using wooden bridges.

Via Ferrata installation:

The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to install several Via Ferratas on the mountain. A Via Ferrata (Italian for iron road) is a protected climbing route commonly found in the mountains of Europe. The essence of a modern Via Ferrata is a steel cable which runs along a climbing route and is periodically attached to the rock which is used as a safety line. It is common to also have climbing aids such as iron rungs, pegs or even ladders installed along such routes.

JHMR is proposing to install several Via Ferratas in three locations. Several would be in the Casper Bowl area and the others would be on the cliff bands located below Tram tower #4 and #5. (see attached Figure 2).

The Via Ferrata system would allow visitor to experience rock climbing in a unique and safe fashion. The routes would be designed and installed by companies that specialize in these types of installations.

The installation of the hardware (iron rungs, safety cable, etc.) would require drilling into the rock face of the chosen route. Foot paths (trails) to the base and tops of the Via Ferratas would be installed for access. These new trails would be part of the overall hiking trail network and would be installed following the design requirements established by the FS.

Zip-line reconfiguration:

In August of 2013, the FS issued a Decision Memo authorizing the installation of an Aerial Adventure Course (AAC) which included a ropes course, drop tower and a zip-line. In order to improve operational efficiencies of the zip-line,

JHMR proposes to move the starting point from a location near the top of the Teewinot chair lift to a point adjacent to the mid-station of the future Sweetwater gondola (see attached Figure 1).

This change would not affect the location of the drop tower. The FS is proposing to authorize JHMR to change the design/location of the zip-line since it does not require any more tree removal than required for the previously approved alignment. The amount of earthwork associated with the installation of the start platform is also similar to what was required initially.

Proposed Action - Implementation Timing

Contingent upon FS approval, the construction of the various projects could begin in 2015 with completion of all project installations expected by December 2017.

Comment period:

This comment period provides those interested in or affected by these projects an opportunity to make their concerns known. A copy of this description of the proposed action is also available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/btnf/projects>.

This proposed project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subpart B. Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project either during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with at § 218.5(a). Those who may wish to object to the subsequent draft DN on the proposed projects must provide comments during the 30-day comment period that will begin upon publication of the legal notice in the *Casper-Star Tribune* per the provisions of 36 CFR 218.

Please address any form of comments as attention: JHMR Recreational Enhancement Projects.

Written comments must be submitted to: Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) - Jackson Ranger District, P.O. Box 1689, Jackson, WY. 83001 - attention Ray Spencer. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments to 340 N. Cache St. are 8:00-4:30 Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone 307-739-5415 or in person. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-jackson@fs.fed.us.

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

Sincerely,

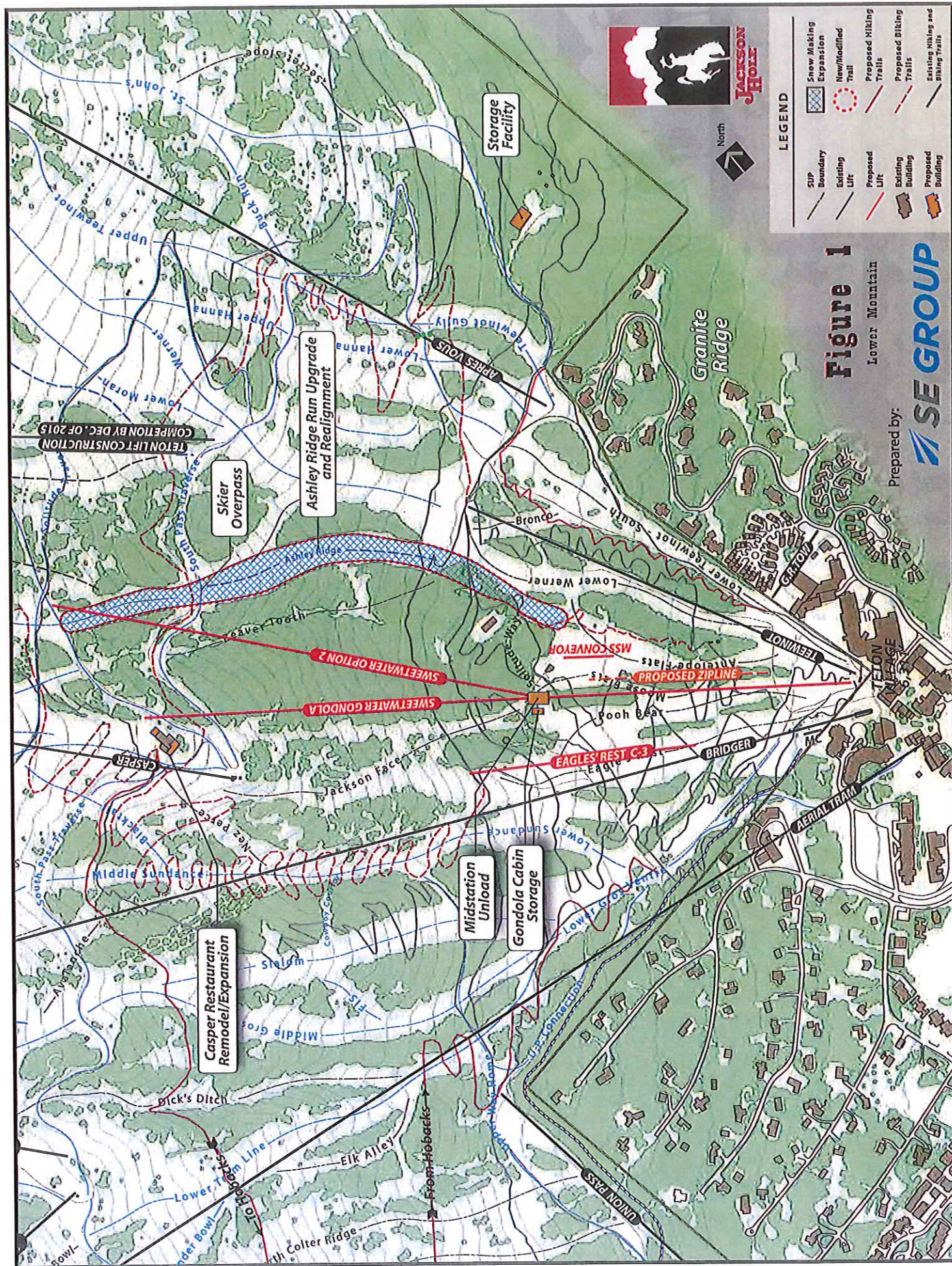


Dale Deiter

Jackson District Ranger

Bridger-Teton National Forest

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, would be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and would be available for public inspection. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.279(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The FS would inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency would return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 15 days.



Prepared by:



LEGEND

SUP	Boundary	New/Modified Trail	GasEx Avalanche System Completion
Existing Lift	Proposed Lift	Proposed Hiking Trails	Proposed Biking Trails
Existing Building	Proposed Building	Existing Hiking Trail	
	Snow Making Expansion		

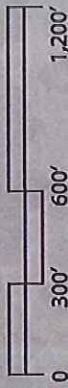


Figure 2

Upper Mountain

