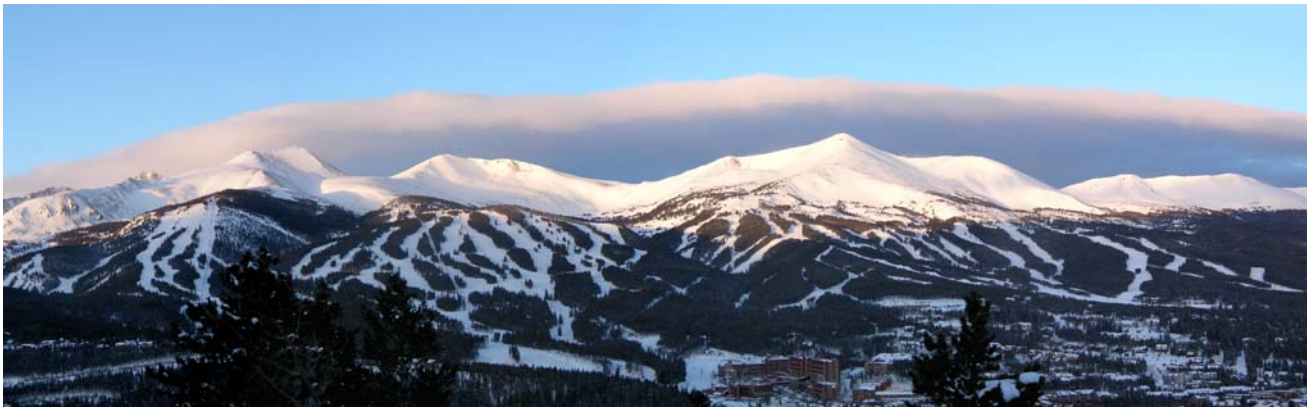
BRECKENRIDGE SKI RESORT



PEAK 6 PROJECT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Record of Decision

AUGUST 2012

USDA Forest Service
White River National Forest
Dillon Ranger District

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USDA FOREST SERVICE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION (R2)

WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST

DILLON RANGER DISTRICT

Summit County, Colorado

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official: Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest

For Information Contact: Joe Foreman, Winter Sports Administrator
Dillon Ranger District
PO Box 620
Silverthorne, Colorado 80498
(970) 262-3443

RECORD OF DECISION

INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision to approve selected projects within Breckenridge Ski Resort's 5,756-acre Special Use Permit (SUP) boundary on the White River National Forest (WRNF) in Summit County, Colorado. My decision is based on, and supported by, the Breckenridge Ski Resort Peak 6 Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the administrative record.

BACKGROUND

Breckenridge Ski Resort (BSR) is owned and operated by Vail Resorts, Inc. under a Special Use Permit (SUP) from the USDA Forest Service. The terms of the SUP require the permittee (BSR) to prepare a Master Development Plan (MDP), which identifies goals and opportunities for future management of the ski area on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Accordingly, a MDP was prepared and submitted by BSR and accepted by the Forest Service in 2007. The *2007 Breckenridge Ski Resort Master Development Plan* (2007 MDP) includes a list of proposed projects that, if approved, could be implemented in five to ten years. The major component of the 2007 MDP is the proposal for lift-served skiing on Peak 6. Currently, BSR includes developed, lift-served skiing on approximately 1,825 acres across peaks 7, 8, 9 and 10 on the Tenmile Range. Also included in the 2007 MDP is a suite of lift upgrades for existing lifts, new lifts, and several terrain network improvements within the developed ski area boundary. The Peak 6 development project was proposed by BSR to the Forest Service, and was subsequently accepted and adopted as the Forest Service's Proposed Action for this project, as it most effectively addresses the needs of the Forest Service and BSR.

Revised in 2002 through the WRNF Land and Resource Management Plan (2002 Forest Plan) revision process, the BSR SUP boundary increased in size to include Peak 6 and a portion of Peak 5. A component of the 2002 Forest Plan revision process also reduced the number of acres at BSR allocated under the 8.25 Management Area Prescription: Ski Areas – Existing and Potential. The area was reduced compared to the previous Forest Plan allocation, but continued to contain the BSR SUP boundary in its entirety. In 2006, an agreement between BSR and the Breckenridge Nordic Center resulted in an additional modification to the SUP boundary, increasing the BSR's SUP area acreage from 5,553 to 5,756 acres.

LOCATION

BSR is located on the Dillon Ranger District of the WRNF, approximately 85 miles west of Denver, the largest metropolitan area in Colorado (refer to Figure ROD-1). BSR is accessed from the Colorado Front Range via Interstate 70 and Colorado State Highway 9.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed projects were specifically planned to better accommodate existing daily visitation levels, and maintain the desired skiing experience with comfortable terrain capacities. It is not anticipated that the proposal would elicit increases in Peak Day visitation. The following seven statements summarize the Purpose and Need:

- Purpose #1: Better accommodate current daily visitation levels.
- Purpose #2: Reduce skier congestion on BSR's existing Intermediate and Advanced-Intermediate terrain network and associated lifts.
- Purpose #3: Reduce waiting time for lifts at BSR.
- Purpose #4: Disperse Intermediate and Advanced-Intermediate skiers more efficiently across the entire skiable terrain network.
- Purpose #5: Provide additional lift-served terrain to accommodate the existing terrain distribution deficit.
- Purpose #6: Provide additional hike-to access servicing advanced ability levels.
- Purpose #7: Provide sufficient infrastructure in pods to serve guests.

Refer to Chapter 1 of the FEIS for the Purpose and Need description in its entirety.

THE DECISION AND RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

After thoroughly considering the project Purpose and Need, issues, alternatives and extensive analyses presented in the Breckenridge Ski Resort Peak 6 Project EIS, as well as the public and agency comments submitted, my decision is to approve Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action. All of the projects approved by my decision are on NFS lands within 2002 Forest Plan Management Area 8.25 and occur within the BSR SUP boundary, with the exception of access road construction that would occur within the Breckenridge Nordic Center SUP area.

Further information is provided in the *Decision Rationale* section of this ROD.

THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

My decision to approve the Alternative 2 as stated in the FEIS, provides BSR with the authorization to implement key components of the 2007 MDP, which will allow BSR to better meet guest expectations and address the project Purpose and Need. Implementation of the projects in the Selected Alternative will also respond to long-term goals and objectives of the 2002 Forest Plan. The Selected Alternative is depicted on Figure ROD-2.

The Selected Alternative encompasses approximately 550 acres of traditional downhill and hike-to skiing accessed by a two-lift configuration. In addition, two guest service facilities will be constructed to accommodate guests—a ski patrol/warming hut will be located at the top of the new upper Peak 6 lift, and a restroom facility with composting toilets will be developed at the junction of the two lifts. Specific components of the Selected Alternative are detailed below.

Terrain

The Selected Alternative includes construction of seven below-treeline trails, totaling approximately 68 acres, on terrain that is located within BSR's existing SUP area north of the existing ski area in an area known as Peak 6. Lift-served, above-timberline terrain will provide approximately 339 additional acres of Intermediate, Advanced-Intermediate, and Expert skiing. Of this total, approximately 235 acres will be lift-served by the Peak 6 lifts, and 104 acres will be lift-served by accessing the existing Imperial Express SuperChair. The increase in lift-served acreage gained from the Imperial Express SuperChair will be a result of moving the operational boundary to accommodate the Selected Alternative.

The following summarizes approved lift-served acreages by ability level:

Beginner:	0 acre
Novice:	0 acre
Low-Intermediate:	0 acre
Intermediate:	182 acres
Advanced-Intermediate:	62 acres
Expert:	163 acres

By hiking approximately 15 minutes to the summit of Peak 6 from the top of the upper Peak 6 lift, guests could access an additional 143 acres of Expert terrain (refer to Figure ROD-2 for the hiking route and hike-to terrain). Table ROD-1 provides a summary of lift-served and hike-to terrain for Alternative 2.

Table ROD-1:
Lift-Served and Hike-To Terrain – Selected Alternative

Terrain Type	Skiable Terrain (acre)	Project Component	
		Tree Clearing	Grading
Lift-served, Below-Treeline Trails	68	Yes	Yes[a]
Above-Treeline Accessed from Peak 6 Lifts	235	No	No
Above-Treeline Access from Imperial Express SuperChair	104	No	No
Total Lift-Served Terrain	*407*		
Hike-to Terrain	143	No	No
Total Terrain	**550**		

[a] Grading in specific areas, shown in orange on Figure ROD-2, totals 12.6 acres.

A collector trail will return skiers from the Peak 6 terrain to the junction of the Peak 6 lifts. Creation of this ski trail will require tree removal and grading on approximately 17 acres to minimize side slopes and provide an appropriate skier egress on a consistent 10 percent grade (refer to Figure ROD-2). The planned Peak 6 terrain and Peak 6 lifts will be accessed from the existing Independence SuperChair pod. The bottom terminal of the lower Peak 6 lift will be located in the inter-trail tree island between *Angel's Rest* and *Lincoln Meadows* trails, just above their confluence. Guests will also be able to access the lower Peak 6 lift bottom terminal from the top of the Peak 8 SuperConnect, Colorado SuperChair and Rocky Mountain SuperChair (all on Peak 8) via *Columbine* to *Pioneer* trails. To facilitate this access, two new trail segments will be created connecting between *Pioneer* and *Wirepatch* trails, and between *Wirepatch* and *Lincoln Meadows* trails (refer to Figure ROD-2). Guests will egress from the Peak 6 trails and connect back to the existing Peak 7 terrain via the *Monte Cristo* trail and the Independence SuperChair. A narrow access trail (approximately 10 feet wide created by selective tree removal) will be constructed on a 10 percent slope from the top of the Independence SuperChair to the junction of the Peak 6 lifts. This access will not require any grading. The access trail will allow entrance to the Peak 6 terrain for more advanced ability level guests and will facilitate movement of guests skiing the natural glades on the south side of the new terrain who are routing back to the bottom terminal of the upper Peak 6 lift. Furthermore, by providing an access trail, this will potentially separate more advanced ability level guests from Intermediate ability level guests skiing in Peak 7.

Final trail design and construction will adhere to all Project Design Criteria (PDC) stated in Appendix A of this document, including scenery and vegetation removal PDC. However, a component of my decision, and the direction I am providing to my staff during implementation, is to balance the preservation of lynx habitat and healthy trees with scenery PDCs, with priority to lynx habitat preservation, when necessary.

Terrain Design Components and Terrain Management

To ensure consistent snow conditions above-treeline, BSR will construct and maintain several snow fences in key locations within the Peak 6 terrain, and on the north aspect of Peak 7. These fences will be similar to those currently in place throughout the resort (refer to Figure ROD-2 for new snow fence locations). Additionally, avalanche control work will be routinely required on the new terrain above treeline (from the existing operational boundary on the north side of Peak 7 to the approved northern operational boundary). Avalanche control work will primarily occur in the morning after storm events, similar to what is currently preformed above treeline on Peaks 7 and 8, and in accordance with the BSR Winter Operating Plan.

Backcountry Access

Forest Service access points are currently maintained allowing skiers to exit the BSR operational boundary to backcountry terrain north of the developed terrain network, and to the upper portions of Peaks 9 and 10. Access north of the new operational boundary will be maintained through designated Forest Service access points.

Lifts

The upper Peak 6 lift will be installed as a detachable six-person chairlift. The lift will have a slope length of approximately 6,000 feet, a vertical rise of approximately 1,550 feet, and a design capacity of 3,000 people per hour (pph). Ground disturbance (grading) will occur for the installation of the top and bottom terminals. This lift will be a bottom drive lift to minimize disturbance above treeline. The power line to the top terminal will also provide power to the ski patrol/warming hut.

The lower Peak 6 lift will be installed as a fixed-grip four-person chairlift. The lift will have a slope length of approximately 2,600 feet, a vertical rise of approximately 350 feet, and a design capacity of 2,000 people per hour (pph). Ground disturbance (grading) is required for the installation of the top and bottom terminals. The lower Peak 6 lift will be constructed as a top drive lift.

Final lift design and construction will adhere to scenery PDC included Appendix A of this document. Disturbance limits will adhere to quantities disclosed in the FEIS.

Guest Services Facilities

A restroom facility will be located at the junction of the Peak 6 lifts. The restroom facility will be approximately 1,200 square feet in size and will include composting toilets. Power to the facility will spur from the junction of the approved Peak 6 lifts. Remaining effluent from the composting toilets will be hauled off-site, as necessary.

A ski patrol/warming hut will be constructed and maintained at the top terminal of the Peak 6 lift. The ski patrol/warming hut will be approximately 500 square feet in size and will provide infrastructure necessary for ski patrol use.

Final design and construction of the facilities will adhere to scenery PDC included Appendix A of this document. Disturbance limits will adhere to quantities disclosed in the FEIS.

Construction Practices

To gain access and implement the Selected Alternative project components, BSR is authorized to utilize existing timber roads within the Breckenridge Nordic Center SUP area and reconstruct and extend decommissioned roads (8,100 linear feet) within the South Barton timber sale areas. Reconstructing road segments will allow the proper construction equipment to access approved trails, the junction of the Peak 6 lifts site, and the restroom facility. Specific roads were selected to avoid stream crossings and the Selected Alternative prohibits construction equipment from crossing live stream channels. Moreover, the Selected Alternative will be constructed without a new stream crossing. A road spur approximately 1,200 feet in length will be constructed from the existing Peak 7/8 mountain access road to the lower lift bottom terminal site. This road spur will also serve as a skier access trail during the ski season. Road

construction is prohibited to the upper lift top terminal location. In total, 1.8 miles of road will be constructed or reconstructed for this project.

Trails will be constructed by flush cutting and/or stump grinding, except areas on the egress trail designated for full grading activities. Power is necessary at the top terminal of the upper Peak 6 lift. A buried power line will be installed using a vibrating plow, which will minimize soil disturbance. The power line will extend from the previously-approved Peak 7 Restaurant location up the existing mountain access road to the approved road spur and connect to the lower lift bottom terminal. From its intersection with the approved egress trail, it will extend to the junction of the Peak 6 lifts. The power line will continue up the designated ski trails, avoiding stream channels and wetlands, exit the treeline, and continue to the upper lift top terminal location via the concave topographic feature on the south side of Peak 6 (refer to Figure ROD-2).

The lift towers will be transported to the site by helicopter. The upper lift top terminal and ski patrol/warming hut infrastructure will also be transported by helicopter and/or over the snow with snowcats and assembled on-site. The foundations of the top terminal and the ski patrol/warming hut will be dug with an excavator that will also be transported via helicopter or over the snow with snowcats. This practice was utilized for the construction of the Imperial Express top terminal and is expected to be effective for the construction of the upper Peak 6 lift top terminal and warming hut. The concrete for the foundations of these structures will be flown via helicopter to the site.

Comfortable Carrying Capacity

The Selected Alternative is anticipated to better accommodate current daily visitation levels and is not anticipated to elicit increases in Peak Day visitation. The Selected Alternative will increase BSR's Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC) by 1,250 guests, increasing the resort's CCC from 14,920 to 16,170 guests. The Selected Alternative CCC is not a daily visitation limit; CCC is a planning tool and will be used to measure planned capacities against actual visitation.

Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment of Standard ALL S1

The Selected Alternative includes a non-significant Forest Plan amendment that removes the applicability of Canada lynx Standard ALL S1 to this project decision.[1] In conjunction with the preparation of the FEIS, the Forest Service prepared a Forest Plan Consistency Analysis (FPCA) for each of the standards and guidelines prescribed in the 2002 Forest Plan.

In the preparation of the FPCA, the applicability and relevance of each standard/guideline to the project was assessed. Standard ALL S1 technically does not apply to the existing condition or No Action Alternative, as it applies to "new or expanded permanent developments." However, through the scientific

[1] Standard ALL S1 is contained in the Southern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision, which amended the 2002 Forest Plan for lynx direction.

assessment, it has been determined that habitat connectivity is not maintained under current conditions, and this Standard is currently unable to be met in the future, with or without further development at BSR.

The Canada lynx Standard ALL S1 states (not including footnotes):

> *New or expanded permanent developments and vegetation management projects must maintain habitat connectivity in an LAU and/or linkage area.*

This Forest Plan Amendment is a one-time waiver that applies only to the Selected Alternative. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning processes for any future ski area project developments within Management Area 8.25 (BSR or other developed winter sports permittees) will evaluate compliance with Forest Plan direction (including Standard ALL S1) on a project-specific basis. The approved exemption to the Forest Plan's standard within the BSR SUP will take effect with the signing of this ROD.

Required Conservation Measures and Project Design Criteria

Operational and management requirements were developed and will be required in conjunction with implementation of the Selected Alternative. The conservation measure requirements were developed and identified in Chapter 2 of the FEIS in response to specific resource issues and concerns raised by the public, and are hereby incorporated as part of the Selected Alternative. PDC are included in Appendix A of this document.

Important conservation measures regarding Canada lynx and BSR visitation management were disclosed in the FEIS and required with the Selected Alternative. Lynx conservation measures address the loss of habitat and the impact to habitat connectivity within southern Summit County. Daily visitation at BSR will be more closely monitored, and strategies will be proactively assembled to manage daily visitation to address Peak Day visitation concerns on and off the ski area.

Responsibility for ensuring that required PDCs and conservation measures are implemented rests with BSR and the Forest Service. In all cases, the ultimate enforcement mechanism for implementation of the specified PDCs and conservation measures in this ROD, extends to the Forest Service Special Use Permit Administrator, the District Ranger, and the Forest Supervisor.

Canada Lynx:

To reduce potential impacts to lynx diurnal security habitat (DSH) and winter foraging habitat (WFH) outside of the approved Peak 6 terrain network, BSR will establish a continuous line of bumblebee rope (yellow and black rope) along the left side of the Peak 6 trail pod collector trail to discourage skiers from exiting the ski area boundary and skiing through the trees north and east of the developed terrain to the Siberian Loop of the Nordic system. This roped line represents the new ski area operational boundary. Access north of the new operational boundary would be maintained through designated Forest Service

access points. The conifer stands below the egress trail contain lynx foraging habitat and DSH. Wildlife closure signs will be installed approximately every l00 feet along the length of the boundary. Forest Service regulations permit skiers to leave and return to the operational part of ski areas only through designated backcountry access points. No access point is available below tree line in the peak 6 expansion area.

Colorado Revised Statute (CRS) 33-44-109 is consistent with these regulations. Under the CRS 33-44-l 09, it is a violation for skiers to enter any trail or area that has been closed by the ski area operator with a rope and/or "Closed" sign, within or adjacent to the ski area. Other than skier access through the backcountry access point that would be developed for access north of the new BSR operational boundary (i.e., north of the terrain to be developed), skiers ducking the signed rope closure constitutes an illegal activity. Bumblebee rope will be installed/removed shortly before the start/end of each ski season to avoid entanglement of antlered big game.

During the Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation process with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) process, Vail Resorts proposed to initiate a lynx and wildlife conservation fund to be administered by the National Forest Foundation (NFF). Vail Resorts' proposal to NFF, which was incorporated as Conservation Measures in the USFWS Biological Opinion, have been incorporated herein as requirements of the Selected Alternative. The intent is to establish a fund that can be used for habitat improvements in Summit County, Colorado and as voluntary mitigation for the Selected Alternative. Vail Resorts and the Forest Service anticipate that the fund would become self-sustaining, available for contribution by others, and be able to fund additional lynx and wildlife conservation projects. Potential projects include purchase of conservation easements, matching funds for grants, habitat improvements, additional studies, and education efforts. The details of the conservation measures include:

A monetary contribution by Vail Resorts of $300,000, paid to the fund over the course of four years subsequent approval of the Selected Alternative. $200,000 of the funds would be used for specific projects, and the balance of the funds allocated to future projects. The specific projects and contribution would be: $100,000 for road decommissioning projects approved in the WRNF Travel Management Plan, and $100,000 for completion of the WRNF lynx/recreation study. The remaining $100,000 would be used for general lynx related studies, education, habitat improvement projects, etc.

In order to monitor the impacts of incidental take as identified in the Biological Opinion (available in Appendix G of the FEIS), the Federal agency or any applicant must report the progress of the action and its impact on the species to the USFWS as specified in the incidental take statement. The monitoring and reporting shall include:

- The Forest Service shall develop a snowshoe hare monitoring plan to track anticipated impacts of the Selected Alternative. The monitoring plan shall include habitat inventory of the development area below tree line, and the area between the new development boundary and the permit

boundary below tree line, winter tracking surveys, and summer pellet counts to estimate snowshoe hare population density.

Winter tracking will provide skier intrusion pattern and frequency, presence/absence of snowshoe hares, and activity trends during pre- and post-implementation.

Summer pellet counts shall incorporate sound scientific methods for estimating population density within the monitoring area. Summer pellet counts will provide information about whether habitats impacted during the winter months become repopulated during the spring and summer.

- The monitoring plan shall be initiated one season prior to beginning ground disturbing activities and continue for at least five years beyond full operation within the new development area. After five years, the Forest Service and the USFWS will assess the monitoring data. If no conclusion can be reached based on the initial five-year monitoring period, the monitoring period may be extended for an additional five-year at discretion of the Forest Service and the USFWS.
- The Forest Service shall, provide the USFWS with an annual report, no later than March 31st, of each year, consistent with 50 CFR 13.45. The report shall provide the initial sampling and data collected for each year. At the end of the first five-year monitoring period. The Forest Service shall provide the USFWS a written report of its findings. If additional monitoring is required, similar reporting shall be required and reported as during the initial monitoring period.

Visitation Management:

Subsequent to the DEIS, BSR proposed a strategy to the Forest Service to address visitation management at BSR, including Peak Day visitation concerns raised by the public, Town of Breckenridge and Summit County Government. The Forest Service cannot require BSR to implement specific measures to address visitation; however, the Forest Service can monitor the results of measures taken by BSR and determine if the measures are successful or unsuccessful. The conservation measure proposed by BSR, which the Forest Service is incorporating as a component of the Selected Alternative, includes:

- BSR and USFS will meet semi-annually, once pre-season and once post-season, to discuss means and methods of managing peak skier visitation. The pre-season meeting will be held as part of the Joint Annual Business Meeting referred to in Section III.C of the BSR Special Use Permit and will be held before the beginning of each winter season. Discussions at the pre-season meeting may include specific means and methods to manage skier visitation by BSR, and adaptive management techniques proposed for addressing resort impacts, pressure points and evolving skier behavior. Means and methods considered may include the following, as appropriate:
    - Off duty employee pass/access restrictions (which may include managing demand for employee parking)

  - Lift access management (which may include actions like implementing season pass restrictions or adjusting lift operating hours)
  - Travel demand management (which may include actions like promoting additional car pool incentives or adjusting operations of BSR-operated parking and transportation systems)
  - Parking and transportation (in coordination with The Town of Breckenridge ("TOB") as contemplated in Section 4 of the Memorandum of Understanding (the "MOU") among BSR, TOB, and Summit County)

- The post-season meeting will be held following the end of winter season operations and may include a discussion of BSR's compliance with the MOU, a review of skier visitation, operations and impacts, and specific means and methods to manage skier visitation implemented by BSR.

Monitoring

Future implementation monitoring is required and will assess if the projects were implemented as approved, and continue to ensure compliance with 2002 Forest Plan direction. Routine implementation monitoring is a part of the administration of all SUPs and involves input from Forest Service resource specialists.

DECISION RATIONALE

The entire Peak 6 analysis and public involvement process was both thorough and effective. It provided a foundation for my decision and the mitigation and conservation measures outlined in the FEIS. The Forest Service, along with BSR, was diligent and inclusive throughout the process and the engagement with the community addressed specific concerns brought out in various forums over the past four years. I learned through this process that quality of life and social issue concerns within the Breckenridge community extend far beyond BSR's Peak 6 proposal. I also realized that no matter what my final decision would be, I would not be able to satisfy everyone's expectations. That however, does not diminish the significant and effective outreach that occurred in conjunction with this process.

The FEIS discloses, using the best available science and information, the qualitative and quantitative effects on the human and biological environment that are anticipated to result with the implementation of the approved projects. In reviewing the qualitative and quantitative effects on the human and biological environment presented in the FEIS, I find they have been adequately addressed and disclosed throughout the analysis. I considered all the resource issues and concerns described in the FEIS, and my rationale for choosing Alternative 2 is based on careful consideration of several key elements addressed during the public involvement and analysis process, including: consistency with the project Purpose and Need; consistency with the 2002 Forest Plan and 2007 BSR MDP; environmental and social impacts; and the Peak 6 Task Force and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Consistency with the Project Purpose and Need

I am approving the Selected Alternative because it meets the Purpose and Need statement in the EIS and best addresses the current deficiencies and constraints at BSR. I believe it will provide a better skier experience and will help distribute skiers and reduce crowding across the ski season. As the analysis shows, this alternative will not address all the problems associated with the peak skier days (seven to eight days per year). However, it does represent a more effective solution than either Alternative 1 or 3.

During the NEPA process, many people in the community raised concerns that Peak 6 actually does not provide appropriate Intermediate ability level terrain and the information presented in the DEIS and FEIS is incorrect. Furthermore, if Peak 6 does not possess appropriate Intermediate ability level terrain, how could it meet the Purpose and Need for the project. Based on the analysis presented in the FEIS and ground-truthed slope measurements conducted by the Forest Service, I am confident that the Selected Alternative will address the Purpose and Need and provide additional Intermediate ability level terrain.

Other concerns were raised around visitation levels at BSR and impacts both at the resort and within the Town of Breckenridge during periods with Peak Day visitation. I understand the concerns of individuals within the community that feel Peak 6 will be a band-aid solution to the Purpose and Need, and in time, lift lines and trail densities will again be a problem as daily visitation continues to rise. A visitation management measure is incorporated as a component of my decision to develop strategies to manage daily visitation levels and preserve a positive experience at BSR, and to the extent BSR can control, within the Town. I recognize the complexity of this issue and the many factors that contribute to visitation, both at BSR and in the Town of Breckenridge. I feel that with this measure in place, the concerns surrounding this issue can be addressed, within the capacity of the Forest Service with BSR as a partner.

Consistency with 2002 Forest Plan and 2007 Master Development Plan

The Selected Alternative is located within lands allocated in the 2002 Forest Plan as Management Area 8.25 – Ski Areas (Existing and Potential). The Selected Alternative is also consistent with the 2007 MDP concept to provide lift-served and hike-to skiing on Peak 6. The Forest Service accepted the MDP and the projects outlined in the plan. I recognize that neither of these plans—2002 Forest Plan or 2007 BSR MDP—mandates or approves specific projects. However, the Selected Alternative is completely consistent with the land use allocation identified in the 2002 Forest Plan and with projects proposed from the 2007 MDP.

The White River National Forest covers over 2.3 million acres of land. Within that, the Forest Plan identified approximately 50,000 acres to be managed specifically for ski areas. These 50,000 acres accommodate over 7 million skier visits on world-class resorts and ski areas each year. The ski areas provide numerous economic benefits to communities, including among other things, direct and indirect jobs. The ski areas also pay a fee to the US Treasury for the use of these lands. Ski areas provide a vital

role in connecting the American public to their public lands. I acknowledge, and the FEIS discloses, the necessity of an amendment to the Canada lynx Standard ALL S1 in the 2002 Forest Plan as a component of the Selected Alternative. My staff and I have deliberated over this topic quite extensively and thoroughly considered the available science. As I explain in the lynx discussion below, I believe that with effective conservation measures in place, lynx habitat can cumulatively be improved within southern Summit County. The conservation measures address the loss of habitat and the impact to habitat connectivity within southern Summit County and extend beyond the BSR SUP boundary to make the most effective use of resources to improve habitat conditions.

Environmental and Social Impacts

The ultimate responsibility I have as Forest Supervisor is stewardship of the natural resources held in the public trust. Ensuring our natural resources are sustained and conserved for future generations is something I take very seriously. I carefully reviewed the FEIS and the environmental impacts associated with the Peak 6 project. There are indeed impacts. I am responsible for balancing the environmental and social impacts with the benefits the project will provide, including the conservation measures and design elements developed to reduce impacts.

Based on the input from the public during the scoping process, we included Alternative 3 in the analysis. The “in-fill” alternative, as it is often referred to, evaluated providing additional facilities and infrastructure primarily within the existing *operational* boundary of BSR. For many of the environmental resources, Alternative 3 would have resulted in greater impacts (notably, water resources). I carefully considered all resource impacts, compared with the other alternatives, when making my decision. Additionally, Alternative 3 would not have met the Purposed and Need as comprehensively as the Selected Alternative.

In the end, I found that the steps taken to minimize impacts and the use of best practices during construction will address the effects to these resources.

Effects to Canada Lynx

As outlined in the Biological Assessment and Biological Opinion, there will be loss of 81 acres of lynx habitat as a result of the Selected Alternative. However, the collaborative efforts between the Forest Service, USFWS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and BSR to develop the lynx conservation measures (refer to Appendix A of this document) have resulted in what I believe is a much better future for lynx in southern Summit County.

The baseline information and analysis clearly demonstrate that existing lynx habitat in this area is degraded, regardless of the Peak 6 project. Biologists generally agree that southern Summit County provides a key linkage zone to available habitat north of Interstate 70. As we completed the consultation process required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(USFWS) and after much consideration, we recognized there was little we could do to minimize and/or mitigate the impacts to lynx within the boundaries of the ski area. We did identify and explore several actions that could address this situation, including: closing existing portions of the ski area (The Windows and the north and south sides of Peak 10) and roping and closing intertrail tree islands in Peak 6, but these strategies would not enhance the potential for lynx habitat improvement in the area or improve this north-south corridor. Frankly, I do not think investing in lynx habitat improvement within a developed ski area is the best use of public resources. After lengthy discussions with the CPW and USFWS, we concluded that our best approach for improving the lynx movement corridor was to look at the entire southern Summit County area and determine where and what we could do to improve lynx habitat. Recently, my staff biologists completed a review of lynx habitat conditions in southern Summit County. We also concluded in this assessment that developed ski areas are not the location for effective lynx mitigation. This review of lynx habitat conditions affirms my belief that there are more effective opportunities to improve lynx habitat elsewhere within Summit County and more technically, the Swan River Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU).

Further discussions led us to an innovative and collaborative partnership between BSR, the Forest Service, USFWS, CPW and the National Forest Foundation, whereby BSR will fund a variety of studies and habitat improvement projects in southern Summit County (refer to Appendix A of this document). These projects have been identified by agency biologists who agree they are the best use of resources to improve habitat and enhance the north-zone migration corridor for lynx. The funding will also serve as seed money to attract other grants and resources to further the conservation of lynx in Colorado. This is an exciting and new approach to endangered species management. I am confident it will demonstrate that taking a broader look at the situation will result in a better future for lynx in Colorado.

By no means do I want to imply that the Peak 6 project is “good” for lynx. The analysis concludes otherwise. However, I do believe that as a result of the collaboration and future partnerships, conditions on the ground will improve for lynx in southern Summit County. This is our ultimate goal, and I look forward to implementing this lynx conservation strategy in the very near future. In making my decision I carefully weighed the impacts to lynx habitat and the public benefits the Selected Alternative will provide. I have determined this balance is acceptable, given the land is allocated as Management Area 8.25 and the Selected Alternative best meets the Purpose and Need.

Effects to Overstory Vegetation

Obviously, the mountain pine beetle epidemic has caused significant lodgepole pine mortality on the WRNF. Although comments were received that questioned cutting healthy trees, I have considered impacts to forest health and the forested area on the WRNF and within the BSR SUP boundary. A PDC was added to the FEIS that could reduce the amount of overall clearing: Minimize overstory vegetation removal during construction of ski trails, which could result in glading ski trails.

In reaching my decision, I also considered the potential loss of "legacy trees" within the Peak 6 area. Although these trees display some characteristics of advanced age trees, they do not classify as "old growth" forest, and as such, are not managed by any Forest Plan standards or guidelines. Nonetheless, trees meeting the definition of a "legacy tree" will be identified and preserved to the greatest extent practicable through implementation of PDC identified in the FEIS.

Effects to Water

In reviewing the effects to water resources, I considered effects to the watershed such as changes in water yield, peak flows, stream health, impacts within the water influence zone and drainage concerns, in relation to applicable portions of the Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook (WCPH). I realize that the Selected Alternative will remove approximately 80 acres of existing forested areas resulting in increase water yield and peak flows in Cucumber Creek and South Barton Gulch. In addition, clearing within the water influence zone in these watersheds will increase the disturbed area that is connected to Cucumber Creek and South Barton. However, as disclosed in the analysis, implementation of the Drainage Management Measures identified in the FEIS will make the Selected Alternative consistent with the WCPH and should not adversely impact the health of Cucumber Creek and South Barton Gulch.

Effects to Backcountry Skiing Opportunities

Throughout the public involvement process I have listened to the concerns of many who cherish Peak 6 for its backcountry values. I understand that my decision will result in a loss of this special experience to some visitors to BSR and people within the community. I acknowledge this; however, my rationale for allowing this loss of experience is straightforward: as I stated earlier, only 50,000 of over 2.3 million acres of the White River National Forest are dedicated for existing and potential ski areas. These 50,000 acres accommodate over 7 million skier visits annually and contribute significantly to the economies and job creation in local communities. I firmly believe the WRNF, and more specific to local interests—the Summit County area, provides an abundant amount of backcountry skiing opportunities. The WRNF Forest Plan clearly identified 8.25 Management Areas as appropriate for ski area development. The Selected Alternative is within the BSR SUP boundary and Management Area 8.25. I realize this is of little consequence to the people who currently use the Peak 6 terrain within BSR's SUP boundary for backcountry skiing; nonetheless I am confident we (the WRNF) still provide ample opportunities for this type of recreation.

Peak 6 Task Force and the Memorandum of Understanding

The scoping process for this project uncovered a variety of social issues and concerns within the Breckenridge community. It was made apparent to the Forest Service that the Town of Breckenridge, like many other prosperous mountain communities, is challenged to balance growth and a quality of life. I commend the effort to create a Task Force and tackle these important issues, including: employee recruitment/retention, affordable housing, healthcare and social services, traffic, and parking. The Task

Force worked hard to create a findings document, which was included in the analysis of the EIS. I want to personally extend my gratitude to the many people in the community who donated countless hours to this effort with the goal of making your community an even better place to live. Your work was vital to this project.

From this Task Force came the MOU between BSR, the Town of Breckenridge and Summit County Government. The MOU formalizes the findings of the Task Force and provides options to address social concerns within the community. The work that was done to complete a MOU is an example of the extraordinary community engagement efforts associated with this process. We have incorporated the MOU into the FEIS as a reference document and mechanism to address some of the broader social needs within the community.

I realize the MOU, and the commitments made by BSR, do not solve all the problems associated with impacts from peak days related to traffic, lift lines, parking and restaurant capacity. These issues cannot be solely placed on BSR. They are multi-faceted and involve marketing, special events and occur in the summer season as well. The MOU is, however, a major step in the right direction. I believe it will lead to better dialogue and problem solving with the right people at the table.

Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction to this section, my decision was multi-faceted. No one thing was the determining factor in the selection of the final alternative; instead, the approval of the Selected Alternative is a culmination of a detailed planning and analysis process. The Selected Alternative best meets the Purpose and Need to better accommodate existing daily visitation levels and maintain the desired skiing experience with comfortable terrain capacities while balancing effects to resources.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

On January 18, 2008, a scoping notice was mailed to approximately 150 community residents, interested individuals, public agencies, and other organizations. The scoping package provided a brief description of the Proposed Action, the Purpose and Need for action, preliminary issues raised, and an illustrative map. This notice was specifically designed to elicit comments, concerns, and issues pertaining to the Proposed Action. A legal notice was published in the Glenwood Post Independent, and a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register, on January 18, 2008. A public open house was held on January 30, 2008, at the Mountain Thunder Lodge in Breckenridge. Following media coverage of the proposal, other individuals obtained copies of the scoping package at the open house or sent requests to the Dillon District Ranger for information. In addition, the scoping package was posted on the WRNF website. An e-mail address was provided for submitting electronic comments.

Based on the 185 scoping letters received, a comment disposition was completed, which documents the Forest Service Interdisciplinary (ID) Team's categorization of each substantive comment. The comment

disposition is a key component to the identification of issues and the formulation of potential alternatives to the Proposed Action.[2] The issues are analyzed in the FEIS in Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.

As part of the Forest Service public outreach effort, a site visit on snow was held at BSR on April 22, 2010, with key project participants to better understand issues, concerns, and potential alternatives.

On June 10, 2011, a Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register for the DEIS. The DEIS was released for public review and comment for a 45-day comment period which extended through July 27, 2011. On July 22, 2011 a second Notice of Availability extended the DEIS comment period to August 26, 2011. During the comment period, a summer site visit was held at BSR on July 14, 2011, to allow the public to view the proposed project areas during non-snow conditions and provide comments to the Forest Service. In response to the DEIS, approximately 900 comments were received from interested parties. From these letters, substantive comments were extracted and entered into a database; comments were linked to specific commenters and resource issues. Substantive comments are addressed in the Response to Comments (RTC) document.

CONSIDERATION OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES

NEPA requires that a range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action be developed and analyzed. By definition, alternatives must meet the Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action while responding to issues identified during scoping.[3] Therefore, in response to internal and external scoping, the Forest Service Interdisciplinary (ID) Team considered issues that would generate alternatives to the Proposed Action. Both CEQ Regulations and Forest Service Handbook direction emphasize that alternatives must meet the “reasonableness” criteria in order to warrant detailed analysis.

Based on the results of public and internal scoping, the Forest Service identified specific areas of concern including:

- Wildlife habitat resources
- Preservation of live trees not affected by the mountain pine beetle
- Backcountry skiing access
- Scenic integrity and viewsheds
- Soils and watershed resources
- Quality of life for the Breckenridge community

[2] The scoping comment disposition analysis is available in the Project File.
[3] FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, Section 12.33 and 14

In response to these issues, Alternative 3 was developed to include trail and lift development within BSR's currently developed lift and terrain network as well as a proposed skiing pod immediately north of Peak 7 (refer to Chapter 1, Section I – Issues and Indicators for a complete list of issues and indicators analyzed in the EIS).

I am confident that the ID Team considered a reasonable range of alternatives early in the NEPA process, and that the two alternatives, in addition to the required No Action Alternative, analyzed in the FEIS are adequate for the scope and scale of this project.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO ACTION

As required by NEPA, a No Action Alternative has been included in the analysis for review alongside the action alternatives.[4] By definition, the No Action Alternative represents a continuation of existing management practices without changes, additions, or upgrades to existing conditions. Brief descriptions of existing on-mountain facilities and services are provided below. The No Action Alternative is depicted in Figure 2 in the FEIS.

The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparing the effects of the action alternatives. No new facilities or recreational opportunities would be approved under the No Action Alternative. Projects at BSR that have been previously-approved, but not yet implemented are analyzed in the Cumulative Effects sections of Chapter 3 and are detailed in Appendix A of the FEIS.

The following discussion is focused on existing facilities, operations, and opportunities relative to the action alternatives. Additional information for Alternative 1 is located in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Terrain

The existing developed trail network at BSR accounts for a total of approximately 1,825 acres of skiable terrain, accommodates the entire range of skier ability levels from Beginner to Expert, and is comprised of 152 lift-served trails. In addition to the developed trail network, BSR maintains approximately 390 acres of managed hike-to skiing. Another approximately 2,600 acres of backcountry terrain is available within BSR's current SUP area and Management Area 8.25.[5]

Lifts

Under the No Action Alternative, BSR's lift network would remain in its current configuration. The lift network is composed of 29 chairlifts: 1 gondola, 2 detachable six-person chairlifts, 7 detachable four-person chairlifts, 1 fixed-grip triple chairlifts, 6 double chairlifts, 5 surface lifts, 1 T-Bar, 3 surface lifts, and 8 conveyor carpets.

[4] 40 CFR 1502.14(d)
[5] This analysis quantifies backcountry terrain that is within the BSR SUP area and 2002 Forest Plan Management Area 8.25.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 was created to respond to several issues raised internally by the Forest Service and externally by the public during the scoping process. The issues include: wildlife habitat resources, preservation of live trees not affected by the mountain pine beetle, backcountry skiing, scenic integrity and viewsheds, soils and watershed resources, and quality of life for the Breckenridge community. The alternative includes trail and lift development within BSR's currently developed lift and terrain network, as well as a proposed skiing pod immediately north of Peak 7.

Alternative 3 would include the development of 326 acres of lift-served and hike-to terrain along with a new gladed skiing area (Peak 6½) immediately north of the existing ski area operational boundary. A new chairlift would be constructed to access this terrain. Twelve new trails would be constructed within the existing ski area operational boundary and three existing lifts would be upgraded—Colorado SuperChair, A-Chair and C-Chair. Snowmaking is proposed on 11 of the proposed trails within the existing operational boundary. Under this Alternative, BSR's CCC would increase by 1,490 guests, raising the BSR CCC from 14,920 to 16,410 guests. A trail grading project on *Four O'Clock* trail, continuing through *Crosscut* and *Lower Sawmill* trails is proposed to increase the efficiency of skiers circulating from Peak 8 to Peak 9. A Forest Plan Amendment is proposed to amend the 2002 Forest Plan Canada lynx Standard "ALL S1."

Additional information for Alternative 3 is located in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

In accordance with CEQ regulations, I am required to identify the alternative or alternatives that could be considered environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2[b]). Forest policy (FSH 1909.15, Section 05) defines "environmentally preferable" as:

> *"An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA… Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources."*

Based on the review of the alternatives, Alternative 1—the No Action Alternative—is the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative 1 is identified as the environmentally preferable alternative because, by its nature, it is not accompanied by any of the acknowledged impacts to the human or biological environment associated with Alternatives 2 or 3.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAWS, REGULATIONS AND AGENCY POLICY

This approval is consistent with the intent of the 2002 Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives.[6] The project was designed in conformance with 2002 Forest Plan Forest-wide management direction and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidance for ski areas—existing and potential.

As Forest Supervisor for the White River National Forest, I am required to manage the Forest in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This authority, which includes approval of ski area projects, is delegated to me through agency policy described in Forest Service Manual 1200. In reviewing the FEIS, I have concluded that my decision is consistent with all relevant laws, regulations and requirements. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1978
- Clean Air Act of 1990, as amended
- Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, including consultation resulting in a Biological Opinion signed April 27, 2012.
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974
- Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
- National Forest Management Planning Act of 1976
- National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986, as amended
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended
- Organic Administration Act of 1897, as amended
- Protection of Wetlands Executive Order 11990

[6] USDA Forest Service, 2002a

Three other permits, which are outside of the Forest Service's jurisdiction, may also be required before portions of the Selected Alternative may be implemented:

- Summit County general construction permits
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Stormwater Construction Activities Permit
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 Wetland permit

APPEAL PROVISIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. All appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of a legal notice of decision in the *Glenwood Post Independent*, the newspaper of record. Appeals and/or attachments received after the 45-day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the *Glenwood Post Independent* is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer at: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 740 Simms, Golden, CO 80401; FAX: (303) 275-5134.

The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered appeals are: Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us. The appeal must include a physical mailing address and have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 36 CFR 215.6 may appeal this decision. The Notice of Appeal must meet the appeal content requirements specified at 36 CFR 215.14. If no appeals are filed within the 45-day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five (5) business days after the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this Record of Decision, the FEIS, or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

Joe Foreman, Winter Sports Administrator
Dillon Ranger District
PO Box 620
Silverthorne, Colorado 80498
(970) 262-3443

Responsible Official:

Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest

August 15, 2012
Date

Appendix A

APPENDIX A: PROJECT DESIGN CRITERIA AND CONSERVATION MEASURES INCORPORATED INTO THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

In order to minimize potential resource impacts from construction and implementation of any approved projects, Project Design Criteria (PDC) and conservation measures have been incorporated into the Selected Alternative.

PDC are devised in the pre-analysis and analysis phases to reduce environmental impacts and comply with applicable laws and regulations. They include, but are not limited to, BMPs, standards and guidelines, and standard operating procedures.

PDC were designed by the Forest Service and specialists involved in this analysis. The potential effects of implementing the Selected Alternative were analyzed with these PDC applied.

PDC come from Federal, State, and local laws, regulations and policies; forest plans, scientific research and from experience in designing similar projects. The majority of the PDCs are considered common practices which ski area managers have historically used in alpine and sub-alpine environments to prevent or decrease potential resource impacts. They are highly effective methods that can be planned in advance and adapted to site conditions, as needed.

Project design Criteria and Conservation Measure Responsibility

Responsibility for ensuring that required PDCs and conservation measures are implemented rests with BSR and the Forest Service. In all cases, the ultimate enforcement mechanism for implementation of the specified PDC and conservation measures would be the Record of Decision for the FEIS, and would extend to the Forest Service Special Use Permit Administrator, the District Ranger and the Forest Supervisor.

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

Recreation
Address the Purpose and Need and guest expectations regarding grooming of Intermediate ability level terrain on Peak 6 to the greatest extent practicable. The Forest Service shall review BSR's annual Winter Operating Plan to consider the amount of terrain BSR intends to groom each season.
Address the Purpose and Need and guest expectations regarding daily operating hours by opening the Peak 6 terrain concurrent with other base area lifts. The Forest Service shall review BSR's annual Winter Operating Plan to consider the operating hours of the Peak 6 lifts and the timing of daily avalanche control efforts.
Grooming machine refueling tanks located at the junction of the two Peak 6 lifts will be reviewed for spill prevention to meet requirements of the State of Colorado, if necessary.
Location and installation of winch cat anchors and an avalauncher to manage and control Peak 6 terrain shall be a component of the snow safety plan and reviewed by the Forest Service.
The Forest Service will work with Summit County and the Town of Breckenridge to investigate the possibility of creating public access onto NFS lands with public trailhead parking in a location jointly determined to be feasible and appropriate. Such trailhead and access may require additional NEPA analysis.
Traffic, Parking and Ski Area Access
Construction vehicle access to the project area via Ski Hill Road/County Road 3.
Manage use of existing skier parking supply through pricing, issuing permits, coordinated transit service and pedestrian access improvements. Encouraged visitors to park once for the ski day and evening.
Peaks Trailhead parking would be monitored and enforced in accordance with measures stated in the 1998 EA which states, "1. To prevent alpine skiers from depleting the limited parking available at the Peaks trail parking area on CR 3, north of the proposed Peak 7 base area, BSR will erect appropriate signs appealing to alpine skiers and snowboarders to respect back country users by not parking at the Peaks trail parking area while alpine skiing/riding. 2. BSR will instigate a monitoring program to assess compliance. If determined necessary by the Forest Service, BSR will fund law enforcement to ensure compliance. 3. Additionally, BSR will support the Forest Service in future efforts designed to reduce resource impacts currently occurring on the Peaks trail including, if necessary, financing construction of a new trailhead and connecting section of trail as determined by the Forest Service."
Scenery
Construct facilities including structures, lift components, and bridges with materials which blend with the landscape character, as is practicable, and meet FSM 2380 policy for color and reflectivity, which is 4.5 on the Munsell neutral value color scale. Building designs will be submitted to the Forest Service for review and approval through the White River Design Process.
Follow FSM guidelines (Section 2380) and Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG) guidelines: The scenic character will be protected through appropriate siting of buildings and the use of low-impact materials and colors (e.g., indigenous construction materials, such as stone and wood, as well as low-reflective glass and roofing materials). Remain in context with the landscape (i.e., rustic, craftsman, and country lodge styles). Architecture, materials, and colors should follow the Forest Service's Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG). Additionally, Forest Service Handbook No. 617, "National Forest Landscape Management for Ski Areas, Volume 2, Chapter 7," refers recommended colors for ski areas on page 37 of that handbook. The colors are darker colors; greens, browns, navy blue, grays and black.

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

Avoid straight edges where removing trees. The edges of lift-lines, trails and structures, where the vegetation is removed, need to use a variable density cutting (feathering) technique applied to create a more natural edge that blends into the existing vegetation. Edges should be non-linear, and changes in tree heights along the edges of openings should be gradual rather than abrupt. Soften hard edges by selective removal of trees of different ages and heights to produce irregular corridor edges where possible. Lynx habitat values and quantity take priority, when applicable.
Cut stumps as low as possible to the ground to avoid safety hazard and to meet scenery objectives.
Re-grade to restore a natural terrain appearance. Blend site grading disturbance into the existing topography to achieve a natural appearance and minimize cuts and fills at the transition with grading and existing terrain.
Bury utilities per 2002 Forest Plan Standard.
Minimize overstory vegetation removal during construction of ski trails, which could result in glading ski trails. Vegetation removal should not occur beyond analyzed trail widths.
Ground disturbance above treeline associated with the installation of the buried power line will adhere to strict disturbance area and revegetation conditions. These conditions will promote prompt more successful restoration of the corridor. Prior to implementation, these conditions will be reviewed and approved by the Forest botanist, soil scientist and landscape architect.
Re-vegetate all disturbed areas after the site has been satisfactorily prepared. Repeat seeding until satisfactory re-vegetation is accomplished. Reseed with a native seed mixture using a variety of native seed grasses, wildflowers and forbs.
Meet reflectivity guidelines when constructing Facilities or structures, including buildings, lift terminals and chairs. This includes any reflective surfaces (metal, glass, plastics, or other materials with smooth surfaces), that do not blend with the natural environment. They should be covered, painted, stained, chemically treated, etched, sandblasted, corrugated, or otherwise treated to meet the solar reflectivity standards. The specific requirements for reflectivity are as follows: Facilities and structures with exteriors consisting of galvanized metal or other reflective surfaces will be treated or painted dark non-reflective colors that blend with the forest background to meet an average neutral value of 4.5 or less as measured on the Munsell neutral scale.
Meet the Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG) and Accessibility Guidelines when constructing all facilities including buildings, lift components, and bridge structures.
The Forest Service encourages BSR to construct the restroom facility and ski patrol/warming hut facility to meet a LEED or LEED equivalent rating of gold.
Cultural Resources
Although site-specific surveys have been conducted, if undocumented historic and/or prehistoric properties are located during ground disturbing activities or planning activities associated with approved construction activities, address as specified in 36 CFR 800.11 concerning Properties Discovered During Implementation of an Undertaking.
Forest Health
Prior to construction, identify and flag trees meeting the definition of a legacy tree (refer to FEIS Chapter 6 – Glossary). Preserve these trees to the greatest extent practicable.

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

Vegetation
Through project design construction impacts to known moonwort aggregations that may contain sensitive plant species would be minimized on a site by site basis by avoiding work within known moonwort aggregations at Breckenridge Ski Resort.
Minimize overstory vegetation removal during construction of ski trails, which could result in glading ski trails. Vegetation removal should not occur beyond analyzed trail widths.
Ground disturbance above treeline associated with the installation of the power line will adhere to strict disturbance area and revegetation conditions. These conditions will promote prompt more successful restoration of the corridor. Prior to implementation, these conditions will be reviewed and approved by the Forest botanist, soil scientist and landscape architect.
Except as noted within descriptions of individual project components requiring tree removal, “flush cut” all new ski trails, individual tree removal, lift corridors, and lift terminal sites. With this method, cut stumps to a height of 4 inches or less from the ground surface; the process may also include stump grinding. This trail preparation method avoids the need to disturb the remaining stumps and/or surrounding soils, thereby minimizing overall ground disturbance and existing vegetation and assisting re-vegetation efforts.
Prior to ground-disturbing activities, BSR must submit a Re-vegetation Plan for review and approval by the Forest Service. This plan must identify a methodology for determining success criteria that would be, at a minimum, consistent with the Forest Plan requirements.
Re-vegetate disturbed areas with native plants. Use, if available, genetically local (at the ecological subsection level) seeds. Seed mixtures and mulches will be noxious weed-free. To prevent soil erosion, non-persistent, non-native perennials or sterile perennials may be used while native perennials become established. The Forest Service must approve the seed mixtures prior to implementation. BSR must provide the Forest Service with annual re-vegetation monitoring reports detailing the successful or unsuccessful re-establishment of vegetation on all disturbed areas. BSR will submit annual re-vegetation monitoring reports for a duration of at least five years subsequent to initial ground disturbing activities or until the annual re-vegetation monitoring report determines successful re-vegetation has been achieved.
Effective ground cover (mulch) upon completion of ground disturbing activities shall meet minimum level of the pre-treatment habitat type.
Adequately mark tree clearing limits to minimize mistakes in clearing limits during construction.
Efforts should be made to retain or transplant seedlings and saplings to other areas to maintain vegetation cover (with regards to lodgepole pine mortality)
Any Engelmann spruce that is felled must be either removed from the area or treated (within one year after felling) to prevent the buildup of spruce bark beetle. Treatments can include burning, burying or peeling the bark off felled Engelmann spruce.
Prior to ground disturbing activities, demarcate sensitive plants to ensure impacts are avoided to the greatest extent practicable.
Prior to ground disturbing activities for the lifts in the Selected Alternative, both lift alignments would be surveyed for threatened, endangered and Region 2 sensitive botanical species.
Noxious Weeds
Complete a noxious weeds risk assessment and have approved by the Forest Service prior to implementation of any authorized ground disturbing activities.
Clean construction equipment prior to entry onto NFS lands.
Treat travel routes accessing the project area for noxious weeds prior to and during project construction. Travel routes include ski area access roads, after leaving county administered roads.
Monitor and treat any new infestations for a minimum of three years after project completion.

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

Wildlife
During construction, contractors are required by Summit County code to provide a bear proof container on site for all edible and food related trash in order to minimize conflicts with black bears. No food products or food containers can be thrown in the larger roll-off type dumpsters.
Confine all construction activities to daylight hours, excluding emergencies.
Construction workers are prohibited from bringing dogs on site during construction.
Store/keep no food/drink in construction worker vehicles. Keep all windows closed and doors locked on all vehicles to prevent bear entry.
If boreal owl nest trees associated with active territories occur within impact areas during the construction season, direct mortality of eggs and/or nestlings could be avoided by conducting tree removal in potential nesting habitat outside of the May 21 to July 15 nesting (with eggs/young) period.
If three-toed woodpecker nest trees associated with active territories occur within impact areas during the construction season, direct mortality of current year recruitment could be avoided by conducting tree removal in potential nesting habitat outside of the March 14 to July 15 nesting period.
If olive-sided flycatcher nest trees occur within impact areas during the construction season, direct mortality of eggs and/or nestlings could be avoided by conducting tree removal in potential nesting habitat outside of the June 1 and July 15 nesting period.
If American marten den trees or logs associated with active territories occur within impact areas during the construction season, direct mortality of current year recruitment could be avoided by conducting tree removal in potential denning habitat outside of the March 1 to June 15 period.
Egg and altricial young mortality could be avoided for boreal owls, three-toed woodpeckers, olive-sided flycatchers, and American martens (and virtually all other wildlife considered herein) by conducting forest clearing outside of the broader March 1 to July 15 nesting/den period.
Retain snags for nesting structures where snags are underrepresented. Conduct this activity where is doesn't pose a safety concern to skiers.
To protect fish eggs and spawning gravels, work on stream crossings and ground disturbance areas approaching the WIZ should be restricted to the relatively low flow construction season period between August 1 and September 31.
Re-vegetate any loss of riparian vegetation caused by construction activities immediately after construction with native vegetation, willow cuttings, and/or native, certified, weed free seed.
Water Resources
Connected disturbed areas could be mitigated, and additional sediment controls that could result in improved stream health may be implemented concurrently with on-mountain construction (this may be necessary for the project to be in compliance with Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook).
Prior to approved construction activities on NFS lands, prepare the following plans for Forest Service approval: • Grading • Erosion control • Pre-construction erosion control/drainage management plans • Post-construction re-vegetation plans
To maintain or improve stream health, BSR and the Forest Service will utilize BSR's Mountain Drainage Plan. Prior to ground disturbing activities, BSR will submit drainage measures from the Drainage Management Plan to the Forest hydrologist for review and acceptance. Implement agreed-upon drainage measures prior to, or concurrent, with ground disturbing projects.
Trails would be constructed by flush cutting and/or stump grinding, except areas designated for full grading activities. If stump removal is necessary, BSR must

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

submit a location map with areas for stump removal designated to the Forest hydrologist and soil scientist for review and acceptance. Flush-cut and leave all stumps and root wads intact within sensitive areas such as the WIZ.
Before grading, remove existing topsoil resources, either by machine or by hand, and stockpiled in an area where soils storage will not cause a resource impact. Subsequent to the grading activities, re-spread, mulch and re-seed topsoil for use in the final restoration of the site.
Keep heavy equipment out of streams, except to cross at designated points, build crossings, or do restoration work, or if protected by at least 1 foot of packed snow
Design and construct water bars to discharge surface runoff originating within the Peak 6 ski trails away from the WIZ and into well vegetated areas, effectively disconnecting disturbed areas from the stream channel.
When appropriate, the downstream end of water bars will encourage sediment separation and dispersion of flow by using straw bales and fiber logs or other appropriate.
Construct erosion control measures such as water bars immediately after construction of the ski trail; inspect water bars during the first snowmelt period following construction.
Immediately following completion of approved ground disturbing activities and seeding, mulch with weed-free straw, wood chips, bark, jute mat, etc. all areas of ground disturbance.
Where construction crosses a stream channel, route the channel through a flexible hose around the area of disturbance. To protect the channel from scour where the water is reintroduced to the stream, temporarily place rocks in the channel.
Store fuel, oil and other hazardous materials in structures placed on impermeable surfaces with impermeable berms designed to fully contain the hazardous material plus accumulated precipitation for a period at least equal to that required to mitigate a spill.
Continue annual monitoring in Cucumber Creek and South Barton near disturbance areas to ensure increased levels of zinc and cadmium do not occur.
To maintain stream health in the Cucumber Creek watershed, disconnect 1.85 acres of existing disturbed surface area by redirecting two ski trail water bars away from the creek's WIZ.
To maintain stream health in the Cucumber Creek watershed disconnect an additional 3.2 acres of ski trail by directing drainage that originates from the upper Monte Cristo trail away from WIZ.
To maintain stream health in the Cucumber Creek watershed disconnect approximately 2.8 acres of existing roads (*Pioneer*, *Wirepatch*, *Lincoln Meadows*, and *Angels Rest)* by discharging road-side ditch flows in well forested areas, away from WIZ.
Waters of the U.S., including Wetlands
During final submittal of construction plans and in the field, where possible, avoid and minimize wetland impacts.
Temporarily place construction spoils in upland areas in locations that will not migrate to wetland areas.
Keep heavy equipment out of wetlands and stream channels during construction.
Stockpile topsoil during construction and replace in order to preserve the wetland seed bank.
Preserve and replant woody vegetation (e.g., Salix) and plant additional hydrophytic woody and herbaceous vegetation where necessary in order to speed the recovery of the wetland community.
Within wetlands, install snowmaking infrastructure in a manner that prohibits or impedes groundwater movement along the snowmaking line to maintain wetland hydrology. Periodically space impervious structures/substances (e.g., clay collars) within the linear disturbance of affected wetland areas. In addition, compact trench

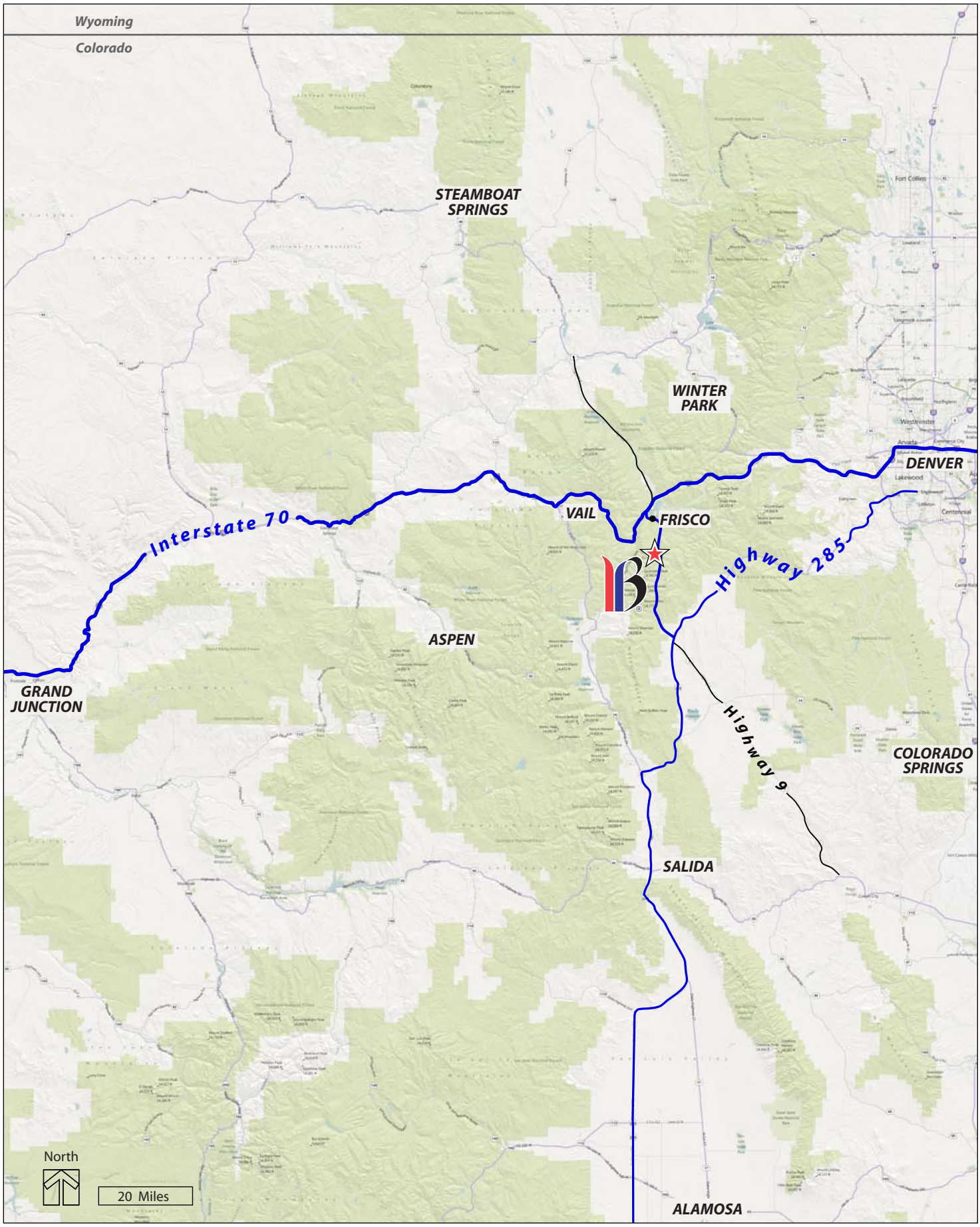
Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

backfill to prohibit the diversion of subsurface flows within the pipeline corridor.
Complete work within stream channels and wetlands when hydrologic flows are reduced.
Flush-cut and leave stumps and root wads intact within sensitive areas such as wetlands.
Apply BMPs for all ground disturbing activities to avoid sediment migration from ground disturbance into wetlands.
Identify and flag wetlands proximate to potentially disturbed areas prior to the initiation of approved construction related activities. Clearly define construction limits and avoid any identified wetlands.
Restore wetland crossings upon completion of construction.
To minimize ground disturbance within wetlands, remove overstory tree vegetation by hand.
Re-vegetate with removed shrubs and mats of herbaceous cover (carefully stockpiled on-site) and appropriate high altitude wetland seed species as soon as possible after the disturbance. Monitor for five years to ensure successful re-vegetation of any impacted montane wetland areas.
Use bulkheads/box structures to minimize disturbance area from side casting and trench width.
Use fabric or hay layers to protect existing vegetation from stockpiled dredged material and to mark existing contours.
Air Quality
To the extent feasible, promptly install site improvements to reduce the potential for dust emissions. Keep the area disturbed by clearing, earth moving, or excavation activities to a minimum at all times, allowing improvements to be implemented in sections.
Water, as necessary and practicable, grading areas, including lift terminal areas, to prevent excessive amounts of dust. In the absence of natural precipitation, watering of these areas should occur, as practicable.
The Forest Service encourages the expansion of the free shuttle bus service for skiers and workers.
The Forest Service encourages the use of low-sulfur or alternative fuels in construction vehicles.
Prohibit unnecessary idling of construction vehicles.
Geology and Soil Resources
Prior to construction, submit a detailed site erosion control plan to the Forest Service soil scientist and hydrologist for review and approval. This plan must include the following components: Silt fences, straw bales, straw wattles, and other standard erosion control BMPs shall be employed to contain sediment onsite. Jute-netting or appropriate erosion-control matting on steep fill slopes to protect soils and enhance conditions for vegetation re-establishment.
Meet requirements for ground cover, as a combination of re-vegetation and mulch applications, for the one and two years following completion of ground disturbing activities.
Prompt re-vegetation upon project completion is required. BSR must submit annual re-vegetation monitoring reports
Use existing and approved roads for construction and routine maintenance of the approved project components.
Use surface netting in conjunction with mulching to reduce the erosion hazard.
Maintain vegetative buffers adjacent to intermittent or perennial drainages and wetlands, to the extent possible. Where avoidance is not possible, minimize impacts in sensitive areas. Hand-fell timber where necessary.

Required Project Design Criteria Incorporated into the Selected Alternative

In all areas where grading or soil disturbance will occur, stockpile topsoil and re-spread following slope grading and prior to re-seeding.
Avoid soil-disturbing activities during periods of heavy rain, runoff or wet soils.
Areas determined to have been compacted by construction activities may require mechanical sub-soiling or scarification to the compacted depth to reduce bulk density and restore porosity.
When logging over the snow, conditions should allow for 1 foot of packed snow to be continuous (i.e., not patchy) and competent enough so that wheeled or tracked vehicles do not break through. When logging over frozen ground, a minimum of 3 inches of continuous frozen ground should be present.
To divert water off the cleared areas and into the more stable forest areas, closely space water bars on trails.
Where appropriate, stock pile and re-spread top-soil to improve re-vegetation success.

Figures

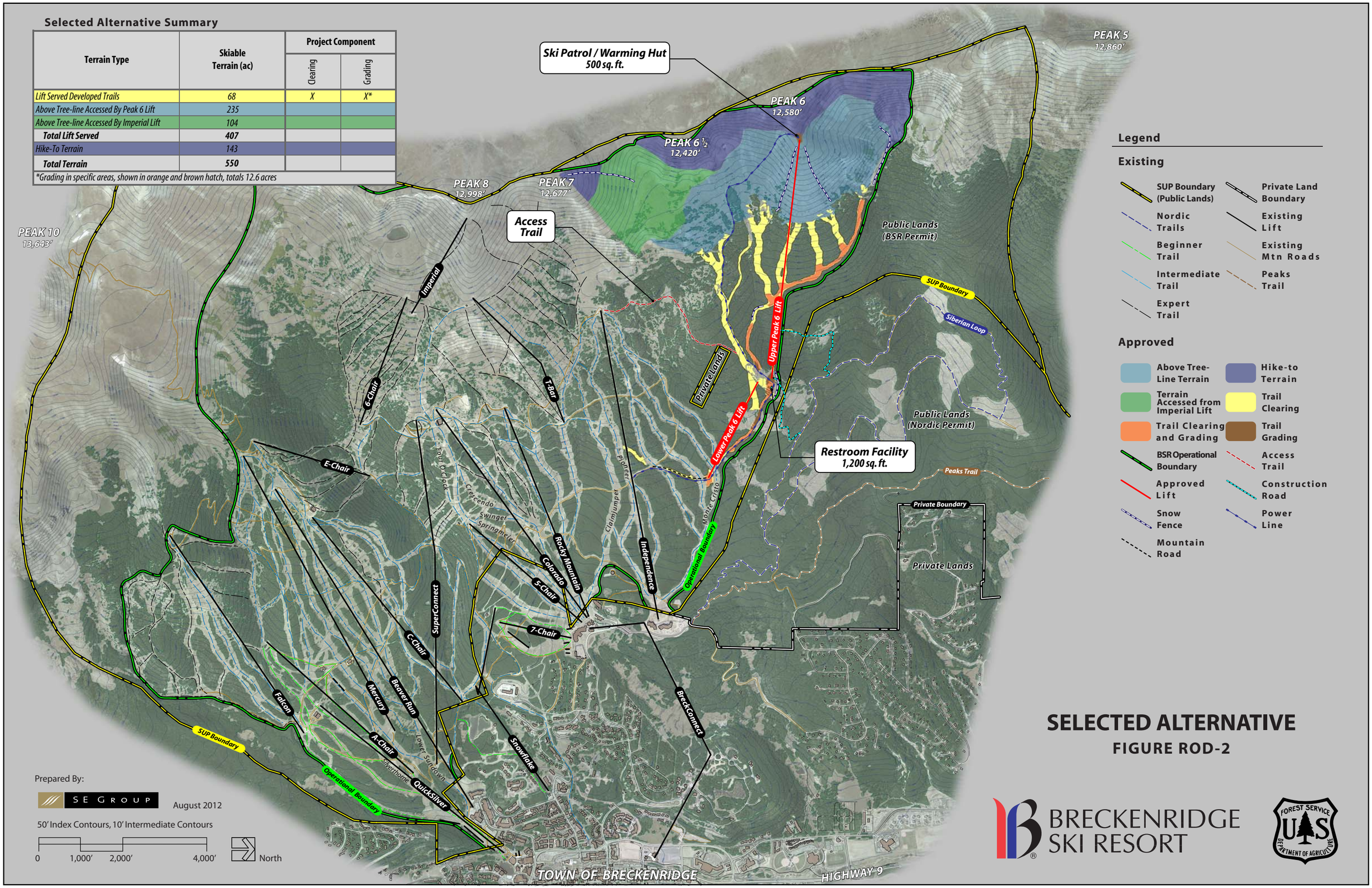


BRECKENRIDGE SKI RESORT

VICINITY MAP

FIGURE ROD-1

Selected Alternative Summary

Terrain Type	Skiable Terrain (ac)	Project Component	
		Clearing	Grading
Lift Served Developed Trails	*68*	*X*	*X**
Above Tree-line Accessed By Peak 6 Lift	*235*		
Above Tree-line Accessed By Imperial Lift	*104*		
Total Lift Served	***407***		
Hike-To Terrain	*143*		
Total Terrain	***550***		

**Grading in specific areas, shown in orange and brown hatch, totals 12.6 acres*