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Environmental Assessment

HILL'S RESORT

**Priest Lake Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Bonner County, Idaho**

T. 60 N., R. 5 W., Section 24, Boise Meridian



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SUMMARY

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests proposes to issue a new term special use permit for the continued operation of Hill's Resort. The permit would authorize the resort operations within the existing 20-acre permit area on National Forest System lands. The project area is located in Luby Bay, T. 60 N., R. 5 W., Section 24 and lies within the Priest Lake Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Bonner County, Idaho. The proposed action will authorize the existing permit facilities and operations to continue for another 30 years.

This action is needed to provide resort type services and opportunities to the public in cooperation with the permit holder.

Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the responsible official will decide how long of a term to authorize the permit for.

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from operating the resort on the current location for the next 30 years. The document is organized into four parts:

- *Introduction:* This section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- *Comparison of Alternatives, including the Proposed Action:* This section provides a more detailed description of the agency's proposed action as well as an alternative method for achieving the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed on the Forest Service's obligation to meet the law and authorities governing the management of special use permits. This discussion also includes mitigation measures.
- *Environmental Consequences:* This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by alternatives.
- *Agencies and Persons Consulted:* This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Priest Lake Ranger District Office.

Background

Resort History:

Hill's Resort is located in the resort community of Priest Lake, 28 miles north of the town of Priest River, Idaho. The legal description of the location is T. 60 N., R 5 W., Section 24, Boise Meridian.

The Hill's family has owned and operated Hill's resort under a special use permit since 1946. Prior to the Hill's family purchasing the resort, two small resorts were located in Luby Bay in the location of the current Hill's Resort. The Hill's family purchased both businesses and developed the facilities into one resort. Hill's operates a four season resort, and their facilities include; 30 individual cabins and 3 multiple-unit buildings, a lounge, restaurant, meeting rooms and facilities for conventions, seminars and retreats, a store, tennis court and marina facilities. They provide many services including; a year-round restaurant, private dining room, lounge, auto and boat gas, swimming lessons and direct access to public hiking and winter use trails. They also rent recreational equipment including, boats, canoes, kayaks, cross-country skis, snowshoes and mountain bicycles.

Hill's employs 40 to 100 staff each year, 100 during peak summer season, and 40 during the winter months. Hill's resort is fully booked from June through September. They operate at 50 to 75 percent capacity during the remainder of the year. When Hill's is at full lodging capacity, they can provide lodging for approximately 300 people, plus provide services for day use visitors (guests coming to the restaurant, store, boat launching, etc.)

Permit History:

The most recent term permit was issued for 20 years on March 4, 1982, with a termination date of December 31, 2001. On January 25, 2002, an amendment was issued for one year, incorporating all of the existing terms and conditions of the permit. This amendment was issued for one year as allowed under Forest Service policy. A temporary permit was issued on February 6, 2003, which authorized Hill's until December 31, 2003. A second temporary permit was issued to Hill's on February 4, 2004. This temporary permit allows continued operation of the resort while the Forest Service completes an environmental analysis to analyze the effects of the resort improvements and operations on National Forest System lands.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this initiative is to meet the Agency's responsibility to provide commercial recreation opportunities on National Forest System lands. This action is needed because a special use permit is the instrument used to authorize private or commercial use of National Forest System lands.

A resort permit is authorized under the following two acts:

- a) The Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (30 Stat. 35; 16 U.S.C. 477-482, 551). This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue rules and regulations for the occupancy and use of the National Forests. This is the basic

authority for authorizing use of National Forest System lands for other than rights-of-way.

- b) The Act of March 4, 1915, as amended July 28, 1956 (38 Stat. 1101; 16 U.S.C. 497). This act authorizes term permits for structures or facilities on National Forest System land, and sets maximum limits of 80 acres and 30 years.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan, signed in 1987, which allows for a variety of private uses to occur on public lands to provide recreation opportunities that will increase the overall benefit to the public, and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan.

While the Forest Service manages the activities authorized by the permit on land, there are different agencies that are responsible for managing some of the other facilities and uses in the Priest Lake area. Listed below are several of these agencies, however, this list does not include all responsible agencies.

- The Idaho State Department of Lands is the lead agency for managing the facilities that occur on the lake, such as docks and marina facilities.
- Bonner County is responsible for managing water uses such as boating rules and regulations, and type of over-the-water craft that are allowable.
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game is responsible for managing lake fish habitat and fishing regulations.
- Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for monitoring fuel storage for marine services.

The actions to be authorized through the decision associated with this EA are limited to those solely within the authority of the Forest Service. These include the use and occupancy of the National Forest System lands. However, the effects analysis disclosed in this EA assume the resort will be operated consistent with the requirements of the authorities listed above, or other agencies as applicable.

Proposed Action

The action proposed by the Forest Service to meet the purpose and need is to issue a new 30-year term special use permit for the operation of the resort. The permit would include current operations and improvements within the existing 20-acre permit area on National Forest System lands. The main facilities of the resort, including the lodge/restaurant/bar, individual cabins and multiple lodging units, are all located east of the West Lakeshore Road. Portions of the permitted facilities are west of the West Lakeshore Road where the tennis court and overflow car and boat trailer parking are located. The special use permit also would include approval to construct a convention center that was approved in Hill's 1981 Master Plan, which is part of the current permit. The convention center would replace the existing storage building, which would be relocated to the west side of the West Lakeshore Road.

Other features include a permit boundary clarification on how the north end of the permit area is defined, along with issuing a new 10-year permit for the existing water system. These improvements include a well and waterline located north of the resort and a storage

tank (20,000 gallon) and a transmission line located west of the resort. These improvements are currently permitted under a separate permit.

As part of the resort permit, the following design features would be required for species and resource protection. As with all requests for construction, changes or modifications to permitted facilities or operations, prior approval must be obtained from the Forest Service:

1) *Wildlife – Threatened & Endangered Species Conservation Measures:*

- a) If any endangered, threatened, or sensitive species were located within areas where they are affected by the permit activities, management activities would be altered, as necessary, in order for proper protection measures to be taken.
- b) The permit holder will be required to convert, remove, or make inaccessible to bears or replace with approved bear resistant containers, all dumpsters and trashcans utilized by the resort and insure the regular collection of garbage. This action needs to be complete by May 1, 2005
- c) The permit holder will educate all employees and guests on the proper handling, storage and disposal of food and garbage.
- d) Any known or potential bald eagle roost site or perch trees within 100 feet of the shoreline of Priest Lake would not be removed unless it presents a safety hazard to the public.

2) *Wildlife – Sensitive Species:*

- a) Information on common loon identification and management should be displayed at the boat launch site within the permit area.

3) *Fisheries – Conservation Requirements:*

- a) Threatened and endangered fish species would be protected.
- b) Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS): INFS requirements for recreation uses would be followed.
- c) No waste or by-products shall be discharged if it contains substances in concentrations, which will result in substantial harm to fish or to human water supplies.
- d) Storage facilities for materials capable of causing water pollution, if accidentally discharged, shall be located so as to prevent any spillage into waters, or channels leading into water that would result in substantial harm to fish or to human water supplies

4) *Watershed and Soils Concerns:*

- a) The permit holder would be required to produce a storm water management plan for control of storm water discharges from the resort facilities and activities. This plan needs to be completed by January 31, 2005. The plan will need to be developed by an environmental engineer,

and stamped plans are required. An implementation date will be determined once the plan is accepted.

5) *Cultural Resources:*

- a) An Archeologist or paraprofessional archeologist will monitor all ground disturbing activities within the permit area.

6) *Sensitive Plant Species:*

- a) There is no suitable habitat for any threatened or proposed threatened plant species in or near the permit area.

7) *Noxious Weeds:*

- a) The permit holder would be responsible for noxious weed treatment within the permit area.

REASONABLE FORESEEABLE ACTIONS

Lakeface-Lamb Fuel Reduction: The Lakeface-Lamb Fuel Reduction stewardship project includes several units adjacent to, and in close proximity to Hill's Resort that have not been harvested or treated yet. It is anticipated that the Lakeface-Lamb project will continue for at least another five years. The Lakeface-Lamb project was analyzed under an Environmental Impact Statement. Implementation of this project began in 2002.

Decision Framework ---

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official (Regional Forester, Northern Region) reviews the proposed action in order to make the following decision:

Whether to allow the operation of Hill's Resort for another 30 years and what terms and conditions are placed on that operation to protect public resources.

Public Involvement ---

The proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) starting on February 12, 2002. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment through the SOPA, along with a scoping notice being mailed to 628 individuals, agencies and organizations. Responses were received from 61 people. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency conducted a content analysis of the comments. The results of this content analysis are summarized in this document. A complete record of the content analysis is contained in the project file.

Using the comments from the public and other agencies, (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address.

Issues

Issues can be defined as discussions, debates, or disputes about the effects that actions would have upon the environment. The list of concerns expressed by the public was utilized by the Interdisciplinary Team to identify issues relevant to the proposed action.

Normally, the Forest Service separates the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues are defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. For this EA, no significant issues were determined, however, an important issue is storm water management. Storm water is discussed below as an important issue.

Non-significant issues were identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

For discussion purposes, the issues have been divided into 3 categories 1) Permit Administration 2) Environmental and 3) Social/ Outside of the Scope of the Proposal. Following is a discussion of the comments, questions and issues brought up during scoping, and how they will be addressed during the permit reissue process:

1) PERMIT ADMINISTRATION

a) *Fee Structure* – The question was asked on how the fee is determined for Hill's Resort, where the revenue goes, and what is the amount of fees Hill's pays.

This is not an issue that relates to the decision contained in the EA. An explanation on the fee structure was provided to the commenter, but we did not include this information in the EA.

b) *Monitoring and Administration of Permit Terms and Conditions* – Comments were received regarding the Forest Service ability to inspect the resort facilities and operations. All special use permits are inspected regularly. The inspection frequency depends upon the character of the use and the conditions found at the last inspection. Inspections include looking at items such as public safety, sanitation, hazard trees, and general compliance with the terms and conditions of the permit. Deficiencies are noted, and included in an inspection report. An operating plan with dates for completion of certain tasks is developed jointly with the permit holder. Inspections are conducted by the district permit administrator, and may include other Forest Service specialists, depending on the purpose and extent of the inspection.

Different agencies are responsible for other aspects of inspecting the resort and assuring compliance with various rules and regulations governing the operations, such as Panhandle Health District, Idaho Department of Lands and Department of Environmental Quality or the Environmental Protection Agency.

- c) *Visual/usable junk pile/dumpster/burn pile area* – several comments were received on the visual aspect of the storage of items near the West Lakeshore Road, both on the east and west sides of the road. The terms and conditions of the new permit will require the removal or screening of these items within a specified time frame.
- d) *Free parking for public use beach* – Several comments were received requesting the permit holder not be allowed to charge for parking to use the beach. It is reasonable for the permit holder to charge a reasonable amount for parking to allow for repair and maintenance of the parking facilities. Any rate proposed would be reviewed and approved by the Forest Service.
- e) *Permit term* – several comments were received on the length of the permit term. The Term Permit Act allows for commercial facilities to be permitted for a minimum of a 20-year term and a maximum 30-year term when the investment in the facilities is over 1 million dollars.

2) ENVIRONMENTAL

a) *Storm Water Management* – Several public comments were received on managing the storm water runoff associated with the permitted operations, along with the issue being brought up during internal scoping. There is the potential for storm water runoff to adversely affect the lake aquatic resources and water quality. These effects should be reduced to acceptable levels. The permit holder will be required to develop a storm water mitigation plan that will address this issue. The plan will be required by January 31, 2005. An implementation date will be determined once the plan is reviewed. The permit holder is only responsible for mitigating the storm water runoff associated with their permitted facilities and operations.

b) *Parking for convention center/capacity/mitigation* – prior to construction of the convention center, a conceptual plan would be required for Forest Service review. This would include a capacity and parking plan. Once the Forest Service has reviewed and approved the conceptual plan, a detailed engineered stamped plan would be required before construction could begin.

The building would be limited to two stories.

Parking would only be allowed within the permit area.

The majority of the convention center use would be “off season”, so most of the parking would be absorbed within already existing parking areas.

Parking capacity would need to comply with any Bonner County ordinances that may apply.

c) *Concern with potential effects to fish & wildlife species* – the permit holder will be required to convert to bear resistant trash containers to minimize the potential of bears visiting and staying around the facilities. Information on bears, loons and bald eagles will be provided to the resort to assist with educating guests on how to avoid conflicts with wildlife. Fish habitat will be protected through development

of a storm water management plan that will limit the amount of sediment delivered to the lake.

d) *Noxious weed control* – control of noxious weeds within the permit area is the responsibility of the permit holder. A noxious weed clause will be incorporated into the new term permit.

3) SOCIAL/OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE

Several comments were received that are overall social issues regarding increased use at Priest Lake. These issues are outside of the scope of issuing a new permit for the continued operation of Hill's Resort. The new term permit will be for the existing permitted operations and facilities or those already approved in an existing Master Plan but not yet implemented. The comments that are outside of the scope of this proposal are addressed as follows:

a) *Increased use on the West Lakeshore Road*: Only a portion of the traffic on the West Lakeshore Road is attributed to use from Hill's Resort. Over the years, because of more private property development, campground improvements, and general discovery of the Priest Lake area for its recreational value, more people have started visiting and recreating at Priest Lake. It is natural for visitors to use the West Lakeshore Road to access public land.

b) *Increased noise from vehicles on the roads and lake*: As with increased use in any area, there is bound to be an increase in sounds associated with land or over-the-water vehicles. These vehicles are entering the road systems and Priest Lake through many access points.

c) *Airport expansion/development of the Priest Lake Basin*: This is outside of the scope of the proposal. Any proposal for airstrip expansion or improvements would be covered in a separate analysis. Private property development of the Priest Lake Basin is outside of the Forest Service jurisdiction.

d) *Increased use of trails*: Increased use to an area is expected to increase the use of existing trails. Use of the Beach Trail, along with other existing trails in the area, will continue to receive some amount of increased use as more visitors come to the Priest Lake area.

e) *Increased boat and personal watercraft use*: The Forest Service has no jurisdiction over the number, size and type of boats and watercraft that are allowed on Priest Lake.

f) *Capacity Study/Bonner County Comprehensive Plan*: This planning process is for the private lands located in Bonner County and does not supersede regulations and policies on National Forest System lands

g) *Open up new areas for resort construction*: Building new resort facilities at other locations on national Forest System lands are outside of the scope of the proposal.

h) *Sewer/convention center capacity* – The existing resort facilities are hooked up to the Outlet Sewer District. The convention center would be required to connect to sewer as well. The permit holder would pay Outlet Sewer the appropriate rate, as determined by the sewer district. The rate structure charged by the utility companies is outside of the scope of the proposal to issue a new resort permit.

i) *Electrical* – The permit holder would be responsible for paying for additional electrical hook-ups and monthly charges. Hill's Resort is already hooked up to Northern Lights, Inc., who is the area provider for electrical service. The rate structure charged by the utility companies is outside of the scope of the proposal to issue a new resort permit.

j) *Post signs at the north end of Hill's Resort indicating "leaving Hill's Resort"* – Although signs would not be inappropriate, the lands to the north of Hill's Resort are public and if people are using the Beach Trail or the access road for appropriate purposes, it is permissible.

ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This chapter describes the alternatives considered for the issuance of a new term permit for the operation of Hill's Resort. It includes a description of each alternative considered.

Alternatives

Alternative 1

No Action

Under the No Action alternative, a new permit would not be issued for the continued operation of resort facilities. This alternative would not meet the Forest Plan goal of providing complimentary private recreation facilities and services, provided long-term public interest is protected.

If through the analysis process it was determined that a new permit would not be issued, the removal of the existing facilities would be required, including a rehabilitation plan describing how the site would be returned to a condition acceptable to the Forest Service.

Alternative 2

The Proposed Action

The Forest Service would issue a 30-year term special use permit for the continued operation of a resort facility. The permit would include current operations and

improvements within the existing 20-acre permit area on National Forest System lands. The main facilities of the resort, including the lodge/restaurant/bar, individual cabins and condominium units, are all located east of the West Lakeshore Road. A portion of the permitted facilities is west of the West Lakeshore Road where the tennis court and overflow car and boat trailer parking are currently located. The special use permit also would include two buildings that were approved in the 1981 Master Plan, which is part of the current permit. A convention center would replace the existing storage building. A new storage building would be constructed to the west side of the West Lakeshore Road.

The permit boundary would be clarified on how the north end of the permit area is defined.

A separate permit would be issued for the existing water system, including the well and waterline and the storage tank. A separate permit is recommended, primarily due to the permit fee structure involved where part of the existing water system lies outside of the resort permit area boundary. The water system permit would be issued for a 10-year term. These improvements include a well and waterline located north of the resort and a storage tank (20,000 gallon) and a transmission line located west of the resort. These improvements are currently authorized under a separate permit.

The following mitigations and design criteria would be included in the term special use permit. This would be accomplished by actual clauses in the permit, or by the addition of an appendix that is part of the permit.

1) Wildlife – Threatened & Endangered Species Conservation Measures:

- a) If any endangered, threatened, or sensitive species were located within areas where they are affected by the permit activities, management activities would be altered, as necessary, in order for proper protection measures to be taken.
- b) The permit holder will be required to convert, remove, or make inaccessible to bears or replace with approved bear resistant containers, all dumpsters and trashcans utilized by the resort and insure the regular collection of garbage. This action needs to be complete by May 1, 2005.
- c) The permit holder will educate all employees and guests on the proper handling, storage and disposal of food and garbage.
- d) Any known or potential bald eagle roost site or perch trees within 100 feet of the shoreline of Priest Lake would not be removed unless it presents a safety hazard to the public.

2) Wildlife – Sensitive Species:

- a) Information on common loon identification and management should be displayed at the boat launch site within the permit area.

3) Fisheries – Conservation Requirements:

- a) Threatened and endangered fish species would be protected.
- b) Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS): INFS requirements for recreation uses would be followed.

c) No waste or by-products shall be discharged if it contains substances in concentrations, which will result in substantial harm to fish or to human water supplies.

d) Storage facilities for materials capable of causing water pollution, if accidentally discharged, shall be located so as to prevent any spillage into waters, or channels leading into water that would result in substantial harm to fish or to human water supplies.

4) *Watershed and Soils Concerns:*

a) The permit holder will be required to produce a storm water management plan for control of storm water discharges from the resort facilities and activities. This plan needs to be completed by January 31, 2005. An implementation date will be determined once the plan is accepted.

5) *Cultural Resources:*

a) An Archeologist or paraprofessional archeologist must be present during all ground disturbing activities within the permit area.

6) *Sensitive Plant Species:*

a) The potential for effects to sensitive plants from site-specific ground-disturbing activities would be evaluated, and surveys conducted as needed before implementation of those activities.

7) *Noxious Weeds:*

a) The permit holder would be responsible for noxious weed treatment within the permit area.

Alternative 3

The Forest Service would issue a 20-year term special use permit for the continued operation of a resort facility. The permit would include current operations and improvements within the existing 20-acre permit area on National Forest System lands. The main facilities of the resort, including the lodge/restaurant/bar, individual cabins and condominium units, are all located east of the West Lakeshore Road. A portion of the permitted facilities is west of the West Lakeshore Road where the tennis court and overflow car and boat trailer parking is located. The special use permit also would include two buildings that were approved in their 1981 Master Plan, which is part of the current permit. A convention center would replace the existing storage building, which would be relocated to the west side of the West Lakeshore Road.

The permit boundary would be clarified on how the north end of the permit area is defined.

A separate permit would be issued for the existing water system, including the well and waterline and the storage tank. A separate permit is recommended, primarily due to the fee structure involved where part of the existing water system lies outside of the resort permit area boundary. The water system permit would be issued for a 10-year term. These improvements include a well and waterline located north of the resort and a storage

tank (20,000 gallon) and a transmission line located west of the resort. These improvements are currently authorized under a separate permit.

The same mitigations and design criteria listed for Alternative 2 would apply to a 20-year term permit as well.

Alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail

None

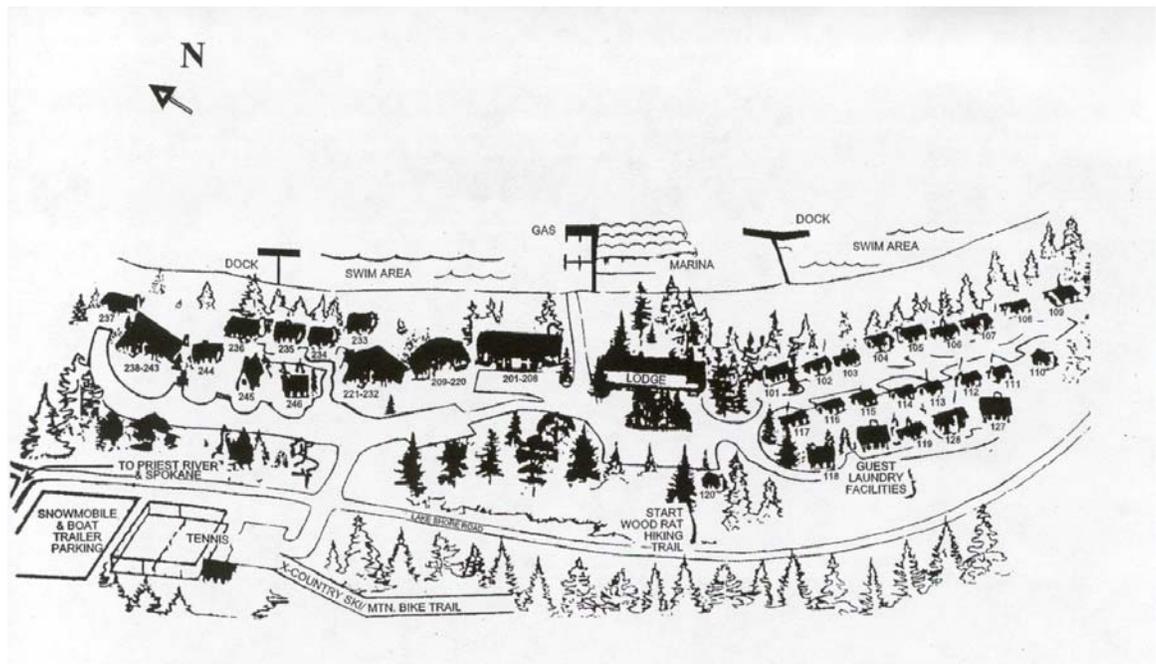


Figure 1. Hill's Resort.

Mitigation Common to All Alternatives

In response to IDT recommendations and public comments on the proposal, mitigation measures were developed to ease some of the potential impacts the permitted operations and activities may cause.

- 1) Sensitive Plants: There is no suitable habitat for any threatened or proposed threatened plant species in or near the permit area.
- 2) Cultural Resources: Site-specific cultural resource site monitoring would be conducted at the time of any ground-disturbing activities. Extensive monitoring was conducted in 1993 prior to construction of an addition to the main lodge.
- 3) Noxious Weeds: Noxious weed control measures will be incorporated into the permit as per direction in the Priest Lake Noxious Weed Control EIS. Any pesticide or herbicide use requires prior approval from the Forest Service.
- 4) Hazard Tree Removal: Hazard tree removal would be permissible with Forest Officer approval.
- 5) Vegetation Changes: Tree removal or changes in vegetation would require Forest Service approval and/or a vegetation management plan prior to changes.
- 6) Visual Analysis: Visual analysis would be required for changes in color schemes on buildings, or proposed vegetation changes.
- 7) Construction Plans: Any major construction would require engineered, stamped plans prior to approval.
- 8) Threatened and Endangered Species: Threatened and endangered species protection would be incorporated into the permit. (Refer to page 4, design criteria).
- 9) Revegetation: Ground disturbances would be revegetated as directed by the Forest Service.
- 10) Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS): INFS requirements for recreation uses would be followed. (Refer to page 4, design criteria).
- 11) Beach Fires: Containerized fire pans would be required for beach fires.
- 12) Design Work: All design work for any of the improvements, including buildings, erosion control, landscape plans, etc. located within the permit area is the responsibility of the permit holder. The Forest Service is responsible to provide information and legal direction, review and approval of the plans.
- 13) Signs: The Forest Service must approve all sign design and placement.
- 14) ADA: All improvements and programs would meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- 15) Laws: The permit would incorporate all applicable federal, state and local laws and ordinances.

16) Hazardous Materials: Hazardous material storage and control measures are the responsibility of the permit holder and are incorporated into the permit by a required clause.

17) Permit Term: During the term of the permit, any changes to laws, policies and regulations regarding the management of National Forest System lands would be amended to the permit.

Comparison of Alternatives

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives.

Alternative 1, The “No Action” Alternative: Not issue a new term permit and require removal of existing facilities

This would not meet the intent of the Forest Plan for providing commercial recreation facilities on National Forest System lands to assist with providing a variety of services, settings and facilities to the public.

With implementation of Alternative A, a removal and rehabilitation plan would be required. The resort facilities would need to be removed from the site within a specified time, and as laid out in the rehabilitation plan. The permitted area would be returned to a condition acceptable to the Forest Service. This would result in a loss of a four-season resort in Luby Bay, along with all of the services, employment and benefits to the community and visitors that are currently provided.

Implementation of this alternative would reduce noise and traffic to the Luby Bay area, however, it would be anticipated that an alternate form of public use would be proposed for the current permit area.

This alternative does not meet the goal of the Forest Plan.

Alternative 2, Issue a 30-year term permit, the proposed action

With the issue of a new 30-year term permit, the facilities that are currently within the permit area would continue to be maintained. This would include the usual upkeep of buildings and grounds with items such as; painting, staining, roof replacements and removal of hazard trees, along with other maintenance items that need to occur on an annual or day-to-day basis. The resort would continue to provide the same services they

currently offer. Other resort related operations would continue such as food and supply deliveries.

The visual integrity of the resort would be maintained. The current facilities are stained a dark brown, which blends in as seen from lake, roads and nearby trails. Changes to the landscape would be seen over time as more trees at the resort die, and removal is necessary. New landscaping may be necessary to replace lost trees. As construction occurs, there may be a slight temporary increase in noise, dust and vehicle traffic, as mitigations such as the storm water structures are implemented. Construction of the new buildings may be visible temporarily until siding and stain/paint is applied. With construction of any project, there is a potential for a temporary increase in sedimentation into the lake, along with short-term effects such as increase in noise and activity.

The resort operations will continue to operate as a valuable part of the community by providing the range of services and facilities to visitors and local residents that may otherwise not be available, along with the employment opportunities the resort provides.

Considering the resort facilities and operations have been permitted and operating for over 50 years, there have been relatively minor effects from the original facilities and operations, or new facilities that have been permitted over time. All of the improvements and services have been permitted due to the public desire for these types of services in the Priest Lake area. The improvements and changes or additions that are planned through the current Master Plan are in response to the need to serve the members of the public who value a resort setting for recreation or work.

In the 1900s, the intent of development of private facilities on National Forest System lands was to encourage use by the public, and provide facilities for a range of recreation opportunities. This goal typically leads to the clustering of public campgrounds, resorts, marinas and recreation residences within the same area when feasible, to take into account the type of facilities and services that are important to a range of visitors.

One of the goals outlined in the Act of March 4, 1915 (Term Permit Act) identified permitting land “for the purpose of constructing or maintaining hotels, resorts, and any other structures necessary or desirable for recreation, public convenience, or safety.”

By not having the facilities and operations that are provided at Hill's Resort, there are many people who would not have been able to enjoy the National Forest since a resort setting is the type of experience they seek out.

Alternative 3, Issue a 20-year term permit _____

With the issue of a new 20-year term permit, the facilities that are currently within the permit area would continue to be maintained. This would include the usual upkeep of buildings and grounds with items such as; painting, staining, roof replacements and removal of hazard trees, along with other maintenance items that need to occur on an annual or day-to-day basis. The resort would continue to provide the same services they currently offer. Other resort related operations would continue such as food and supply deliveries.

The visual integrity of the resort would be maintained. The current facilities are stained a dark brown, which blends in as seen from lake, roads and nearby trails. Changes to the

landscape would be seen over time as more trees at the resort die, and removal is necessary. New landscaping may be seen to replace lost trees. As construction occurs, there may be a slight temporary increase in noise, dust and vehicle traffic, as mitigations such as the storm water structures are implemented. Construction of the new buildings may be visible temporarily until siding and stain/paint is applied. With construction of any project, there is a potential for a temporary increase in sedimentation into the lake, along with short-term effects such as increase in noise and activity.

The resort operations will continue to operate as a valuable part of the community by providing the range of services and facilities to visitors and local residents that may otherwise not be available, along with the employment opportunities the resort provides.

Considering the resort facilities and operations have been permitted and operating for over 50 years, there have been relatively minor effects from the original facilities and operations, or new facilities that have been permitted over time. All of the improvements and services have been permitted due to the public desire for these types of services in the Priest Lake area. The improvement and changes or additions that are planned are in response to the need to serve the members of the public who value a resort experience.

In the 1900s, the intent of development of private facilities on National Forest System lands was to encourage the use by the public, and provide facilities for a range of recreation facilities. This goal typically leads to the clustering of public campgrounds, resorts, marinas and recreation residences within the same area when feasible, to take into account the type of facilities and services that are important to a range of visitors.

One of the goals outlined in the Act of March 4, 1915 (Term Permit Act) identified permitting land “for the purpose of constructing or maintaining hotels, resorts, and any other structures necessary or desirable for recreation, public convenience, or safety.”

By not having the facilities and operations that are provided at Hill's Resort, there are many people who would not have been able to enjoy the National Forest since a resort setting is the type of experience many people seek out.

The only difference between the issuance of a 30-year term permit and a 20-year term permit is the length of the term. The facilities and operations that occur within the permit area remain the same.

OTHER REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

Effects to consumers, minority groups, women, civil rights, and Environmental Justice

There would be minimal impacts to consumers. The amount of increased use at the resort would be dependant on the capacity of the facilities.

Minority groups would not be affected by the action alternative and no groups would be disproportionately impacted (Environmental Justice). There would be no effects to women or civil rights. All resort permits contain Equal Employment Opportunity requirements.

Effects to Prime Farm Land, Rangeland, and Forest Land

None of the activities proposed would adversely impact prime farmland or rangeland. National Forest System lands are not considered prime forestland.

Effects to floodplains and wetlands

The Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) standards and guidelines implemented with this project would protect floodplains and wetlands.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

No effects are anticipated to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. No impacts on American Indian social, economic or subsistence rights are anticipated.

Energy Requirements

There are no unusual energy requirements for implementing the action alternative. In terms of petroleum products, the energy required to implement either action alternative is insignificant when viewed in light of production costs and the effects on the national and worldwide petroleum reserves.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes and non-Forest Service persons during the development of this environmental assessment:

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FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES:

Department of Environmental Quality

Environmental Protection Agency

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Idaho Department of Lands

United States Army Corps of Engineers

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

TRIBES:

Kalispel Tribe