



File Code: 1950/2720

Date: April 15, 2004

You have expressed an interest in being kept informed of the proposed expansion project for Bridger Bowl ski area. A copy of the April 2004 Bridger Bowl Special Use Permit and Master Development Plan Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) is now available on line at the Gallatin National Forest website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin?page=projects.bridger_bowl.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for this proposal was prepared by the Forest Service in 1998 and distributed for public comment in April 1999. Based upon review of the numerous comments received by the public and the need for new or revised analyses of resources (e.g., Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species; old growth forest; and additional analysis of cumulative effects), the Forest Service determined the preparation of a SDEIS would be the most effective way to present new information and respond to public comments on the 1999 DEIS. This SDEIS supercedes and replaces the 1999 DEIS. Many of the issues raised during the comment period for the 1999 DEIS have been incorporated into this SDEIS. In addition, new topography information and new, more accurate GIS methods have been used for the analysis in this SDEIS. It includes changes to the proposed project elements that have taken place since the 1999 DEIS including renewing the special use permit for the current use.

The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team identified significant issues warranting the formulation of two additional alternatives to the Proposed Action. A No Action alternative is included; as well as a series of required mitigation measures in the analysis.

Based on the analysis of anticipated environmental effects presented in the SDEIS, I am currently considering the approval of Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action. The Preferred Alternative includes: modifications to three existing lifts as well as the construction of six new lifts, expansion of the Special Use Permit (SUP) area into the Slushman Drainage (337 acres) and Bradley Meadows (274 acres), and the construction of 16 new ski trails. This alternative would disperse skiers across the mountain while maintaining relatively lower densities of skiers both on the existing ski area and the two proposed expansion areas. Associated project elements would include further development of resort infrastructure including mountain service roads and power. The specific elements of Alternative 2 are described in detail in Chapter 2 of the SDEIS.

Your comments are important as we work toward a decision for the future management of Bridger Bowl Ski Area on national forest lands. Written comments are invited on this analysis now through the end of the comment period. Comments may be submitted through a link at the above website or comments may also be submitted electronically to the following e-mail address: **comments-northern-gallatin@fs.fed.us** and must be in one of the following formats: MS Word, Word Perfect or RTF format. Please **add Bridger Bowl to the subject line** when responding through the website.



The comment period for this DEIS extends 45 days from the date of publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. The NOA is expected to be published April 30, 2004. Comments may also be mailed to:

Bozeman Ranger District
3710 Fallon St., Suite C
Bozeman, MT 59718

If you choose to comment, comments must be substantive and specific to the proposed activities and area being analyzed. Please include: (1) Your name, address, telephone number, and organization represented (if applicable); (2) title of the SDEIS upon which you are commenting; and (3) specific facts or comments, with supporting reasons, that I should consider in reaching a decision. Comments are most helpful when they point out inconsistencies or errors, provide additional information pertinent to the analysis, or provide rationale for support of an alternative. Any changes to the SDEIS made as a result of public comments will be available for public review in the Final EIS. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and a Record of Decision (ROD) will document my decision. Copies of the FEIS and ROD will be mailed to those individuals or groups requesting a copy.

Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be accepted as appellants following release of the Bridger Bowl Final EIS and Record of Decision. For appeal eligibility, each individual, or representative from each organization, submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or verify their identity upon request.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality might be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

Hard copies may be viewed at the Bozeman Ranger District office; the Bozeman Public Library; or the Montana State University library. If you have additional questions, please direct them to Nancy Halstrom, team leader, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon Street, Bozeman, Montana or telephone (406) 522-2520.

It is anticipated the NOA will be published on April 30, 2004. **Comments must be submitted 45 days after the date of publication. It is anticipated the deadline will be June 15, 2004.** If you wish to remain on our mailing list for this project, please send a written or e-mail request.

REBECCA HEATH
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure