USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion

Draft Record of Decision

Forest Service | Idaho Panhandle National Forests and Lolo National Forest | Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District | December 2016

Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion
Draft Record of Decision
Shoshone County, Idaho, and Mineral County, Montana

Lead Agency:	**U.S. Forest Service**
Cooperating Agencies:	**None**
Responsible Official:	**Mary Farnsworth, Forest Supervisor** **Idaho Panhandle National Forests** **3815 Schreiber Way** **Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815** **Tim Garcia, Forest Supervisor** **Lolo National Forest** **24 Fort Missoula Road** **Missoula, Montana 59804**
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Table of Contents

List of Attachments

List of Tables

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials	AASHTO
area of potential effects	APE
best management practice	BMP
Code of Federal Regulations	CFR
Clean Water Act	CWA
draft environmental impact statement	DEIS
environmental impact statement	EIS
Executive Order	EO
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	EPA
Endangered Species Act	ESA
final environmental impact statement	FEIS
U.S. Forest Service	Forest Service
Forest Service Manual	FSM
Interstate 90	I-90
Inland Native Fish Strategy	INFISH
Idaho Panhandle National Forests	IPNFs
Land Management Plan, 2015 Revision, Idaho Panhandle National Forests	IPNFs Forest Plan
Lolo National Forest Plan	LNF Forest Plan
Lolo National Forest	LNF
management area	MA
management indicator species	MIS
National Environmental Policy Act	NEPA
National Forest Management Act	NFMA
National Forest System	NFS
National Register of Historic Places	NRHP
Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy	PACFISH
PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion	PIBO
riparian habitat conservation area	RHCA
riparian management objective	RMO
record of decision	ROD
State Historic Preservation Office	SHPO
scenic integrity objectives	SIOs

total maximum daily load	TMDL
United States Code	USC
U.S. Department of Agriculture	USDA
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	USFWS
visual quality objective	VQO

1. BACKGROUND

Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area is located on National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNFs) and Lolo National Forest (LNF) in Shoshone County, Idaho, and Mineral County, Montana. The ski area is accessible from Interstate 90 (I-90) and is located approximately 12 miles east of Wallace, Idaho, on the Idaho-Montana border. Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area currently operates under a special-use permit from the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) to provide downhill skiing opportunities on approximately 538 acres.

In 2010, Lookout Associates LLC submitted a proposed master development plan to the Forest Service. The plan, which identified goals and opportunities for future management of the ski area, included a list of proposed projects that, if analyzed and approved through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, could be implemented in the next 5–10 years. Major components of that plan include improvements to existing lift infrastructure; additional terrain serviced by new lifts; a new power line; temporary and permanent access roads; and the construction of a new maintenance shop, parking, and guest service facilities. In 2011, the Forest Service accepted the proposed master development plan, and a memorandum of understanding between Lookout Associates LLC and the Forest Service was signed in 2012. In 2013, the Forest Service approved a modified version of the proposed master development plan, the *Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area Master Development Plan* (Administrative Record ([AR] Doc. No. M1-128), hereafter referred to as the Master Development Plan.

In March 2016, the Forest Service published the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) analyzing the impacts of proposed ski expansion activities. Fifty-five non-duplicate comment letters were received on the DEIS that pointed out specific errors or omissions and that resulted in a new analysis. In December 2016, the Forest Service published the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project containing changes resulting from comments to the DEIS. The FEIS also includes all comments received on the DEIS and the Forest Service's responses.

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In response to the purpose and need and the issues identified for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project (discussed in Chapter 1 of the FEIS), the Forest Service developed three alternatives to be analyzed in detail. Descriptions of each alternative and its development are presented below.

2.1. No-Action Alternative (Alternative 1)

NEPA requires that an EIS include a "no-action" alternative to serve as a baseline against which to compare action alternatives. In general, a no-action alternative is based on the premise that social and ecological systems may continue to change, even in the absence of active management.

For this project, analysis of the No-Action Alternative (Alternative 1) represents the effects of not implementing the proposed ski expansion activities while taking into account the effects of other past, ongoing, and reasonably foreseeable activities occurring in the area (see Appendix D of the FEIS). This alternative proposes to maintain existing ski operations at Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area. Current management plans would continue to guide summer and winter recreation use. Vegetation management within the existing ski area special-use permit boundary would continue, as would previously authorized projects. A list of ongoing activities in the area is provided in Section 2.9 and Appendix D of the FEIS.

2.2. Proposed Action (Alternative 2)

Alternative 2 represents Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area's Proposed Action, as generally described in scoping documents and in the Master Development Plan (AR Doc. No. M1-128). After fieldwork in the summer of 2015, the Proposed Action was modified by re-routing one ski trail to minimize impacts to the Mullan Road. Segments of proposed permanent and temporary access roads and the power line were also re-routed to better align with local topography.

2.2.1. Project Location and Components

Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area is located approximately 12 miles east of Wallace, Idaho, along I-90 on the Idaho-Montana border (see Figure A1 in the FEIS). Under the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), the existing Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area boundary would be expanded through a new special-use permit to encompass an additional 654 acres of NFS lands. Administration of these lands is split between the IPNFs in Shoshone County, Idaho, and the LNF in Mineral County, Montana. Approximately 55% of the additional acreage (359 acres) would fall within the IPNFs, and 45% (295 acres) would fall within the LNF.

The Proposed Action would consist of the following major project components:

- Fifteen new ski trails, totaling approximately 91 acres of new terrain for traditional downhill skiing. Trees would be removed within the ski trail corridor, and up to 11 acres of ski trails would be graded to minimize side slopes and provide easier skier transitions.
- Nine acres of gladed terrain where individual beetle-infested trees would be removed.
- Two new fixed-grip lifts (for two to four passengers per chair on Lift 5 and two passengers per chair on Lift 6) to provide access to the new ski trails.
- An upgrade of existing Lift 1 from a two-passenger lift to a fixed-grip or detachable four-passenger lift.
- A buried power line from the bottom of existing Lift 1 to the bottom drive terminals of proposed Lifts 5 and 6 (approximately 12,000 feet of cable).
- Approximately 130 new parking spaces (7 acres) in two locations: near the main lodge and along Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area's access road.
- A 7,000-square-foot (120 × 60–foot) maintenance shop and adjacent 864-square-foot (36 × 24–foot) concrete pad with fuel storage tanks near the main lodge. A new, permanent 0.01-mile road would provide access to these facilities.
- A 24 × 20–foot ski patrol service building located at the top of proposed Lifts 5 and 6.
- A 13 × 10–foot restroom structure near the proposed Lift 5 bottom terminal.
- 1.4 miles of temporary roads for timber harvest and lift construction.
- 2.8 miles of new or reconstructed permanent roads for timber harvest, lift construction, and long-term operation and maintenance.
- 2.3 miles of road decommissioning (NFS Undetermined Roads 37315 and 37315-1).

These components are described in detail below.

2.2.2. Ski Trails and Terrain

Fourteen of the 15 new ski trails would measure 120 feet wide, and one would measure 150 feet wide. All would be located below tree line and provide a total of 91 new acres of traditional terrain.[1] Of this total, approximately 23 acres would be new novice to low intermediate terrain through the creation of the Windsong ski trail and three new connector ski trails: Tamarack, Dizzy Lizzy, and R2C2. Tamarack ski trail (off the existing Rainbow Ridge ski trail) would provide skier and snowboarder access to the bottom of proposed Lift 5. The two other new connector ski trails would allow skiers and snowboarders to proceed from the bottom of proposed Lift 5 to the bottom of existing Lift 2 for access back to existing ski terrain. The remaining acreage (68 acres) would provide new intermediate to advanced intermediate terrain.

Construction of traditional terrain ski trails would require the removal of all trees within the ski trail corridor. Timber harvest during ski trail construction would be conducted via ground-based yarding using wheeled and tracked equipment (including forwarders). Trees would be cut at ground level, and stumps and roots would be left intact unless they present safety issues that necessitate removal by harvest equipment. Slash, including limbs and large woody debris, would be either removed or burned. Shrubs on ski trails would be trimmed periodically during summer operations to ensure safe downhill skiing conditions in winter. Ski trail edges and leave islands would also be treated (such as through selective "feathering" or thinning), as necessary, to maintain edge integrity while minimizing the potential for wind damage and the spread of disease or insects.

Lookout Associates LLC would control noxious and invasive plants in the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area, as established in their annual summer operations plan. The plan contains approved seed mixes and herbicides for weed treatments. All seed mixes would be certified weed-free, and seeded areas would be monitored to confirm that successful revegetation has occurred (AR Doc. No. M2-015).

Up to 11 acres of new ski trails would be graded to minimize side slopes and provide easier skier transitions across proposed and existing permanent road edges. Grading would consist of removing all vegetation, stockpiling topsoil and incorporated plant materials, adjusting topography to meet site-specific needs, re-spreading topsoil, and revegetating with native and desirable non-native plants.

Low-impact yarding methods would be used for tree removal in wetlands or other sensitive areas. Trees would be directionally felled away from sensitive areas to minimize impact. Trees would also be felled toward temporary access roads to minimize the ground-based yarding distance. Low–pressure, rubber-tired skidders, or tracked mechanized yarding equipment, would be used for yarding to minimize rutting or other soil disturbance, and the leading end of logs would be suspended during yarding with either a grapple or bull-line and arch. Winching of logs from the stump to the skidder with a bull-line would be minimized. When possible, a debris mat formed from logging slash would be used in sensitive terrain to minimize soil impact.

Proposed Lifts 5 and 6 would also provide visitors with access to 9 acres of new gladed terrain. Trees with beetle infestation damage within this area would be removed, and wood waste would be chipped and used for erosion control, cut for firewood, or piled and burned according to Forest Service standards and air quality controls.

Two permanent culverts (shown collectively as one dot on FEIS maps) would be placed in a perennial stream approximately 400 feet east of the base of Lift 6. The stream crossing is located on mild terrain (25% or less slopes) upslope of a wetland and a few hundred feet above a steeply incised stream channel.

[1] Cleared terrain associated with the middle segment of the Lift 5 corridor is not considered a planned run and is therefore not included in this calculation, although skiers would be permitted to ski down the corridor as desired.

The crossing would consist of a main channel and a secondary fork that experiences flows during larger storm events. Culverts would be placed in both channels to facilitate natural hydraulic conditions of the downstream wetland. Fill height at the crossing would be kept to the minimum possible. All culverts would be designed to meet the 100-year flow. The specific design would be determined before construction to meet the intent of the water quality standards of the State of Idaho and the IPNFs Forest Plan.

Lookout Associates LLC would establish an operational downhill skiing boundary along the outermost ski trails of the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreational Area. This operational boundary establishes the limits where skiers are allowed to ski and would be clearly marked by signs posted on trees to alert skiers when they approach out-of-bounds ski areas; no ground disturbance would occur during sign installation.

2.2.3. Lifts

Lift 1 would be upgraded from a two-passenger lift to a four-passenger lift to increase the number of skiers the lift can accommodate. A new drive terminal, a return terminal, and 14 line towers would be installed to support this upgrade. Existing terminals would be removed, line towers would be cut at ground level, and tower footings would be left in place. Less than 0.1 acre of terrain disturbance would occur during installation of the new top and bottom terminals and line towers. New line tower footings paralleling the existing route, each measuring approximately 4 × 4 feet and placed at a depth of 8 feet, would support the upgraded lift. Terminal specifications would depend on the manufacturer's design. However, for the purposes of analysis, this FEIS assumes an average drive terminal size of 18 × 12 feet and an average return terminal size of 8 × 4 feet.

Existing access roads would be used for construction and maintenance of upgraded Lift 1; no new road construction would be required.

Two new lifts—Lifts 5 and 6—would be constructed in the proposed special-use permit expansion area to provide skier access to new traditional and gladed terrain. Lift construction would occur within tree-cleared corridors measuring 100–120 feet wide. Lift 5 would be approximately 5,200 feet long with a vertical rise of approximately 1,300 feet. It would serve six trails and provide access to the Lift 6 ski trails. Lift 5 would be installed as a fixed-grip lift for two, three, or four passengers. Depending on final engineering design for the lift, approximately 24 towers would be needed. Approximately 0.1 acre of ground disturbance would occur during installation of the top and bottom terminals and line towers. The disturbance acreage does not include proposed temporary and permanent road construction, which is addressed in Section 2.2.2.8 of the FEIS.

Lift 6 would serve six trails and would provide access back to the Lift 5 trails. The lift would be approximately 2,800 feet long with a vertical rise of approximately 800 feet, and would be installed as a fixed-grip, two-passenger lift. As with Lift 5, approximately 0.1 acre of ground disturbance would occur during installation of the top and bottom terminals and an estimated 12 towers (depending on final design).

Lift terminal locations were determined based on the site's ability to provide access to proposed ski trails and to ensure adequate space for lift lines, unloading areas, and general congregation areas.

Lifts 5 and 6 would be constructed as bottom drive lifts. Power to the lifts would be supplied through a new underground power line, as well as via backup diesel or gasoline generators. The new lifts would incorporate components recycled from the Lift 1 upgrade as well as used components purchased from other ski areas to promote resource conservation and to reduce costs. Lift terminals and towers would be transported to each site using logging equipment (forwarders, tractors, or skidders). Some tower

foundations would be poured using concrete pump trucks while others could require concrete buckets flown by helicopter.

2.2.4. Power Line

Proposed Lifts 5 and 6 would be powered via an underground power line installed by Avista Power Company. Per Avista Power Company (AR Doc. No. M1-129), there is sufficient capacity (13,000 volts) to serve the new loads that would be needed for the proposed project on a single three-phase circuit within an existing transformer located at the base of existing Lift 1. One additional power pole would be installed near the base of Lift 1 to provide a power source. Depending on the route, Avista Power Company could also need to install a buried line from the top of Lifts 5 and 6 to the bottom of Lift 2 for an emergency loop feed (AR Doc. No. D1-039). For the purposes of this FEIS, construction of the emergency loop feed is assumed to occur within existing and proposed lift corridors, roads, or ski trails; no additional ground disturbance would be required.

From the bottom of existing Lift 1, the underground power line would be routed to the bottom drive terminals of proposed Lifts 5 and 6 within a 75-foot construction easement. The approximately 12,000 feet of buried cable would be installed up the Montana Face trail and then down the Rainbow Ridge trail to one of the new connector trails. From there, the cable would be routed along proposed temporary roads and ski trails to the bottom terminals of Lifts 5 and 6. Avista Power Company would construct a 20 × 20–foot transformer at the power line terminus.

The power line would cross one unnamed spring-fed creek near the base of Lift 6. The cable would be either directionally drilled under the creek or installed using an open-cut method. The creek would be restored to pre-construction or better condition, and erosion and sediment control measures would be installed to reduce streambank and upland erosion and sediment transport into the waterbody.

This power line corridor would also serve as an escape ski trail for skiers to reach existing Lift 2 and proposed Lift 5 if proposed Lift 6 should become inoperable. Lift maintenance and operations staff would also be able to use this corridor to access proposed Lift 6. A 10-foot permanent power line easement would be maintained by Avista Power Company for maintenance purposes.

2.2.5. Parking

The Proposed Action would add 6.6 acres of parking in two areas to accommodate an additional 130 vehicles and buses, based on a 90-degree parking angle and 19 × 10–foot spaces.

Parking would be extended to the north of the overflow parking lot to permit parking on both sides of the railroad grade while maintaining a 20-foot-wide roadbed for ingress and egress for other users such as snowmobilers accessing the Northern Pacific Railroad Trail. Approximately 5.2 acres are available in this area for parking; however, because of the steepness of the surrounding terrain, parking would not be possible in some locations. Lookout Associates LLC estimates that the area would support 50 parking spaces, as well as provide room for a turn-around to handle vehicles with trailers and recreational vehicles.

South of the existing paved parking area, 400 feet of new parking would be added on the west side of the access road and on the west side of the existing railroad grade, which, due to less-steep topography, would provide an additional 80 parking spaces within 1.4 acres. The area along the railroad bed would be used for employee parking and would have at least 20 feet for ingress and egress for other users.

Parking areas would be graded to near level and covered with gravel or crushed rock to minimize erosion. Drainage from the parking areas would be routed to upland vegetated areas. Parking lot snow removal

and storage would be planned to provide for vehicle and snowmobile ingress and egress. No snowmobile off-loading or trailer parking would be designated or permitted within the special-use permit area boundary. Signs would be posted in parking areas to control vehicle speed and to notify users of the multi-use nature of the parking areas.

2.2.6. Maintenance Facilities

A new 7,000-square-foot (120 × 60–foot) maintenance shop and adjacent 864-square-foot (36 × 24–foot) concrete fuel tank pad would be constructed just south of the existing fueling pad station to support ski operations. A 0.01-mile new permanent gravel road would be constructed to provide access between the maintenance facilities and the lodge.

2.2.7. Guest Service Facilities (ski patrol service building and restroom)

A 480-square-foot ski patrol service building and warming hut would be constructed at the top of proposed Lifts 5 and 6. The log structure would be similar to the existing ski patrol service building and would be powered by propane or fuel cell technology to provide heat and light.

The Proposed Action would also include construction of an approximately 160-square-foot, two-stall Romtec restroom structure near the proposed Lift 5 bottom terminal, just off existing NFS Road 18591 along a proposed new permanent road. These roads would be constructed or reconstructed to permit pump truck access for vault pumping during summer months. For winter pumping, Lookout Associates LLC would equip a snowcat with a tank and pump to access the vaults.

Guest service facility upgrades would not require a change to Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area's existing water system. No snowmaking would occur under the Proposed Action.

2.2.8. Roads and Access

Approximately 4.2 miles of permanent and temporary roads would be constructed or reconstructed to Forest Service standards by Lookout Associates LLC to facilitate timber harvest and ski area maintenance and operations, as summarized in Table 1. Temporary logging roads and Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area's permanent access road would be closed to public travel; all motorized use within the special-use permit boundary would be prohibited upon completion of expansion activities, except as authorized in the permit. However, all existing surrounding Forest Service roads and trails currently open to motorized or non-motorized public use would remain open under all alternatives.

Table 1. Proposed Road Actions

Road Action	Operational Maintenance Level	Miles
Existing permanent road reconstruction		
NFS Road 18591	2	0.5
New road construction		
Temporary roads	Not applicable	1.4
Permanent road	2	2.3
Total road construction and reconstruction		4.2
Proposed road decommissioning	Undetermined	2.3

Entry to the project area during the timber harvest and construction phases would occur via existing NFS Roads 9132, 4208, 18591, and 3026A. Based on current road planning, approximately 0.5 mile of NFS Road 18591 would require grading and reconstruction to accommodate logging trucks and construction vehicles and to facilitate tree removal and transport from adjacent ski trails. Grading would begin approximately 800 feet from the junction of NFS 4208 and would involve reshaping the subgrade by excavating material on the outer, or downslope, portion of the road prism and placing it along the inner, or upslope, portion of the road prism to provide an out-sloped road. Clearing 10–15 feet on both sides of the existing road prism would be necessary along most of the road segment to accommodate road re-grading activities and to meet Forest Service construction standards. At one low-water stream crossing, roughly 1,700 feet from the junction with NFS 4208, clearing of vegetation on the downstream side would be confined to the grading limits of the new drainage structure and any trees deemed *hazard trees* per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Additionally, one pipe arch (squash pipe) would be installed at the low-water crossing. As previously noted, this culvert would be designed to meet the 100-year flow. The specific design would be determined before construction to meet the intent of the water quality standards of the State of Montana and the LNF Forest Plan. With the exception of potential, temporary road closures during reconstruction, NFS Road 18591 would remain open to all motorized and non-motorized use as permitted by Forest Service travel management plans.

Approximately 2.3 miles of new, permanent roads would be constructed to provide long-term, year-round use by Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area. Motorized vehicle access would be permitted for Forest Service administrative use and by Lookout Associates LLC for maintenance and operations, but all other motorized access would be prohibited.

Planned new permanent roads would be constructed as resource extraction roads, as defined in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (AR Doc. No. M1-133), with an average daily traffic of ≤ 400. Road grades would generally not exceed 15% gradient, and would be less than 10% gradient where feasible. However, approximately 400 feet of 18%-gradient road would be necessary to avoid private property in the southwest portion of the project area. The permanent road would consist of an out-sloped, 16-foot running surface for segments with up to a 12% road grade. Segments with a road grade in excess of 12% would consist of an in-sloped, 16-foot road prism and ditch. For these latter road segments, ditch relief culverts (18 inches in diameter) would be placed at 300-foot intervals and skewed at a 30-degree angle from centerline.

The proposed new road alignment is located on terrain with side slopes generally not exceeding 45%, allowing for a balanced cut-fill road prism. However, an approximate 300-foot segment of full-bench construction, located near the top of Lifts 5 and 6, would be necessary to cross slopes in excess of 55%. Excavated material would be placed along an existing dirt road south of NFS Road 3028UBF, approximately 750 feet east of the full bench segment.

Temporary road construction (approximately 1.4 miles) would occur in locations where existing and proposed permanent roads are insufficient for timber harvest due to slope or other factors. Roughly 60% (0.8 mile) of all proposed temporary roads would be constructed on existing ski trails, jeep tracks, or other primitive trails and unmanaged Forest Service roads to minimize vegetation and soil disturbance. Temporary roads would be constructed to a 12-foot running surface width and shaped to minimize surface erosion. Road grades would not exceed 15% gradient and would generally be kept to less than 10% gradient. Temporary roads would be constructed for logging of a single entry only and would be decommissioned following this activity.

Construction equipment access would also be needed for lift tower locations. The specific location of these access points has not been identified at this time because it will depend on final lift design.

However, temporary routes would likely extend from proposed temporary or permanent roads and would be made by a small trackhoe that would traverse cross-country to reach the line tower footing locations. As with the temporary roads, these lateral routes would be recontoured, seeded, and fertilized, as necessary, at the conclusion of construction activities.

Upon construction of the proposed new permanent road, Forest Service Undetermined Roads 37315 and 37315-1 would be decommissioned. These roads provide duplicate access to areas that would be accessed by the proposed new permanent road and represent a higher risk to area resources because they are not managed by the Forest Service or constructed to current Forest Service–specified road standards. Decommissioning roads that are not necessary for long-term administrative or public purposes is consistent with Forest Service guidance to "identify the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands" (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 212.5(b)).

During decommissioning, roads would be decompacted, and major fills, embankments, and areas with higher risk of failure would be pulled up to the roadbed and stabilized. Drainage structures would be removed from stream channels, and the adjacent slopes would be restored to resemble natural conditions. Following decommissioning, Forest Service Undetermined Roads 37315 and 37315-1 would be removed from the National Forest Road System but would be tracked as historic routes in the Forest Service database.

2.2.9. Forest Plan Amendment

The Proposed Action would include an amendment to the LNF Forest Plan (AR Doc. No. M1-007). This amendment would change the management area (MA) designation for the expanded footprint of the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area from Mas 9, 13, and 24 to MA 8 (ski areas), as follows, to provide for consistent management of the ski area:

- MA 9 (173 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 13 (13 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 24 (107 acres) reclassified to MA 8

The affected area is immediately west of the existing ski area boundary along the Montana-Idaho state line in the west end of the Superior Ranger District. This amendment has been determined to be a non-significant amendment to the LNF Forest Plan.

2.3. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 was developed to avoid or reduce potential environmental impacts identified during public scoping (see Appendix A and Sections 1.7.1 and 1.7.2 of the FEIS) by

- eliminating all temporary road construction by using skid trails,
- eliminating three ski trails to expand the size of some inter-trail leave islands, and
- increasing the size of the gladed area to remove more insect-damaged trees.

2.3.1. Ski Trails and Terrain

Under Alternative 3, 12 new ski trails would be constructed; 11 would measure 120 feet wide, and one would measure 150 feet wide. All would be located below tree line and provide a total of 78 new acres of traditional terrain. Of this total, approximately 23 acres would be new novice to low intermediate terrain. The remaining acreage (55 acres) would provide new intermediate and advanced intermediate terrain.

Proposed Lifts 5 and 6 would provide visitors with access to 17 acres of new gladed terrain. Up to approximately 9 acres of the new ski trails would be graded to minimize side slopes and provide easier skier transitions across proposed and existing permanent road edges. All other ski trail construction actions would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.2 of the FEIS.

2.3.2. Lifts

The proposed number of lifts, lift construction, and lift locations would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.3 of the FEIS.

2.3.3. Power Line

All power line features would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.4 of the FEIS.

2.3.4. Parking

Proposed parking construction and locations would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.5 of the FEIS.

2.3.5. Maintenance Facilities

Proposed maintenance facility construction and location would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.6 of the FEIS.

2.3.6. Guest Service Facilities

Proposed guest service facility construction and locations would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.7 of the FEIS.

2.3.7. Roads and Access

Under Alternative 3, no temporary road construction would occur. Instead, single-entry skid trails would be used in locations where existing and proposed permanent roads are insufficient for timber harvest due to slope or other factors. All other road construction and lift tower access, as well as road decommissioning activities, would be as described for the Proposed Action in Section 2.2.2.8 of the FEIS.

2.3.8. Forest Plan Amendment

Alternative 3 would include an amendment to the LNF Forest Plan (AR Doc. No. M1-007). This amendment would change the MA designation for the expanded footprint of the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area from MAs 9, 13, and 24 to MA 8 (ski areas), as follows, to provide for consistent management of the ski area.

- MA 9 (148 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 13 (5 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 24 (78 acres) reclassified to MA 8

The affected area is immediately west of the existing ski area boundary along the Montana-Idaho state line in the west end of the Superior Ranger District. This amendment has been determined to be a non-significant amendment to the LNF Forest Plan.

3. ALTERNATIVES NOT CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

The following five additional alternatives were considered, but they were not analyzed in detail because they do not meet the purpose and need of the project:

1. An alternative that would promote backcountry access
2. An alternative that would provide a new access route for non-motorized users to return to the ski area from the backcountry
3. An alternative that would use helicopter, horse logging, or cut-to-length harvester/forwarder system
4. An alternative that would provide additional skier and snowmobiler parking
5. An alternative that would develop additional beginner terrain

These alternatives were dismissed from further consideration as described in the FEIS (Section 2.5).

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE *DRAFT* DECISION

4.1. The Selected Alternative

I have decided to implement Alternative 2 with modifications as the Selected Alternative. Based on my careful review of the FEIS and public comments, I have determined that the Selected Alternative will best meet the purpose and need; address issues; respond to public comments; and comply with laws, regulations, and policy. The Selected Alternative is within the range of actions and effects analyzed and disclosed in the FEIS.

4.2. Modifications Included in the Selected Alternative

I am adopting the following modifications of Alternative 2 with this decision:

1) Road construction: The temporary road locations proposed in Alternative 2 are retained; however, the Selected Alternative will employ the single-entry skid trails proposed for Alternative 3. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of skid trails are disclosed in the FEIS.
2) Gladed terrain: 9 acres of gladed terrain are proposed in Alternative 2, and 17 acres of gladed terrain are proposed in Alternative 3. The Selected Alternative will include the 17 acres of gladed terrain proposed in Alternative 3. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of glading are disclosed in the FEIS.
3) Ski trails: The Selected Alternative has one fewer ski trail (4 fewer acres of ski trails) than proposed in Alternative 2. Removal of this ski trail will occur because of the expanded gladed terrain, and its removal is analyzed under Alternative 3. Therefore, the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of removing this ski trail are included and disclosed in the effects analyses in the FEIS.
4) Special-use permit boundary: The Selected Alternative will use the southern permit boundary identified in Alternative 3; however, the northern boundary was reduced from both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 to eliminate lands that will not be needed for ski area operations. The new

special-use boundary will cover 485 acres of Forest Service lands. This new boundary is 169 and 106 acres fewer than Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, respectively.

Attachment A provides a map of the Selected Alternative.

4.3. Summary of Activities under the Selected Alternative

Table 2 provides a summary of activities that will occur under the Selected Alternative in comparison to Alternatives 2 and 3. Design features common to all alternatives are identified in Appendix E of the FEIS.

Table 2. Comparison of Key Project Components, by Alternative

Project Component	No-Action (Alternative 1)	Proposed Action (Alternative 2)	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative (Alternative 2 with Modifications)
Proposed special-use permit expansion area	0	654	591	485
Number of new ski trails	0	15	12	14
Acres of new gladed terrain	0	9	17	17
Acres of new ski trails	0	91	78	87
Acres of new graded area	0	11	9	11
Number of new lifts	0	2	2	2
Feet of new buried power line	0	12,470	12,470	12,470
Number of new parking spaces	0	130	130	130
Miles of permanent road (reconstruction and new construction)	None	2.8	2.8	2.8
Miles of temporary road construction	None	1.4	0	0
Miles of road decommissioning	None	2.3	2.3	2.3
Miles of skid trails	None	0	1.4	1.4
Number of new culverts	0	3	3	3
Amendment to LNF Forest Plan	No change	LNF MAs converted to ski area MA 9: 173 acres MA 13: 13 acres MA 24: 107 acres	LNF MAs converted to ski area MA 9: 148 acres MA 13: 5 acres MA 24: 78 acres	LNF MAs converted to ski area MA 9: 148 acres MA 13: 5 acres MA 24: 78 acres (see Attachment B of this document)

4.4. Mitigation

Mitigation measures are additional site-specific actions developed to avoid or reduce effects to resources that may occur despite the implementation of design features. After analyzing the potential effects of proposed activities, the Forest Service determined that most effects were eliminated or reduced through the implementation of design features and therefore do not require additional mitigation. Forest Service has developed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Idaho and Montana State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) that includes mitigation measures to address adverse effects to Mullan Road. Additionally, the Forest Service has committed to buying eight blister rust–resistant whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) seedlings from the Coeur d'Alene nursery to plant in undisturbed and untraveled whitebark pine habitat within the expansion area as replacement for individual whitebark pine trees removed during ski area construction.

These mitigation measures are provided in Section 3.2.4.2 of the FEIS.

4.5. Monitoring Activities

Monitoring must be summarized in the record of decision (ROD) "where applicable for any mitigation" (40 CFR 1505.2). As specified in the MOA, the Forest Service will monitor the effects on Mullan Road as follows:

- A base line monitor inspection and inventory will occur prior to the implementation of the proposed ski run to the status and condition of the Mullan Road was prior to ground disturbing activities. This inspection will be documented in a report for reference and submitted to the Montana SHPO.
- Monitoring will occur within 1 year of installation of the proposed ski run to ensure the protection measures (i.e., the barriers to funnel runoff away from Mullan Road) are protecting the remaining integrity of Mullan Road.
- Yearly monitoring for the life of the permit of Mullan Road at each disturbed crossing on the proposed ski run and a pedestrian walk through the Mullan Road corridor will continue to ensure that the protection measures are successful in meeting the intended preservation goals.

If protection measures are not sufficiently protecting the integrity of Mullan Road, the Forest Service with the Lookout Associates LLC will redesign, in consultation with Montana SHPO, the mitigation measures to protect the historic road.

For all other affected resources, the Forest Service will continually evaluate the project to ensure that best management practices (BMPs) and IPNFs and LNF Forest Plan standards and guidelines are followed. BMPs and Forest Plan standards and guidelines will be incorporated into different phases of the project, as described in Appendix E of the FEIS.

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION

5.1. Regulatory Guidance

The Forest Service conducted public involvement activities related to the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project in accordance with regulations and guidelines of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500–1509), Forest Service NEPA Procedures (36 CFR 220), Chapter 10 of the Forest Service NEPA Handbook 1909.15, and Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (36 CFR 218).

5.2. Objectives of the Public Involvement and Collaboration Process

The Forest Service designed and implemented public involvement and collaborative activities to ensure open communication with a wide range of potentially affected or interested parties, in ways that allowed them to effectively participate in the process of developing the proposal and evaluating the consequences of implementing or not implementing the proposed activities (see Appendices A and M in the FEIS).

5.3. Public Outreach

Members of the general public were informed about the proposal early in the process and were encouraged to participate in project development. Use of the IPNFs' website for the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions made information widely available to the public and provided links to project documents and maps (AR Doc. No. C2-006). The website averages one or two visitors daily, with approximately 200–300 over a 6-month period.

The Forest Service provided information to the public in letters sent through postal mail or electronic mail to more than 500 specific agencies, governments, businesses, organizations, communities, and citizens who are known or believed to have an interest in participating in forest planning. The initial mailing list for the project was developed by identifying those groups potentially interested in or affected by the proposal, as well as adjacent landowners, special-use permit holders, and those with mining claims in the area. Additions were made as requested, and addresses were deleted if mailings were returned unopened.

5.4. The Role of the Public in Issues Identification and Alternatives Development

Every effort was made to notify and encourage as many people as possible to become involved in development of the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project through scoping. Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action (40 CFR 1501.7). The Forest Service planned specific scoping activities to solicit information and encourage a dialogue that would help the Forest Service define the issues, design the Proposed Action, and develop alternatives to the Proposed Action.

In April 2014, the project interdisciplinary team asked the public to share their knowledge about conditions and uses in the area, beginning with three open house meetings. The public was made aware of the meetings using a variety of methods, including an email blast and mailed letter to more than 500 potentially interested or affected members of the public (AR Doc. No. C2-002 and C2-005), a legal advertisement published in the newspaper of record, flyers sent electronically to County Commissioners and Chambers of Commerce, and additional display advertisements and articles published in the local

newspapers (AR Doc. No. C2-001). The April 7, 2014 letter (AR Doc. No. C2-002) included maps and a description of the Proposed Action as developed at the time.

Recognizing that interested members of the public often must participate on their own time, the three open houses were scheduled during the evening in De Borgia, Montana; Wallace, Idaho; and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. An estimated 80 people attended the three meetings (AR Doc. No. C2-003). Displays included

- a description of the general purpose and need for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion EIS;
- a description of the Proposed Action;
- a map of the Proposed Action, including proposed ski trails, lifts, and roads;
- a list of preliminary issues identified to date;
- the NEPA process and schedule; and
- a description of different ways to submit comments.

After reviewing the displays and/or talking with team members, some attendees submitted written comments at the meeting, whereas others elected to take the information and comment forms home and submit their comments at a later date.

By the end of the formal scoping period, a total of 90 comment letters had been received, although several were duplicate submissions (AR Doc. No. D1-001 through D1-087). A thorough analysis was conducted of comments received during scoping (see FEIS Appendix A and AR Doc. No. C4-001). The Forest Service used these comments to help identify issues, define the analysis of effects and proposed treatments, and check for any additional alternatives to the Proposed Action. Public comments resulted in a number of changes to the project design and analysis process, including the following:

- A new alternative to the Proposed Action: In comparison to the Proposed Action (represented in the FEIS by Alternative 2), Alternative 3 replaced all proposed new temporary road construction with skid trails, increased the amount of gladed terrain, reduced the total number and acreage of downhill ski trails, and decreased the size of the special-use permit boundary.
- Cultural mitigation: In response to public concern regarding Mullan Road, the Forest Service moved one proposed ski trail and developed an MOA with the Montana and Idaho SHPOs that included mitigation measures to address adverse effects to the Mullan Road for any implemented action alternative.
- Specific design features: The project interdisciplinary team developed design features to minimize or avoid adverse effects that could occur as a result of implementing proposed activities for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project. Some design features (such as BMPs, woody debris retention guidelines, and whitebark pine retention guidelines) were shaped by law or policy; others were in response to public comments or site-specific conditions.

The project interdisciplinary team worked extensively to involve the public in developing the Proposed Action, and they incorporated ideas presented by the public and other agencies into alternative design whenever possible. The project record demonstrates the team's meaningful consideration of public input and subsequent adjustments to the Proposed Action as noted above and in the FEIS (Chapters 2 and 3).

5.5. Public Review of the DEIS

5.5.1. Circulation of the DEIS

Consistent with objection process regulations (36 CFR 218.25[a][1] and [2]), the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion DEIS was completed and a notice of availability was posted in the *Federal Register* on March 11, 2016, starting the 45-day comment period, which was subsequently extended an additional 15 days to end on May 10, 2016 (AR Doc. No. F1-001 and F1-002). Before the *Federal Register* posting, interested parties and other agencies were notified of the DEIS availability and comment period via official correspondence letters (AR Doc. No. F3-007) and legal advertisements (AR Doc. No. F3-003), which provided the link to the DEIS on the IPNFs' webpage. The Forest Service provided a hard copy of the DEIS to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as required and provided options for requesting compact disks or hard copies of the DEIS for all other agencies and interested parties (AR Doc. No. F2-001, F2-002, and F2-003).

5.5.2. Comments on the DEIS

Interested members of the public submitted specific written comments by email, Forest Service web form, in person, and U.S. Postal Service mail. In all, 55 non-duplicate comment letters were received from individuals; environmental organizations; and federal, state, and county agencies (AR Doc. No. G1-001 to G1-059). In accordance with 40 CFR 1503.4 (Response to Comments), comments were considered individually and collectively in order to determine the appropriate response. Responses to comments are documented in Appendix M of the FEIS and in the administrative record (AR Doc. No. H1-001).

5.5.3. The Role of the Public in Identifying the Selected Alternative

The Forest Service identified an alternative—the Selected Alternative—for implementation based on EIS findings and public comment. For example, during the DEIS comment period, the Forest Service received project-specific comments such as

- support for the use of skid trails as opposed to temporary roads,
- a motorized users' request for creation of a buffer between the new special-use boundary and existing Northern Pacific Railroad trail, and
- a request for further protection of whitebark pine.

The Forest Service also used comments to make factual corrections and clarifications to the DEIS, as identified through boldface italics in the FEIS. Where appropriate, the Forest Service provided an explanation of why comments did not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons supporting the agency's position.

6. DECISION RATIONALE

I have determined that my decision to select Alternative 2 with modifications is consistent with all laws, regulations, and agency policy. I have considered reasonably foreseeable activities and potential cumulative effects. I believe that my decision provides for the best management activities that respond to the purpose and need and issues identified in the development of the project. The factors I used to make my decision on this project included the following:

- Responsiveness to the project's purpose and need (FEIS, Chapter 2)
- Public comments (FEIS, Chapter 2 and administrative record [response to comments])

- Relationship to environmental, economic, and social issues (FEIS, Chapter 3)
- Analysis completed and disclosed in the FEIS and project record Documentation
- Consistency with the Forest Plans and findings required by other laws, regulations and policy (FEIS, Chapter 3, by resource)

The analysis and decision processes for this project are based on the consideration of the best available science. The manner in which the best available science is addressed can be found throughout the EIS, in the Response to Comments (FEIS, Appendix M), and the project record. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is currently underway. The USFWS's Biological Opinion will be provided as further supporting documentation in the Final Record of Decision.

6.1. Meeting the Purpose and Need for Action

The Forest Plans share a common goal of providing year-round recreation opportunities for the public on NFS lands. Specifically, the goal for the three MAs—the IPNFs MA 7 and the LNF MAs 8 and 9—is to provide for a diverse range of developed recreation opportunities, including existing and potential ski areas, which are specifically recognized in the Forest Plans (AR Doc. No. M1-007 and AR Doc. M2-001).

Developed downhill skiing opportunities on the IPNFs are currently being provided solely by Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area; downhill skiing on the LNF is provided by Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area and another resort, Montana Snowbowl Ski and Summer Resort. This proposal provides an opportunity to improve the overall recreation experience at Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area and to maintain the two forests' ability to comply with their management directives related to providing a diverse range of developed recreation opportunities.

The Master Development Plan identifies three social, economic, or physical factors that necessitate the development of additional terrain in order to ensure continued, publicly acceptable ski operations (AR Doc. No. M1-128). These factors, which together form the overall need for the Proposed Action, are

1. diminished skier 2 experiences associated with overcrowding, increased skier congestion, decreased safe operating conditions, and inefficient skier transport during high-visitation days;
2. a need to maintain ski terrain alignment with the local market demand; and
3. concerns over the economic viability of Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area and its ongoing contribution to the local economy.

Details regarding these needs are discussed in greater detail in the FEIS (Section 1.3).

6.1.1. Need: Maintain High-Quality Skier Experiences on High-Visitation Days

Alternative 1 does not respond to this element of the purpose and need. Under this alternative, the ski area would continue to experience issues associated with skier congestion, long lift wait times, and insufficient parking during high-visitation days, which could ultimately affect visitation rates over time.

Numerous comments during scoping and the public DEIS comment period were received supporting the expansion of the ski area. Expansion of Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area under any action alternative would allow the IPNFs and LNF to continue to comply with their management directives to

[2] The terms "skier," "skiing," "ski," and "skiable," as used within this EIS, include all forms of downhill skiing, such as snowboarding, telemark skiing, adaptive skiing, and other forms of allowable, on-snow sliding.

provide a high-quality recreation experience for a wide range and number of skiers. The addition of new terrain, two new lifts, and more seats on existing lifts would allow guests to disperse more widely and efficiently across the ski area. Additionally, lift improvements and increased terrain acreage would allow Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area to comfortably accommodate larger crowds. Even with more total skiers using Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area, these improvements collectively would maintain skier experience on low-visitation days and reduce the potential for overcrowding and long lift-line wait times during high-visitation days. Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area would also add 130 new parking spaces to accommodate additional guests once construction was complete.

The Proposed Action (Alternative 2) and Alternative 3 provide tradeoffs in the development of new traditional ski trails and gladed terrain to meet skier needs. Alternative 2 would provide more traditional downhill skiing (91 acres versus 78 acres), whereas Alternative 3 would provide more gladed terrain (17 acres versus 9 acres). The Selected Alternative would provide a balance between these two alternatives by emphasizing traditional ski trails except where current conditions indicate that glading is necessary to remove beetle-killed trees and provide a safe skiing environment. In summary, the Selected Alternative would provide 87 acres of downhill skiing plus 17 acres of gladed terrain.

6.1.2. Need: Maintain Ski Terrain Alignment with Local Market Demand

Anecdotally, Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area has historically failed to retain younger, advanced skiers because of limited trail options. Although the topography surrounding Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area does not allow for a perfectly balanced terrain distribution, proposed expansion under any action alternative would provide additional ski trail variety, bringing the ski area closer to desired market goals and allowing Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area to provide or expand recreation opportunities for a wider range of skiers, thereby increasing skier retention and helping the IPNFs and LNF comply with their management directives. The Selected Alternative effectively responds to this purpose and need by providing 87 acres of downhill skiing plus 17 acres of gladed terrain across varying ability levels while still ensuring a safe skiing experience.

6.1.3. Need: Maintain Economic Viability

Ski area expansion, as described under Alternatives 2, 3, and the Selected Alternative, would allow the ski area to accommodate its highest historical peak visitor use (2,402 guests reported one day in 2015) and to incorporate any future increases in recreation demand and visitation from surrounding counties. Future visitation growth would increase ski area revenue, would spur the addition of new full-time or part-time jobs at Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area, and could increase visitor spending in nearby communities (Section 3.7.4.3 of the FEIS). These economic changes would also help ensure that developed winter recreation opportunities for public users of the IPNFs and LNF continue to be provided, at least in part, by Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area.

6.2. Consideration of Public Comments in the Decision

The decisions related to this project are based on a fair analysis of the scientific and environmental data, effects analysis, and public response. The Forest Service encouraged public participation from the beginning and maintained participation throughout the planning process, including issue identification and the analysis Documentation process. Project-specific public comments were used to refine alternative design and ensure a thorough analysis, helping the project interdisciplinary team, Superior and Coeur d'Alene River district rangers, and me in determining the best course of action for the project.

6.3. Consideration of the Issues

Using the comments received during the scoping period and considering known concerns among the Forest Service interdisciplinary team, the Forest Service developed a list of issues to address in the FEIS. Issues that were evaluated were as follows:

- Cultural resources: Effects to cultural resource sites, including those listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- Fish: Effects to stream habitat and to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species
- Forest vegetation: Effects to species composition, forest health, productivity, and regeneration
- Recreation: Effects to opportunities for downhill skiing and summer users
- Special-status plants: Effects to habitats for sensitive plants and species of concern
- Socioeconomics: Effects to the local economy (i.e., employment, wages, visitor spending, county tax revenue, and traffic patterns)
- Soils: Effects to detrimental soil conditions and hazards
- Visual resources: Effects to visual characteristics and compliance with the Forest Plans' scenery integrity objective designations
- Water resources: Effects to water quality (sedimentation in streams), water quantity (peak flows), wetlands, and other waterbodies of the U.S.
- Wildlife: Effects to wildlife habitat and effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate species (including lynx within the lynx analysis unit); sensitive species; management indicator species (MIS); and other species of interest

A comparison of project impacts to the above list of issues, by alternative, is provided briefly below.

6.3.1. Cultural Resources

NEPA requires that agencies consider the effects of their actions on all aspects of the human environment, including cultural uses. Cultural uses of the environment include historic properties, culturally valued properties, archaeological sites, and other less tangible aspects of the environment such as lifeways and religious practices. Under the Selected Alternative, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3, the proposed project would adversely affect the feeling, workmanship, and setting of Mullan Road on the Montana side of the area of potential effects (APE). However, the Forest Service has developed an MOA with the Montana and Idaho SHPOs that includes mitigation measures to address adverse effects to Mullan Road. These impacts and mitigation measures that would be implemented for any selected action alternative are discussed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

6.3.2. Fish

Fisheries' issues include potential project impacts to downstream fish habitat and to native or sensitive fish species, such as the westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*). Alternatives 2, 3, and the Selected Alternative would result in similar impacts to fish habitat and populations. There would be no effect to the fish-bearing South Fork Coeur d'Alene River or to Tributary SR3. Any action alternative would result in a 0.04-ton-per-acre increase in sediment for Tributary CA2. Temporary increases in sedimentation to Tributary SR2 and the St. Regis River would also occur from the proposed culverting of a ford along NFS Road 18591; however, effects would cease once construction ends. Additionally, there would be no vegetation removal along the banks of St. Regis River or change in Pacific Anadromous Fish

Strategy (PACFISH)/Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) Biological Opinion (PIBO) parameters. Increased water yield by up to 0.14% would not result in changes to stream geomorphology or degrade fish habitat.

Alternative 1 would not reduce long-term sedimentation from vehicle movement across a ford along NFS Road 18591 and therefore does not address fisheries issues as well as the other alternatives.

6.3.3. Forest Vegetation

The NFMA (36 CFR 219.12 (a)(2)) requires assurance that the Forest Service manages federal forest lands for long-term sustainability of the forest vegetation resource. All action alternatives would result in tree removal and a slight reduction in stand density within the analysis area, but differences between alternatives would be minimal (ranging from 103 to 108 acres). Under any alternative, there would be no change in fire regime condition class; however, the Selected Alternative and Alternative 3 would treat a slightly larger area of stands susceptive to insect or disease damage or at high mortality risk (46 and 44 acres versus 39 acres for Alternative 2). All action alternatives would result in localized soil disturbance, including soil compaction or rutting. The Selected Alternative would result in slightly greater soil disturbance because of its larger construction footprint (101 acres versus 96 acres and 92 acres for Alternative 2 and the Alternative 3, respectively). All action alternatives would also reduce snags and course wood on roughly 25% of the analysis area, whereas downed woody debris could be reduced by up to 30% as a result of vegetation removal. However, the Forest Service would implement design features to minimize soil impacts, revegetate disturbed areas, and maintain downed wood and snags as feasible. Additionally, although the IPNFs Forest Plan generally places an emphasis on retention of snags and downed woody debris, greater emphasis is placed on visitor safety and recreational values for actions that may alter vegetation on lands designated as Primary Recreation Areas (MA7) (see Section 3.4.3 of the FEIS).

6.3.4. Recreation

All action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and the Selected Alternative) would be consistent with desired visitor experiences in recreation opportunity spectrum classes and would provide additional novice to advanced intermediate terrain, allowing the resort to accommodate more guests and disperse guests more widely across ski area trails, which would likely also help reduce skier congestion and overcrowding on high-visitation days. Upgrades to Lift 1, as well as construction of Lifts 5 and 6, for all action alternatives, would improve lift capacity and reduce overall lift wait times across the area. All three alternatives would also provide 130 new parking spaces for guests.

Alternative 2 would provide the greatest increase in traditional downhill skiing opportunities (15 trails; 91 acres), whereas Alternative 3 and the Selected Alternative would provide 78 acres (12 trails) and 87 acres (14 trails), respectively. In comparison, Alternative 3 and the Selected Alternative would provide more higher-elevation gladed terrain (17 acres) for skiers than Alternative 2 (9 acres).

Alternative 1 would not reduce skier congestion, lift wait times, and insufficient parking during high-visitation days and therefore does not address recreation issues as well as the other alternatives.

Summer uses in the analysis area would not change under any alternative, although noise, visual disturbance, and human activity could decrease some recreation users' experience or cause them to temporarily avoid the area during construction. Following construction of any action alternative, all land within the analysis area would be designated solely for downhill skiing activity during winter months. Other winter users would lose access to the expansion area for the duration of the 20-year special-use

permit and would be required to either move west and south into adjacent St. Regis Basin terrain or to find new recreation destinations.

6.3.5. Special-Status Plants

Special-status plant issues include potential project impacts to plant populations and habitat guilds that may support special-status plants. All action alternatives would result in vegetation alternation or removal from construction of project components. However, these vegetation types are common across the landscape, and the impacts would not be adverse or significant. The Selected Alternative would result in the greatest acres of vegetation alteration or removal (126 acres). Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 would result in slightly less vegetation disturbance, at 121 acres and 118 acres, respectively. In the long term, the Selected Alternative would convert 117 acres of forest habitat and 1 acre of rich fen habitat to montane dry grassland for the duration of the special-use permit, whereas Alternatives 2 and 3 would convert 113 acres and 110 acres of forest habitat, respectively, and 1 acre of rich fen habitat.

No alternative would impact federally threatened or endangered plant species. Approximately 51–55 acres of subalpine forest would be removed for all action alternatives, resulting in the removal of eight non-cone-bearing trees. Also, root zones of any standing whitebark pine could be impacted if operations are within 4 feet of their base. However, these impacts would not contribute to a trend toward federal listing, cause a loss of population or species viability, or degrade habitat capability to an extent that the species' existing distribution would be reduced. The Forest Service has committed to buying eight blister rust–resistant whitebark pine seedlings from the Coeur d'Alene nursery to plant in undisturbed and untraveled whitebark pine habitat within the expansion area as replacement for individual whitebark pine trees removed during ski area construction.

6.3.6. Socioeconomics

The proposed ski area expansion would impact the local economy. This impact can be measured by calculating estimated jobs created and labor income generated directly, as well as visitor spending and impacts to county tax revenue. Other issues of concern include changes to ski ticket prices and traffic on surrounding roads. When considering all project activities, all action alternatives are expected to provide a negligible positive increase in revenue, employment, and visitor spending. Ski area ticket prices will increase at the pace of inflation. Traffic increases along I-90 are estimated to be no more than 5% greater than current average daily traffic during peak snow days. The impacts of the Selected Alternative on the local community would be the same as Alternatives 2 and 3, which are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

6.3.7. Soils

Road, lift, and restroom construction associated with all action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, or the Selected Alternative) would directly disturb less than 1 acre of soils with high hazard ratings. Although developed sites are not subject to productivity requirements or regional soil quality thresholds, all action alternatives would not affect high productivity soils or result in detrimental soil disturbance greater than 9% of the total analysis area, which falls within regional and forest soil quality standards. Up to 11 acres of soil would be managed for administrative uses for the duration of the 20-year special-use permit rather than vegetation production. All action alternatives would also result in localized soil disturbance, including soil compaction or rutting. The Selected Alternative would result in slightly greater soil disturbance because of its larger construction footprint (101 acres versus 96 acres and 92 acres for Alternative 2 and the Alternative 3, respectively). However, the Forest Service would implement design features to minimize soil impacts and revegetate disturbed areas.

6.3.8. Visual Resources

The Forest Service requires that potential impacts to visual resources be inventoried, evaluated, and analyzed based on the *Handbook for Scenery Management* (AR Doc. No. M2-187) and based on the Forest Plans (AR Doc. No. M1-007 and AR Doc. M2-001). Under all alternatives, the existing ski area would remain visible to observers in the area. Additional cleared ski trails, gladed areas, permanent roads, and ski resort–related structures and lift corridors proposed under Alternatives 2, 3, and the Selected Alternative would be visible to ski area visitors during the 20-year special-use permit. However, long-term scenery effects would likely be consistent with expected visual impacts associated with the operation of a ski area by users. Along I-90, many project components would be visible, although the duration of visibility would be limited (1 minute or less) because of existing rolling terrain, high travel speeds, and limited travel distance within view of the ski area (approximately 2 miles). Users of adjacent trails, such as the Northern Pacific Railroad trail, could also observe some new project components, depending on their location and speed of travel. The impacts of the Selected Alternative on visual resources would be the same as Alternatives 2 and 3, which are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

6.3.9. Water Resources

Water resource issues include potential project impacts to water quality, water flow, wetlands and area streams, local watershed conditions, and riparian habitat conservation area (RHCAs). Alternatives 2, 3, and the Selected Alternative would result in similar impacts to these issues of concern. There would be no effect to the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River or to Tributary SR3. Any action alternative would result in a 0.04-ton-per-acre increase in sediment for Tributary CA2 during construction and a 0.004-ton-per-acre increase in sediment in the long term. Vegetation removal within the Tributary CA2 RHCA would also reduce shade, increase temperature, and reduce large woody debris for 120 feet (2% of the total tributary segment length). Temporary increases in sedimentation to Tributary SR2 and the St. Regis River would occur from the proposed culverting of a ford along NFS Road 18591, but effects would cease once construction ended. Additionally, there would be no vegetation removal along the banks of St. Regis River or change in PIBO parameters.

All action alternatives would increase water yield by up to 0.14%; however, effects would not be large enough to cause changes to stream geomorphology. No change in peak flows is predicted. Herbicide use at Tributary CA2 would be restricted within 150 feet of the stream to avoid impacts.

One acre of Wetland B would be altered through ski trail development under any action alternative. However, this alteration would not substantially affect wetland functions and services because the hydrologic connection would remain unchanged.

Alternative 1 would not reduce sedimentation from vehicle movement across a ford along NFS Road 18591 and therefore does not address water resource issues as well as the other alternatives.

6.3.10. Wildlife

6.3.10.1. GENERAL WILDLIFE

During construction and operations associated with all action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, or the Selected Alternative), increased noise levels and human activity could result in temporary disturbance or displacement of wildlife. As compared to Alternative 2 and the Selected Alternative, Alternative 3 could result in a slightly lesser magnitude of wildlife displacement because three fewer ski trails would be built and larger inter-trail leave islands would remain. However, displaced species under any action alternative could find alternative suitable habitat throughout the analysis area and on surrounding lands.

Occasional wildlife strikes could also occur from increased human activity and traffic during ski area construction and operation, but the risk of wildlife strikes would be low on ski area roads due to low vehicle speeds, low volume of traffic, and no night-time activity. The action alternatives would increase traffic on I-90 by 2% to 5% during construction and peak ski days, which could increase potential for wildlife to be struck and injured or killed by a vehicle when attempting to cross I-90. However, the increase in traffic would be unlikely to adversely affect wildlife populations or result in a long-term change in distribution (avoidance or abandonment of preferred areas), a reduction in population size, or a shift in the population demographics.

Proposed road development could decrease habitat quality through the introduction of weeds to roadside vegetation or through noise level increases, but under all alternatives weeds would be managed as prescribed in the IPNFs and LNF weed management plans and through ski area operation plans to prevent an overall reduction in habitat health. Roads can also act as a movement barrier to some wildlife species, especially when the road is wide, paved, and handling high levels of traffic. All proposed roads under the action alternatives would be gravel or dirt, and would not handle high levels of traffic. The skid trails proposed under Alternative 3 and the Selected Alternative would present less of a barrier for some species than the temporary roads proposed under the Proposed Action because of their narrower clearing width.

6.3.10.2. LYNX

Approximately 0.5 acre of lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) habitat would be removed for construction of ski trails and a road under any action alternative, which constitutes less than 1% of the available lynx habitat in the lynx action area. All impacts would occur to the multistory forest stage habitat; no winter foraging habitat would be affected. Because of the small amount of non-winter lynx foraging habitat that would be impacted by the project, lynx would not be significantly affected by this habitat loss. Denning habitat would not be impacted under any action alternative. Implementation of the action alternatives would not significantly fragment foraging habitat because affected existing foraging habitat only occurs in two small, likely low-quality patches.

One lynx linkage is located in the lynx action area at Lookout Pass. This linkage would be made more difficult for lynx to cross under any action alternative because of vegetation removal for construction of three new parking areas (up to 6.6 acres, cumulatively) adjacent to I-90.

6.3.10.3. GRIZZLY BEAR

Expansion of the special-use permit boundary by up to 55% (485–654 acres, depending on the action alternative) would increase the existing magnitude of fragmentation. The action alternatives would also increase human activity in a key high-elevation movement area. Approximately 126–134 acres of vegetation removal would occur, depending on the action alternative, which would remove hiding and foraging cover for bears moving through the Lookout linkage zone. This habitat removal accounts for only 5% of existing habitat in the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) action area; therefore, impacts would not result in significant adverse effects.

6.3.10.4. WOLVERINE

Approximately 117–121 acres (less than 1%) of suitable wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) foraging and dispersal habitat in the analysis area would be directly impacted under the action alternatives through vegetation removal for the construction of roads, ski runs, ski lifts, and other project infrastructure. Potential denning habitat is not present in the proposed expansion area and would not be impacted. Based on concurrence from USFWS that dispersed recreational activities and infrastructure development are not

a threat to the species (AR Doc. No. M1-018) and implementation of design features to protect dens, the action alternatives would not jeopardize the continued existence of the North American wolverine.

6.3.10.5. SENSITIVE AQUATIC SPECIES

Approximately 1 acre of wetland would be directly impacted by the creation of two new ski trails under any action alternative, which could affect the boreal toad (*Bufo boreas*) and northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*). Individuals of these species could be temporarily displaced from the impacted wetland during construction or could be crushed by machinery. It is unknown whether boreal toad and northern leopard frogs currently breed in analysis area wetlands; however, if they do, breeding locations may be lost or altered in the long term because of localized vegetation alterations. Because the surface and sub-surface water flow would remain unchanged, however, it is likely that temporarily displaced individuals would return to this portion of the wetland once construction ceased. Both of these species are highly mobile, and also would also be able to travel overland (boreal toad) or through the existing hydrology (both species) to access other breeding sites within this wetland complex. Because individuals of these species may use the culverts to forage as well as to travel between habitat patches, the construction of permanent culverted stream crossings would not fragment sensitive aquatic species habitat. Sedimentation associated with culvert installation could enter and settle in the wetland, but the Forest Service would implement BMPs to decrease sediment yield. Other changes to streamside conditions—potential changes in shade, temperature, and woody debris—would be unlikely to be substantial enough to degrade aquatic habitat. Road decommissioning would remove fill material that is currently impounding the wetland within the existing special-use permit boundary, and could also result in net increases in aquatic habitat over time.

6.3.10.6. SENSITIVE TERRESTRIAL SPECIES

Less than 1% of the habitat available for all sensitive terrestrial species, with the exception of the black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*), would be impacted by any action alternative. Respectively 11% or 12% of available black-backed woodpecker habitat would be impacted by the action alternatives because the species is restricted to narrower habitat requirements and would experience effects at the project scale. As part of this habitat loss, 9 acres (Alternative 2) or 17 acres (Alternative 3 and Selected Alternative) would be gladed, removing individual beetle-infested trees. Beetle-infested trees serve as nesting, perching, and foraging habitat for this species. However, the snags present in the analysis area no longer constitute high-quality foraging habitat.

6.3.10.7. MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES AND OTHER WILDLIFE SPECIES

Implementation of any action alternative would remove less than 1% of the habitat available in the analysis area applied to each species, with the exception of migratory birds with smaller ranges. The presence of ski runs can reduce species richness (the number of species present), diversity, and abundance of migratory birds through a decline in arthropod (food) abundance from vegetation removal and mowing. However, because of the availability of large amounts of similar habitat in the project- and landscape-scale wildlife analysis areas, migratory birds would not be significantly affected. Nesting individuals and their eggs or chicks would also not be directly impacted because of the design feature to locate and protect active nests.

Of the MIS, the elk (*Cervus canadensis nelsoni*) is most susceptible to vehicle strikes due to the presence and use of roads. This potential would be reduced under all action alternatives by maintaining a low speed limit on all roads throughout the project area.

Effects to the Idaho giant salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*) by alternative would be similar to that described in Section 6.3.10.5 of this ROD.

6.4. Environmentally Preferred Alternative

It is required by law that one or more environmentally preferred alternatives be disclosed. The environmentally preferable alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented and it does not have to meet the underlying need of the project. However, the environmentally preferred alternative must cause the least harm to the biological and physical environment while best protecting and preserving historic, cultural, and natural resources (36 CFR 220.3). The environmentally preferred alternative must also "encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment," "promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere" and "stimulate the health and welfare of man" (42 United States Code [USC] 4321).

In the short term, Alternative 1 would seem to be the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not result in new disturbances to the biological and physical environment. However, Alternative 1 fails to address several existing environmental concerns present in the project area, including sedimentation to area streams from vehicle traffic across a ford on NFS Road 18591 and a high concentration of beetle-killed trees on higher elevation slopes.

Alternative 3 is identified as the environmentally preferred alternative because it would have the smallest construction footprint and result in the least amount of surface disturbance. Although Alternative 3 would result in short-term impacts, which are described in the FEIS and Section 6.3 of this ROD, these impacts would be outweighed in the long term by the benefits of actions that reduce hazardous fuels and improve water quality and aquatic habitat.

6.5. Forest Plan Consistency

Proposed activities at Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area under the Selected Alternative are consistent with the IPNFs Forest Plan (AR Doc. M2-001) and LNF Forest Plan (AR Doc. M1-007) because they help meet objectives of the purpose and need for this area. All management activities would be in compliance with MA direction, including goals and objectives, as described in the FEIS (Chapter 3, by resource) and summarized below.

6.5.1. Cultural Resources

The Selected Alternative would meet the standards of the Forest Plans and other applicable standards because existing cultural resources have been inventoried, and all affected historic properties determined eligible for the NRHP would be managed in a manner consistent with the standards specified by the SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, as well as applicable U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations. As part of tribal consultation, the Forest Service has also communicated with all affected Indian tribes (see Chapter 5 of FEIS).

6.5.2. Fish

The Selected Alternative would adhere to the aquatic resources requirements of the Forest Plans (AR Doc. M2-001 and M1-007), as amended by INFISH (AR Doc. No. M1-125), and in compliance with Idaho and Montana's implementation of the Clean Water Act (CWA).

NFS Road 18591 reconstruction would occur within the 300-foot RHCA of the St. Regis River, but at least 100 feet of vegetation would remain between the road prism and the St. Regis River during construction, operation, and maintenance. Similarly, NFS Road 18591 reconstruction would occur within the 150-foot RHCA for Tributary SR2, but clearing of vegetation on the downstream side of the stream crossing would be confined to the new drainage structure and to any trees deemed "Hazard Trees" per

OSHA. INFISH and Forest Plan direction is to avoid adverse effects to inland native fish through several measures, but it does not prohibit the proposed activities within an RHCA.

There is not a site-specific exception being requested or employed, and there is no need to complete a watershed analysis for the reconstruction of an existing road in an RHCA. A site-specific analysis of NFS Road 18591's effects to the analysis area waterbodies is included in the FEIS.

Viable populations of aquatic species are likely present in the fish-bearing streams in the analysis area and would be retained, as directed by the NFMA.

6.5.3. Forest Vegetation

The Selected Alternative was designed to meet the forest vegetation requirements of the Forest Plans, state forest practices legislation, and applicable sections of the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbook. Negative direct, indirect, and cumulative effects would be limited by application of design features.

6.5.4. Recreation

The Selected Alternative would be compliant with the Forest Plans because the expanded ski area would provide an improved downhill recreation opportunity for a wide variety of skill levels, and continue to permit other, dispersed summer recreation activities in the analysis area. Other non–downhill skiing winter recreation activities within the proposed expansion area would be eliminated. However, most of St. Regis Basin activity occurs to the south and west of the proposed ski area expansion boundary and is anticipated to continue in that area regardless of which alternative is selected for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project. Therefore, the proposed project is not anticipated to measurably reduce winter recreation opportunities across the IPNFs or LNF.

6.5.5. Special-Status Plants

In accordance with the Forest Plans (AR Doc. M2-001 and M1-007), all areas with proposed ground or vegetation disturbance under the Selected Alternative were surveyed for special-status plants in 2015. When impacts to special-status species cannot be avoided, the NFMA and FSM Chapter 2670 (AR Doc. No. M2-194) require that an assessment be made as to the significance of potential adverse effects on the population or its habitat within the area of concern and on the species as a whole. The Selected Alternative includes vegetation removal within a tenth of an acre of subalpine forest occupied by whitebark pine, an Endangered Species Act (ESA) candidate species and Forest Service Region 1 sensitive species. Although some small non-cone-bearing trees would be lost, there would be no significant impact to the species' population viability, nor would its range be reduced. The Forest Service has also committed to buying eight blister rust–resistant whitebark pine seedlings from the Coeur d'Alene nursery to plant in undisturbed and untraveled whitebark pine habitat within the expansion area as replacement for individual whitebark pine trees removed during ski area construction. Therefore, the alternative is considered in compliance with Forest Plan guidance.

The Selected Alternative would have no effects to plants listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

6.5.6. Socioeconomics

The Selected Alternative would be compliant with the Forest Plans (AR Doc. M2-001 and M1-007) because the expanded ski area would provide an improved recreation opportunity, would create jobs and increase income, and would contribute to the functional economy surrounding the forests.

6.5.7. Soils

The Selected Alternative would be in compliance with Forest Plans and other relevant regulations, laws, and policies. Proposed actions would not exceed regional or forest soil quality standards, and implemented design features would ensure that project actions minimize soil disturbance and maintain productivity, as feasible.

6.5.8. Visual Resources

Potential visual impacts to the landscape under the Selected Alternative would be expected to be consistent with a Moderate scenic integrity objective (SIO) or Partial Retention visual quality objective (VQO) and would not initially meet the IPNFs' High SIO or the LNF's Retention VQO established for much of the visual analysis area. Visual impacts cannot be assessed for areas with undesignated VQOs without an updated site inventory.

However, the Selected Alternative is located within a visual resources analysis area that provides motorized and non-motorized recreation activities. A typical user would expect to see existing developed recreation facilities in this area. Landscape visibility—consisting of viewer context, duration of view, and degree of detail—strongly influences the severity of scenery effects. In this case, viewer expectations to see ski area terrain and related facilities should lessen the visual impact of the proposed ski area expansion actions and would likely move the Selected Alternative toward compliance with the IPNFs' High SIO and LNF's Retention VQO. Implementation of scenery resources design features would also reduce deviations to the landscape form, line, color, texture, and pattern, and would move impacts toward compliance with the management objectives.

6.5.9. Water Resources

6.5.9.1. WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

INFISH envisions that site-specific assessments can be made when disturbance occurs within an RHCA to assess whether the actions are compliant. In this case, NFS Road 18591 reconstruction is unlikely to affect shade, temperature, sediment yield, or large woody debris on the St. Regis River. Design and construction of the road would incorporate road management standards and guidelines (RF-2d and RF-2e), and would therefore comply with INFISH (AR Doc. No. M1-125).

The placement of a ski trail across Tributary CA2 would reduce shade, increase temperature, and reduce large woody debris (specific RMOs) for a 120-foot-long segment of this stream. However, adverse effects on fish would be avoided because this segment is not fish bearing and the nearest occupied habitat is more than 1 mile downstream. This segment represents less than 2% of a 7,100-foot-long tributary segment that leads to the fish-bearing South Fork Coeur d'Alene River. A watershed analysis, referenced in RM-1, was not completed because project actions would not alter the Tributary CA2 RHCA, as disclosed in Section 3.10.4.2.1 and 3.10.4.3.1 of the FEIS, to the point that adverse effects to fish would occur, and therefore INFISH guidelines RM-1, RM-2, and RM-3 would be achieved (AR Doc. No. M1-125). The ski trail would also require compliance with the State of Idaho rules for protection of streams and waterbodies during forestry management under the Idaho Forest Practices Act; however, it is not clear if these rules

would legally apply to clearing during ski trail development. Disturbance to the tributary itself (within the banks) would require permitting under both the CWA and Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act. Throughout the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project, the Forest Service would continue to ensure that all project actions comply with local, state, and federal regulatory requirements.

The estimated effects from the proposed activities would be consistent with watershed-scale efforts to improve water quality. The TMDL for the St. Regis River identifies targets for both sediment and temperature (MDEQ 2008). As indicated by the analysis, after application of BMPs, the expected sediment impacts from culvert installation in Tributary SR2 would not be measurable downstream, and no removal of vegetation would occur to impact temperature on the St. Regis River. The TMDL for the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River identifies sediment targets, although temperature has also been identified as a concern more recently. After application of BMPs, the expected sediment impacts related to Tributary CA2 would not be measurable, and no vegetation removal would impact temperature on the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River.

6.5.9.2. WETLANDS

With regard to wetlands and other waters of the U.S., the Selected Alternative would be in compliance with the Forest Plans, with the inclusion of INFISH standards (AR Doc. M2-001, M1-007, and M1-125). U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permits and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality/Montana Department of Environmental Quality guidelines provide permitting vehicles for both the culvert installations at Tributaries CA2 and SR2 and the proposed road decommissioning.

To meet the intent of the Executive Order (EO) 11990, the project avoided wetlands to the degree possible. A watershed analysis, referenced in RM-1, was not completed because the existing wetland RHCA would not be altered, and project actions, as disclosed in Section 3.10.4.2.2 and 3.10.4.3.2 of the FEIS, would not alter wetland functions and services.

6.5.10. Wildlife

6.5.10.1. LYNX AND GRIZZLY BEAR

The Selected Alternative would adhere to the threatened and endangered species requirements of Forest Plans (AR Doc. M2-001 and M1-007) and would be in compliance with the ESA. Specific design features implemented to reduce effects to lynx and grizzly bear are discussed in Appendix E of the FEIS.

6.5.10.2. WOLVERINE

The Selected Alternative is consistent with Forest Plans and policy direction to "ensure that these species do not trend toward federal listing as a result of management actions." The alternative would not result in a threat to the North American wolverine (AR Doc. No. M1-018). Design features implemented to reduce effects to wolverine are discussed in Appendix E of the FEIS.

6.5.10.3. AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL SENSITIVE SPECIES

The Selected Alternative is consistent with Forest Plans and policy direction to ensure that these species "do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service actions" (AR Doc. No. M2-194). The Selected Alternative would not affect more than 12% of potentially suitable sensitive species habitat in the project-scale wildlife analysis area, and would affect inconsequential amounts of habitat available across the broader landscape. Therefore, these actions would also be consistent with NFMA requirements to provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities across the forest.

6.5.10.4. MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Forest Plans guidance requires management of wildlife habitat through a variety of methods (e.g., vegetation alteration, prescribed burning, and invasive species treatments) to promote viable populations of all indigenous wildlife species. Based on analysis, the Selected Alternative would affect less than 1% of all potentially suitable MIS or other wildlife habitat, excluding migratory birds, in the project-scale wildlife analysis area, and would affect inconsequential amounts of habitat available across the broader landscape. Given this, there would be no effects to population viability for considered MIS and other wildlife species. As a result, the project would also be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and EO 13186.

6.6. Findings Required by Other Laws, Regulations and Policy

6.6.1. National Forest Management Act

The NFMA requires that all projects must be consistent with the governing Forest Plan (or Plans) (16 USC 1604[i]). The FEIS (Chapter 3) addresses consistency of the alternatives with the IPNFs and LNF Forest Plan standards and other legal requirements. Potential physical, biological, cultural, and engineering impacts of the Selected Alternative have been assessed and are disclosed in the FEIS (Chapter 3) with supporting information in the administrative record. Based on the conclusions presented in the EIS that proposed activities are within Forest Plan standards, this decision is consistent with Forest Plan direction. No IPNFs Forest Plan amendment is required. However, under the Selected Alternative the LNF Forest Plan would be amended. This amendment would change the MA designation for the expanded footprint of the Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area from MAs 9, 13, and 24 to MA 8 (ski areas), as follows, to provide for consistent management of the ski area.

- MA 9 (148 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 13 (5 acres) reclassified to MA 8
- MA 24 (78 acres) reclassified to MA 8

The affected area is immediately west of the existing ski area boundary along the Montana-Idaho state line in the west end of the Superior Ranger District. This amendment, which will be authorized under this ROD, has been determined to be a non-significant amendment to the LNF Forest Plan.

The Selected Alternative is consistent with other NFMA requirements as described below:

- Maintaining diversity (16 USC 1604[g][3][B]): The Selected Alternative will have no significant impact to any species and will maintain the diversity of populations or species of fish (FEIS, Section 3.3 and wildlife (FEIS, Section 3.11 and Appendix E).
- Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions (16 USC 1604[g][3][E][i] and protection for streams and other bodies of water (16 USC 1604[g][3][E][iii]): Ski area design includes features designed specifically to protect water, soils, and fisheries (FEIS Appendix E), including use of BMPs and other criteria for road reconstruction and maintenance. There will be no irreversible damage to soil, slope, or other watershed conditions (FEIS, Sections 3.8 and 3.10).

6.6.2. 2005 Travel Rule

The Selected Alternative meets all requirements of the various components included in the 2005 Travel Rule (36 CFR 212, 251 and 261) because no changes are being proposed to the Superior and Coeur d'Alene River Ranger Districts' existing travel management decisions.

6.6.3. Clean Water Act

Under authority of the CWA, the EPA and the states must develop plans and objectives that will not further harm, and will eventually restore, streams that do not meet beneficial uses of the state. The Forest Service has developed BMPs as outlined in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSM 2509.22; AR Doc. No. M2-183), to meet the intent of the water quality standards of the State of Idaho and Montana. The INFISH standards and guidelines and the BMPs implemented with this project would also protect riparian areas and wetlands. Additional information is provided in Appendix E of the FEIS.

6.6.4. Idaho Forest Practices Act

The Idaho Forest Practices Act (Title 38, Chapter 13, Idaho Code 2000) regulates forest management on all ownerships in Idaho, including NFS lands. The Forest Service has agreements with the state to implement BMPs for all management activities. All activities will meet or exceed guidelines described in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSM 2509.22; AR Doc. No. M2-183). Following these BMPs will meet the water quality protection elements of the Idaho Forest Practices Act.

6.6.5. Endangered Species Act

6.6.5.1. AQUATIC SPECIES

Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are listed as threatened under the ESA (1973). Although bull trout could be present in the project area, the species would not be affected by the Selected Alternative because of the following factors:

1. The ski area special-use permit boundary is 24 miles upstream of the nearest designated critical habitat for bull trout, mapped up to river mile 12.5 on the St. Regis River.
2. The special-use permit boundary is in the St. Regis River headwaters (Hydrologic Unit Code 170102040801) of the Middle Clark Fork River Core Area for bull trout (AR Doc. No. M1-016; AR Doc. No. M1-124). No bull trout are known to occupy the St. Regis River headwaters adjacent to the special-use permit boundary because bull trout access to these streams is blocked by a barrier under I-90 at river mile 34.2 (AR Doc. No. M1-016). This fish barrier is approximately 2 miles downstream of the ski area parking lot.
3. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks historical fish sampling records indicate bull trout up to river mile 15.3, approximately 21 miles downstream of the special-use permit boundary. No bull trout were observed in the St. Regis River headwaters during fish sampling conducted in 2013 and 2014.
4. BMP implementation required by INFISH would ensure that no sedimentation occurs in downstream reaches occupied by fish, including bull trout. Additionally, a recent study of stream crossing replacements on NFS roads finds that during culvert replacement, turbidity values 0.5 mile downstream were similar to results measured upstream of the culvert replacement. The closest distance to potential bull trout occupancy is anywhere from 2 to 21 miles downstream from proposed surface-disturbing activities from the project.
5. All fish-bearing streams would have stream crossings designed to provide aquatic organism passage, ensuring that fragmentation of aquatic habitat would not occur.

For the reasons listed above, the Selected Alternative would have no effect on bull trout species or bull trout designated critical habitat and is dismissed from further analysis.

6.6.5.2. WILDLIFE SPECIES

The following threatened, endangered, and proposed species would be affected at a level that does not increase risk to the species, with effects adequately mitigated through project design (see FEIS, Appendix E Design Features).

- Grizzly bear: Because of the low probability that individuals would pass through the area, the limited (5%) habitat removal, and the potential availability of other habitat linkages along the I-90 corridor, any of the action alternatives may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect, grizzly bear.
- Canada lynx: Because of negligible (0.5 acre) impacts on summer foraging habitat and no effects to winter foraging habitat, the Selected Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, Canada lynx.
- Wolverine: Because of the low probability that individuals would den in the area, conservation measures protecting denning individuals, and concurrence from USFWS that dispersed recreational activities and infrastructure development are not a threat to the species (AR Doc. No. M1-018), any of the action alternatives would not jeopardize the continued existence of the North American wolverine.

6.6.5.3. PLANT SPECIES

No endangered plants are listed by the USFWS for the IPNFs or LNF. Potential exists for the threatened water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*) to occur, but these species are not known to be present in the project area (AR Doc. No. B2-002), and no individuals or populations were identified in the project area during the 2015 field surveys.

One candidate species—whitebark pine—is present in the analysis area. Construction of the Selected Alternative would remove approximately 55 acres of subalpine forest, of which 0.10 acre is known to be occupied by eight non-cone-bearing whitebark pines. However, the Forest Service has committed to buying eight blister rust–resistant whitebark pine seedlings from the Coeur d'Alene nursery to plant in undisturbed and untraveled whitebark pine habitat within the expansion area as replacement for individual whitebark pine trees removed during ski area construction.

6.7. Other Disclosures

NEPA at 40 CFR 1502.25(a) directs that, "to the fullest extent possible, agencies shall prepare draft environmental impact statements concurrently with and integrated with … other environmental review laws and executive orders."

6.7.1. National Historic Preservation Act

An appropriate inventory has been conducted for this project, and cultural properties are known to be located within the APE. Based on the design features identified in Appendix E of the FEIS, the Forest Service has determined that this project would have no adverse effect to all properties with the exception of Mullan Road, because the project has been designed to avoid significant effects to components and features associated with cultural sites determined to be eligible for the NRHP. The project would result in an adverse effect to Mullan Road. However, the Forest Service has developed an MOA with the Montana and Idaho SHPOs that includes mitigation measures to offset these effects. These mitigation measures are described in Section 3.2.4.2 of the FEIS.

Any future discovery of cultural resource sites would be inventoried and protected if found to be of cultural significance. A decision would be made to avoid, protect, or mitigate effects to these sites in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. No further analysis of this concern is warranted.

6.7.2. Idaho Roadless Rule, Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and Wilderness Act of 1964

No lands within Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area's proposed expanded special-use permit boundary are designated as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or roadless areas.

6.7.3. Environmental Justice Executive Order

EO 12898, issued in 1994, ordered federal agencies to identify and address the issue of environmental justice, i.e., adverse human health and environmental effects that disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. Although low-income and minority populations live and recreate in the vicinity, activities proposed for the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion FEIS would not discriminate against these groups. Based on the composition of the affected communities and the cultural and economic factors, the Selected Alternative would have no adverse effects to human health and safety or environmental effects to minority, low-income, or any other segments of the population.

6.7.4. Role of Science

The development of the EIS and draft ROD has been based on consideration of the best available science. This has occurred by carefully reviewing available scientific research and other information relevant to the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project. Scientific conclusions are drawn from well-supported data sources, and data availability is disclosed. Scientific sources relied upon were cited, responsible opposing views were discussed, incomplete and unavailable information was acknowledged, and scientific uncertainty and risk were addressed in relevant portions of the EIS or administrative records. In addition, the specific modeling and analysis methods used were documented, as appropriate.

7. PRE-DECISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) PROCESS

This project is subject to review and objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218 regulations (Subparts A and B). A written objection, including attachments, must be submitted to the reviewing officer within 45 calendar days following publication of the legal notice of the objection period in the Coeur d'Alene Press, which is the newspaper of record.

It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure their objections are received in a timely manner (36 CFR 218.9[a]). The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors should not rely upon time requirements provided by any other source.

Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the project during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with 36 CFR 218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in 36 CFR 218.8(d), and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in 36 CFR 218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to 36 CFR 218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

The objection must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 218.8(d), and include the following information:

- The objector's name and address, with a telephone number or email address, if available.
- A signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for email may be filed with the objection).
- When multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector as defined in 36 CFR 218.2 (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request).
- The name of the project being objected to, the name and title of the responsible official, and the name of the national forest and ranger district on which the project will be implemented.
- A description of those aspects of the project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the project and, if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; and supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider.
- A statement that demonstrates the connection between prior specific written comments on the particular project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunity for formal comment.

Incomplete responses to these requirements make review of an objection difficult and are conditions under which the reviewing officer may set aside an objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218.10.

The following address should be used for objections sent by regular mail, private carrier, or hand delivery:

Objection Reviewing Officer
USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
Building 26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, Montana 59804

Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays.

Electronic objections must be submitted by email to appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us, with "Lookout Project" typed in the subject line. Electronic objections must be submitted in Microsoft Word (.Doc or .Docx) or rich text format (.rtf).

The telephone number for faxed objections is (406) 329-3411.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

If no objections are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, the fifth business day following the end of the objection filing period, depending upon the availability of funding.

When objections are filed, approval of project activities will not occur until the pre-decisional review process is complete and a final ROD is issued. The responsible official may not sign a decision until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all pending objections, and all concerns and instructions identified by the reviewing officer in the objection response have been addressed.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information concerning the Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion project, please contact Kerry Arneson at karneson@fs.fed.us or (208) 769-3021.

Approved by:

Signature Date

Name

Title

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Attachment A
Selected Alternative Map

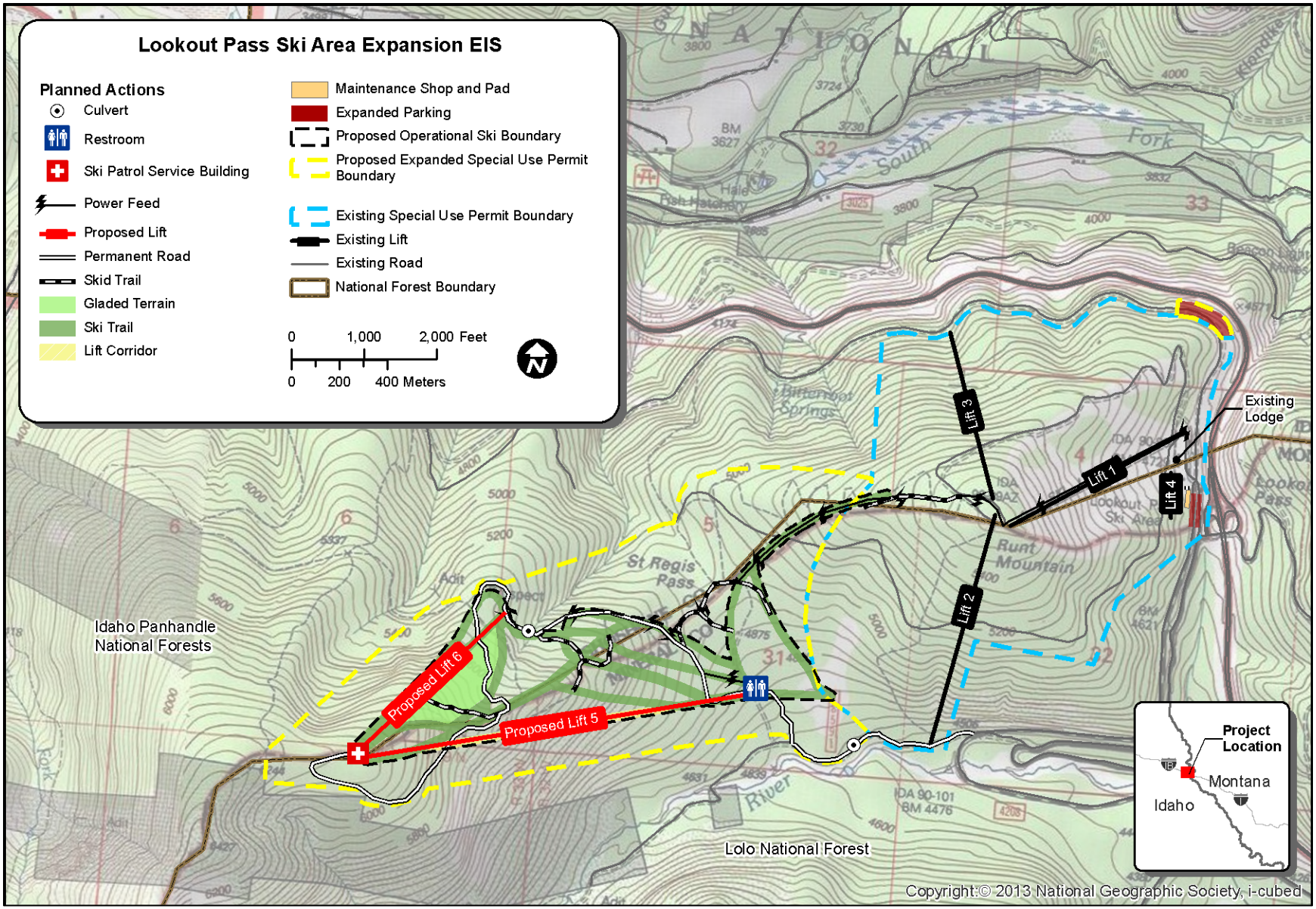

Figure A1. Selected alternative.

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Attachment B
Lolo National Forest Plan
Amendment #43

Lolo National Forest Plan
Amendment #43

*** 2016**

This amendment changes the management area (MA) designation for the expanded footprint of the Lookout Pass Ski Area from MAs 9, 13, and 24 to MA 8 (ski areas) to provide for consistent management of the ski area. The affected area is immediately west of the existing ski area boundary located along the Montana-Idaho state line in the west end of the Superior Ranger District (Figure B1).

- MA 9 (148 acres) is reclassified to MA 8.
- MA 13 (5 acres) is reclassified to MA 8.
- MA 24 (78 acres) is reclassified to MA 8.

This amendment, authorized under the *Lookout Pass Ski Area Expansion Record of Decision*, has been determined to be a non-significant amendment to the Lolo Forest Plan.

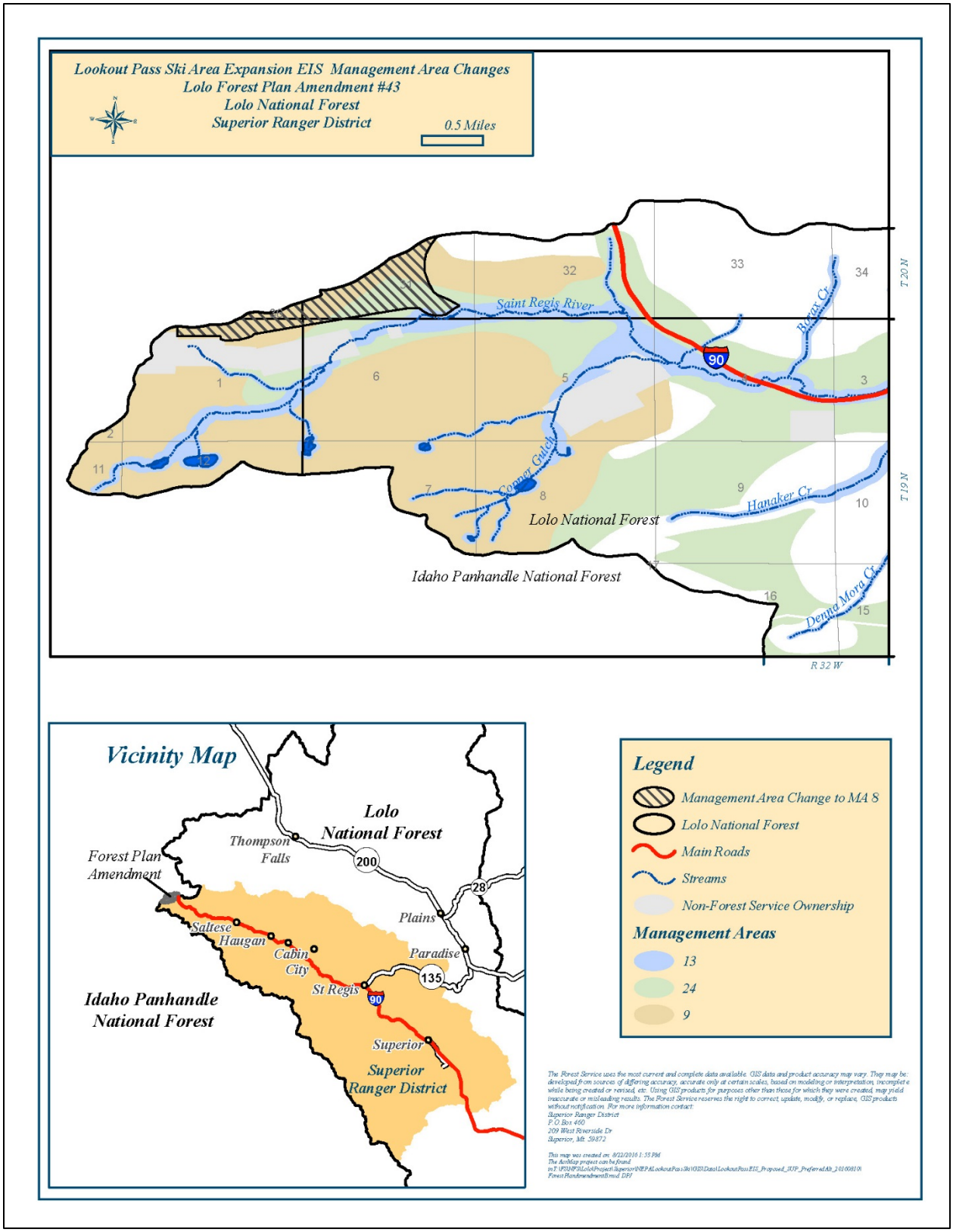

Figure B1. Lolo National Forest management area amendment map.