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WANOGA SNOW PLAY AREA AND WANOGA SHELTER REPLACEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest
Deschutes County, Oregon**

Introduction

The Bend Fort Rock Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest, has initiated the Wanoga Snow play Area and Wanoga Shelter Replacement Environmental Assessment (EA) that includes an analysis of the effects of creating a safe snow play area and of upgrading the shelter facility at Wanoga Snopark. The goal of this project is to improve winter recreation opportunities in the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway area by 1) providing a safe snow play area, 2) replacing the existing warming shelter at Wanoga Snopark with a larger facility, 3) limiting the existing numbers of ingress/egress access points to the highway, and 4) bringing power to both sites, the Snow play area and Wanoga Snopark.

The project is located approximately 15 miles west of Bend on the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway, Township 18 South, Range 10 East, Section 28. Access is via the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway.

The original decision, signed May 3, 1996, (Snopark EA) authorized construction of a 4 acre snow play hill with 3-5 runs cleared of vegetation, a warming shelter (approximately 600-1000 square feet, a single vault toilet, a 100 vehicle parking area and a 600 foot road access to Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway. The original decision also closed Snowmobile Trail #2 where it goes through the snow play area. It also included other decisions relating to use regulations in the Dutchman Snopark area.

The original Snopark EA decision is approximately 7 years old. There has been an assessment of the proposed changes in light of the changed conditions, which have occurred in the interim years. A letter to the files has been completed to document that there were no changes in the last seven years that would affect the original decision concerning the snow play area.

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We welcome your comments on our service and your suggestions for improvement.

Forest

Deschutes National Forest

1001 SW Emkay Drive
Bend, OR 97702

(541) 383-5300

Ochoco National Forest

3160 N.E. 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

(541) 416-6500

Crooked River National Grassland

813 S.W. Hwy. 97
Madras, OR 97741

(541) 475-9272



This EA assesses only the changes and additions, which pertain to the Wanoga portions of the original decision. This EA will not assess effects related to the clearing of the runs, the shelter and toilet, or the parking lot. It assesses the effects of the change in ingress/egress routes, providing power to both the snow play and Wanoga Snopark sites, and the replacement shelter at Wanoga Snopark. See vicinity map (Figure 1).

The Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), 1990, as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), 1994, established broad direction for the Forest. The analysis conducted for this project tiers to the Forest Plan and its supporting documentation. The project includes Forest Plan Management Areas (MA):

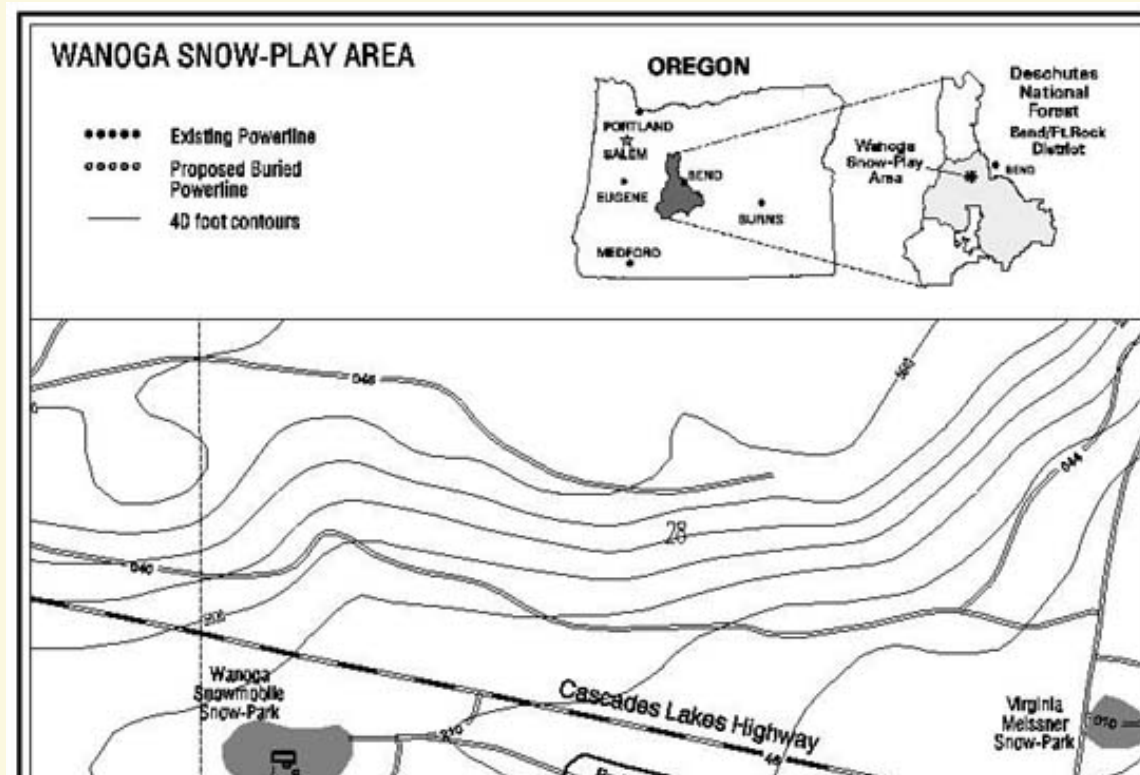
- **Scenic Views (MA-9)** - To provide Forest visitors with high quality scenery that represents the natural character of Central Oregon. Recreation developments and changes to existing developments are permitted as long as they are consistent with the desired visual condition. Parking facilities, structures and other recreational facilities will normally be placed where they are not visible from significant viewer locations. See Landscape Architect report for more detail.

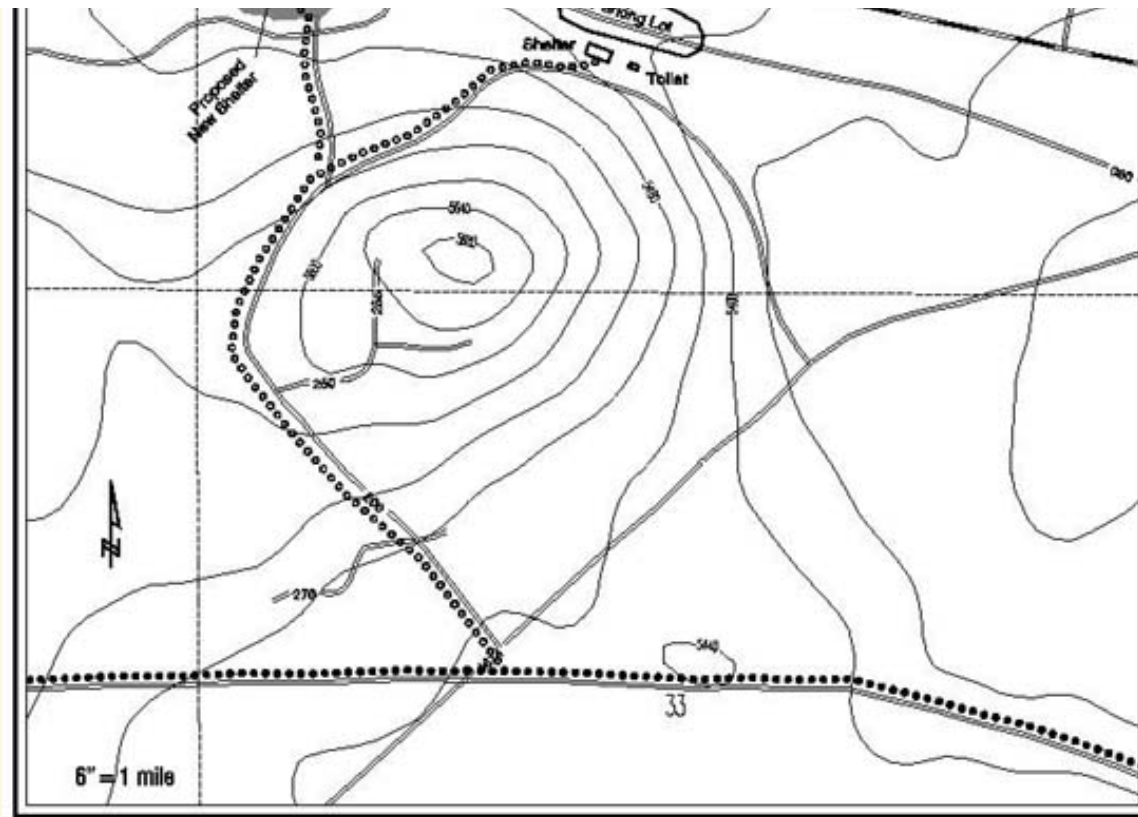
The project lies within the Northwest Forest Plan boundary and is designated as Matrix. Matrix is the equivalent to General Forest in DNFLRMP and has a primary purpose of growing timber.

The project lies within the Bend 6th field watershed. There are no active watercourses in the project area.

The nearest Inventoried Roadless area is 3 miles to the northwest in the Tumul Mountain area. There are no Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive plant or animal species in the project area. There is a population of Spotted Knapweed along the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway corridor adjacent to the project area.

Figure 1





Documents Tiered To

The following documents were used in this analysis and are incorporated by reference and are available for public review at the Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District Office:

- 1990 Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) - This plan was developed to guide all natural resource management activities and establish standards/guidelines on the Deschutes National Forest.
- 1994 Record of Decision for Amendments to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl - Developed to adopt a common management approach to the administration of lands throughout an entire ecological region.

Purpose And Need For Action

Increases in tourism and population between 1985 and 1995 increased recreation demands in Central Oregon, which is known for its year-round recreational opportunities and its consistently favorable weather. Present annual projections indicate an approximately 5% increase in population, visitation and recreation use. The popularity of winter sports had grown as well. All winter sports with the exception of Nordic skiing have been growing rapidly. Winter sports include skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling, as well as snow play or sledding. The project area and the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway are already destination areas in the winter for all sports. The increase in use on Forest Service land is consistent with other areas.

The original decision of May 1996 approved the construction of a snow play area, parking lot, access road, shelter and toilet. This EA addresses changes to that decision because there is more current or different data, which would support a modified proposed action. The basic decision of 1996 is still valid with the exception of the proposed changes/additions, which this EA assesses.

The purpose of the project is to provide additional winter recreation opportunities near existing facilities along Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway (CLSB). This project would provide a new snow play facility as well as replace the existing warming shelter at Wanoga snopark. There is currently a lack of safe, designated snow play areas on the Deschutes National Forest, and especially in the area of the CLSB. There are other areas, which are used for snow play, that are not official or considered safe. The nearest official non-fee snow play area is at least 50 miles away. The CLSB is a natural magnet for winter related sports due to consistent snow and numerous other snoparks. Snow play is discouraged at the other snoparks along CLSB.

There is a need to provide a safe, designated snow play area along the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway and close other unsafe areas where warranted.

The original Snopark EA authorized the construction of an ingress/egress from the highway to the snow play parking lot. This would have required significant changes in the highway, which would have been costly. There would have been two accesses to the highway within a quarter mile, potentially creating more congestion.

There is a need to have only one ingress/egress to/from the existing Wanoga Snopark and Snow Play area. The new road to the snow play area would tie into the existing road accessing Wanoga Snopark.

There is currently no power provided to either site. A primary power line is located within a mile. If power is needed for functions at the existing shelter in the Snopark, it comes from generators. These shelters would be used for various social functions such as club events and meetings, which require electricity (shelter utilities). As local winter recreation clubs grow, there will be an increasing need for power. Wanoga Snopark is also a facility that is used for special recreation events. This need is expected to grow. Many of the club events require electricity either through direct AC power or through a generator.

There is a need to provide power to the existing shelter site at Wanoga Snopark and at the future site of the Wanoga Snow Play area.

At the existing Wanoga Snopark, existing facilities are old and deteriorating, as well as being of inadequate size (600 square feet) for existing and projected future use. The shelter was constructed by the National Guard in the 1980's. It is being stabilized by cables and turnbuckles because of marginal construction specifications. Existing use at Wanoga Snopark is high and the parking area is usually completely full on most weekends throughout the winter. Motorized use continues to increase at a rapid pace. The existing shelter is often at capacity. Club events often include food, requiring kitchen facilities.

There is a need to construct a new shelter facility, which will be large enough for existing and projected future use and which is designed to meet the needs of the local users, i.e. including a woodshed and a kitchen area.

Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition for this area is to improve winter recreation facilities along the CLH by constructing a new shelter at Wanoga Snopark and by creating a safe snow play area to meet the current and future demands of the winter recreating public. This snow play area would be free of charge, with the exception of a parking fee, which would need to cover charges for plowing snow. The snow play area would be managed by the US Forest Service.

The facilities would be screened from the highway by vegetation to meet the parameters of Management Area 9, Scenic Views.

Proposed Action

The original decision, signed May 3, 1996, (Snopark EA) authorized construction of a 4 acre snow play hill with 3-5 runs cleared of vegetation, a warming shelter (approximately 600-1000 square feet, a single vault toilet, a 100 vehicle parking area and a 600 foot road access to Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway. It also included other decisions relating to use regulations in the Dutchman Snopark area. This EA proposes the following additions and changes:

The proposed action includes creating a snow play area as originally planned, assessing the following changes.

- One access to the highway instead of 2.
- Providing power to both snopark sites.
- Construction of a new warming shelter at Wanoga Snopark.
- The USFS managing the snow play area at little or no cost to the public.

Decision To Be Made

The purpose of this document is to display the effects of the revised proposed action and any alternative methods of addressing the purpose and need for the Wanoga Snow play Area and Wanoga Shelter Replacement EA. It documents an environmental analysis of the alternatives including the no-action alternative. Based upon this analysis and public comments, the Bend/Fort Rock District Ranger will determine which alternative would be implemented in the project area and if so, where and under what conditions.

Availability Of The Planning Record

Specialist reports used in the preparation of this Environmental Assessment are on file and available on request at the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District office.

Public Involvement/Scoping Process Used

A letter requesting public involvement was mailed to approximately 70 individuals, businesses, and organizations that have an interest in the process on July 18, 2002. Included in the mailing was The Bulletin, the local newspaper that reported on the proposed project area on 8/20/02.

Scoping/ Issues

The public scoping process for the WSA and WSR EA resulted in the following comments. Comments were received from seven (7) individuals, one group, and the Bend Bulletin via Editorial. Two of the seven individuals work for the USFS.

In summary of the above comments, the following themes are repeated:

- There is a need for a free use safe snow play area.
- Involve the public and other partners to accomplish.
- Keep it simple and inexpensive.
- Keep it managed by the USFS, rather than a concession.
- Close Skyliner because it is unsafe.

Out of these comments, two surface as key issues.

1. The need is clear for a safe sanctioned snow play area, which would be managed by the US Forest Service and would be minimal or no cost to the recreating public. There is an existing area (Skyliner), which is utilized by locals for snow play. It is not designated by the USFS nor is it safe. There are serious accidents each year at this site even though USFS signing discourages use. There would be an opportunity to close the area to snow play with the creation of a new area. It is also clear for the need to not mix motorized and non-motorized uses in and around the snow play area. Snow play invites children; therefore keeping motorized use away from the snow play area would be imperative for safety. An additional safety issue would be the addition of an ingress/egress to the highway. This additional access would be within ¼ mile of the existing access road into Wanoga Snopark, potentially creating congestion on the highway.
2. The other key issue is the perceived need by the public for the snow play area to be maintained and managed by the USFS, rather than a concessionaire. It has been clear through scoping that the majority of public responders favor the USFS to manage a facility and by doing so keep the cost to use the facility minimal or no cost. Related to this issue is the question of liability, i.e. who would be liable for accidents.

Both of these key issues could drive the development of an alternative or the need to mitigate the effects of implementation of the project.

Alternatives

This section provides discussion of a no action alternative and two action alternatives. A site-specific environmental analysis was conducted.

Alternatives Considered and Eliminated From Further Study

Three alternatives were considered but not fully developed or analyzed.

An alternative, which was suggested through a comment, included adopting an alternative in the original EA that would have constructed a snow play area near Dutchman Snopark. This alternative was considered to be outside of the parameters of the current EA decisions determined by the line officer.

The second alternative considered reconstructing Skyliner area to become a safe snow play area in lieu of constructing one at Wanoga. This alternative was not developed because 1) the cost of changing the slope would be excessive and 2) the alternative does not meet the purpose and need to have a snow play area along the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway.

A third alternative would have required the snow play facility to be managed by a concessionaire. This alternative was not developed due to the overwhelming agreement by the public to have the USFS manage the facility.

Alternatives Considered in Detail

This section presents a detailed description of the alternatives responding to the "Purpose and Need" that are considered to be reasonable and viable by the Decision Maker (the Bend-Fort Rock District Ranger). The Proposed Action Alternative is designed to move toward the desired condition, while remaining consistent with the standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan. Other alternative(s) may be developed in order to address key issues.

Alternative A (No Action)

The No Action alternative would not change the decision from 1996. There would be a separate ingress/

egress to/from the highway for the new snow play area. There would be no power brought to either site. The snow play area would be constructed as planned in the original decision. There would be no commitment as to who would manage the site.

No shelter would be constructed at Wanoga Snopark at this time.

Alternative B

In addition to the original decision, the current proposal would:

- 1) Change the road access to the snow play area from the highway by utilizing the existing Wanoga Snopark ingress/egress rather than creating a new one. A new access road (Approximately ¼ mile) from the proposed snow play area would tie into the existing ingress/egress road to Wanoga Snopark. This road would require fill material for the first 300 feet from the junction with the existing road into Wanoga Snopark and then use existing road to access the new parking lot. Fill material would be required to meet existing gradient as the existing entrance road is built on a fill. The road would be two lane and paved.
2. Bury a power line from the existing Midstate line to the proposed snow play area and Wanoga Snopark, totalling approximately 1.4 miles. The power line would be buried in an existing road (200 rd) for all but 200 feet on the south end near where the existing powerline is. This powerline would be buried 4 feet deep in conduit and would require a special use permit and authorization from Midstate and Mt. Bachelor. The trenching would include removing approximately 1650 cubic yards of material and then fill it back in. Power to each site would be paid for by special use permittees, and/or groups(s) in partnership with the Forest Service, not by the US Forest Service. Power could be used for utilities for both shelters, Wanoga Snow play area and Wanoga Snopark.
3. Construct a new log shelter at Wanoga Snopark, approximately 1500 square feet in size. This would replace the existing shelter and would include an attached woodshed of approximately 300 square feet. The existing shelter would be removed and possibly utilized in another location if it or parts of it would meet current standards and codes. It would be located near/in the same location as the existing shelter in an area free of vegetation. If the existing shelter isn't reuseable, it would be parted out, hauled off and disposed of. The unuseable wood may be burned on site.
4. Construct a snow play area, which would be managed by the US Forest Service and would be little of no cost to use. Any fees would be set to cover the costs of plowing snow, maintaining improvements and/or other operational activities (not to include capital investment costs).

Alternative C

The difference between alternative B and C is that alternative C addresses the two key issues above as follows:

1. Alternative C would close Skyliner Snooper area to snow play. This would be accomplished by closing the site through a Code of Federal Regulations Prohibition. Closing Skyliner snow play area would meet the purpose and need to provide a safe snow play experience on the district/area. In addition, it would meet the need to provide for snow play recreation along the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway.

Mitigation Measures

Wildlife

None

Botany

1. Clean all equipment and vehicles before entering National Forest System lands. Remove mud, dirt, and plant parts from project equipment before moving it into project area to reduce the possibility of importing noxious weeds to the area.
2. Use gravel from a known weed-free site. Potential sources should have noxious weed surveys completed before being used.
3. Monitor and flag the known knapweed sites within 2 miles of the project and pull any plants before project begins. Avoid these sites if possible. Continue to monitor disturbed areas until there is assurance of no new weed populations.
4. Use weed-free staging areas. Do not allow any vehicles or heavy equipment to park or be staged on the shoulders of Road 46. Even though noxious weeds may not be visible along Road 46 in the immediate area of the Wanoga Snopark there is a high risk that knapweed seeds have already been transported into these areas and could be picked on the wheels of vehicles that will be used for the project.
5. After management activities seed with native plant species areas that have been disturbed. The powerline burial would be very susceptible to invasion by noxious weeds because of the extent of the ground disturbance.
6. Monitor the project work area in the period after work is completed, map and pull any new noxious weed sites as necessary.
7. Consider pulling mullein before project activities begin. Mullein is not considered an invasive plant but, because it is a non-native, it is thought to be undesirable by some people.

Cultural Resources

None

Fish /Hydrology

None

Soils

None

Scenic Views

The proposed management activities may affect scenic resources (and their integrities) within the Foreground landscape as seen from a travel corridor, such as the Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byways system, or a sensitive viewer location. The mitigation measures are designed to help reduced impact on Scenic Resources and meet LRMP's standards and guidelines.

- A Landscape Architect shall work closely on conceptual site design, site location, and site rehabilitation prescriptions to help minimize any potential effect on scenery, site integrity, landscape character, and meet ROS classification guidelines.
- Utilized construction materials and color scheme that better blend in and subordinate to the existing environment.
- Treatment of slash and tree stump (following timber removal/construction) shall comply with the Deschutes National Forest LRMP standards and guidelines, including rehabilitation of impacted area.
- Plant native shrub and grass species to soften any effect following construction. Reduce soil and

color contrast by completely covering up impacted area with native materials such as pine needles casting, local topsoil of similar color, or bark mulch of impacted area following construction completion.

- Following the reconstruction, remove all rejected materials off site so to maintain the original site condition as much as possible, as part of overall site rehabilitation effort.

Environmental Consequences

This section describes the beneficial and adverse impacts to the environment that would occur if the alternatives were implemented. Estimated effects are discussed in terms of environmental changes from the current situation and include qualitative as well as quantitative assessments of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects.

Alternative A - No Action

The No Action Alternative would not accomplish the Purpose and Need or fulfill the Proposed Action. The snow play area may be built, but under the original terms. The No Action alternative would not change the decision from 1996. There would be a separate ingress/egress to/from the highway for the new snow play area. There would be no power brought to either site. The snow play area would be constructed as planned in the original decision. There would be no commitment as to who would manage the site.

Recreation

The recreation resource would benefit from the development of a snow play area. The changes or additions proposed in this EA would not effect the development of a snow play area. The snow play area as originally designed would have a separate entrance; there would be no power to the snow play site or Wanoga Snopark; a new shelter at Wanoga Snopark would not be constructed at this time. The question of whether to have the snow play area managed by the USFS or a potential concessionaire would remain undetermined but could go either way. The cost of this original alternative would be higher and therefore prohibitive.

Use would continue to increase, outgrowing existing facilities and potentially creating an unsafe atmosphere. Skyliner would continue to be used and accidents would continue to happen.

Wildlife

The following wildlife/habitats have been reviewed ("x", na = not applicable) to determine if the project/activity will have any negative effects on listed, proposed, candidate or sensitive species in order to meet the requirements for a biological evaluation:

Northern Spotted Owl - na	Canada Lynx LAU- na	Oregon Spotted Frog - na
NSO Critical Habitat - na	Canada Lynx KLA - na	Northern Bald Eagle -na
NSO NRF habitat -na		

The following wildlife/habitats have been reviewed to determine if the project/activity will have any negative effects on them including LRMP Management Indicator Species (MIS), NWP Survey and Manage (S&M) species, ecological indicator species, special habitats, and Eastside Screens habitats and species. Only those with an "x" could be potentially affected by the project/activity.

LRMP MIS Species/Habitats:

Deer	Transition Rng. Summer Rng. Winter Rng. Fawning Habitat	Raptors* Woodpeckers Great Blue Heron Waterfowl
Elk	Transitions Rng. Summer Rng. Winter Rng. Calving Habitat Key Elk	California Wolverine - See BE American Marten Western Big-Eared Bat Logs/Down Wood spp. Special Habitats

Ecological Indicator Spp. (see list)**Species of Concern (USFWS)**

Northern Goshawk
Black Tern
Harlequin Duck (see BE)
Olive-Sided Flycatcher
Tri-Colored Blackbird (see BE)
Western Sage Grouse (see BE)
Ferruginous Hawk
Pygmy Rabbit (see BE)
Pacific Western Big-Eared Bat
Small-Footed Myotis
Long-Eared Myotis
Long-Legged Myotis
Yuma Myotis
Fringed Myotis
California Wolverine (see BE)
Pacific Fisher (see BE)
Preble's Shrew
Northern Sagebrush Lizard
Tailed Frog
Cascades Frog

Northwest Forest Plan:

S&M Mollusks
Great Gray Owl (S&M)
Snags (matrix)
Coarse Woody Debris (matrix)
Riparian Reserves
Late Successional Reserves
Green Tree Retention (matrix)
LOS Retention (matrix)
Bats (matrix)
Woodpeckers (PB)***
Flammulated Owl (PB)
Canada Lynx (see BE)

Eastside Screens (sales only):

Northern Goshawk
Riparian
LOS Forest
Connectivity
Logs/Snags

- **Note:** northern spotted owl, peregrine falcon and bald eagle are addressed by the BE. Includes golden eagle, northern goshawk, redtail hawk, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, great gray owl (also a S&M spp.), and osprey. ** Special habitats include: caves, old-growth forest, riparian, wetlands, and snags. ***PB = Protection buffer species (NWFP).

There are no expected direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Survey and Manage or TES animal species from any alternative. There is no suitable habitat or known species in the planning area, which would be effected by implementation of any alternative.

Soils

Landscape Characteristics: The landscape is generally characterized as nearly level to gently sloping glaciated uplands adjacent to moderately-steep to steep northern slopes of a cinder cone. Elevations within these special use areas range from about 5,400 feet to 5,700 feet, and the annual precipitation is about 30 to 40 inches. Ash and pumice deposits have covered glacial till and older soils on cinders. Dominant landtypes contain deep (> 40 inches) sandy textured soils with rapid infiltration rates. The soils have low-to-moderate erosion hazard ratings, and they are sufficiently resistant to erosion to permit limited and temporary exposure of bare soil. There are no perennial streams or other water bodies within the project area.

The current condition of the soil resource has mainly been influenced by the transportation system and existing recreation facilities. Soils dedicated to management facilities are considered an irretrievable loss of soil productivity until their functions have been served and disturbed sites are restored back to a productive capacity.

The concentration of human activity in and around recreation sites can reduce vegetative cover, compact the soil surface, and accelerate erosion. However, recreational use around this site has resulted in little or no soil resource damage because most activities occur during the winter over snow and frozen ground.

There would be no change to the soil resource. The potential for soil displacement and overland flow would continue with the current conditions. There would be no disturbance from the construction of the snow play hill clearing. The disturbance from the road construction and parking lot would not degrade water quality, as there is no direct access to water sources. The nearest water source is approximately 4 miles west. Best management and engineering practices would mitigate short-term erosion and effects from implementation.

Botany

Effects on botany from implementation of Alternative A would be the same for all alternatives concerning the construction of the parking lot, shelter, toilet and sledding hills. Botany mitigations for this construction would apply.

No Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) plant species, noxious weeds, or Survey and Manage sites were located within the areas of proposed activities. The alternatives would have no adverse effects upon TES plants.

Scenic Views

Under this alternative, the proposed project area would not be altered or changed by any management activity. The natural processes would be allowed to continue unmanaged. Access and travel management would remain as is and road would not be closed or altered in anyway. The current land use patterns in the analysis area would remain unchanged.

Vegetation health, growth, and vigor would be mostly at the mercy of nature. The current vegetation condition is expected to degrade over time and thus affecting long-term (five years and beyond) scenic quality, forest health, and safety for the general public.

Scenic integrity and landscape character would remain essentially the same during the short-term duration (0-5 years).

Recreation opportunity and level of use would remain unchanged from the current condition.

Under this alternative, the Deschutes National Forest LRMP direction and the Desired Future Condition for Scenic and Recreation Resources would remain essentially unchanged. The desired future condition for recreation opportunity within this area may not be met.

Alternative B - Proposed Action

Recreation

The recreation resource would benefit by the implementation of the proposed action. There is a valid need for a safe snow play area along Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway. This snow play area would meet the need for an easily accessible, low or no cost site that would have and hold adequate snow throughout the winter season as stated in the purpose and need.

Having the same ingress/egress from the highway may be confusing for users at first but proper signing should mitigate the confusion. There may be a challenge to keep snowmobile users from using the snow play area parking lot in the case that Wanoga SP is full. Again proper signing and law enforcement would mitigate the potential problem.

A new warming shelter at Wanoga snopark would meet the current and future needs of a growing snowmobile population, as well as future club events and recreation event needs. A kitchen area and woodshed are necessary amenities, which would meet the need for safe storage and food service. The club events would require a need for a food service area.

The existing shelter would be dismantled and used at another site if feasible. If not useable, it will be parted out and stored. If there is unuseable wood material it may be burned on site.

Having a designated snow play area would provide a good option for the public and would keep unsafe snow play from occurring in most situations.

Wildlife

Potential negative impacts of the activity/project for the species associated with the affected area are negligent as there are no known Survey and Manage or TES species or suitable habitat in the planning area.

Soils

The proposed action alternative would require the importing of 1300 cubic yards of rock and soil to provide the fill material for the new entrance road. This material would come from an approved pit, (likely the Inn pit). Other soil effects would be the same as alternative A. Vegetation and soil would be removed from approximately 2 acres of area including the entrance road and the parking lot. For the majority of the area, the soil fill and removal will balance. The additional 1300 cubic yards is needed for the first 300 feet of road requiring fill from the entrance connection to the existing road.

There would be an additional disturbing due to the burial of 1.4 miles of powerline. A trench would be dug approximately 2 feet wide and 4 feet deep to bury the line (in conduit). This amount to the removal and then replacement of 2190 cubic yards of material.

The development of new facilities at the snowplay area and Wanoga Snow Park would help meet public demands for recreational opportunities in this area. Although management facilities remove land from production, the proposed expansions and improvements to existing facilities would only convert a small amount of additional soil to a non-productive condition. The construction of a new access road and parking lot would not disturb areas with sensitive soils. The powerline installation would likely disturb a minor amount of soil adjacent to the road beds of Forest Road 200 and the road that leads to the snowpark. Soils dedicated to roads already have detrimentally disturbed soil properties. The backfill from the excavated trench would not be densely compacted material that would inhibit the natural recovery of vegetative ground cover.

As described for Alternative A, future activities would most likely be associated with continued recreation use and standard road maintenance. The cumulative effects of the proposed and future management activities would meet Forest Plan direction for maintaining soil productivity.

Botany

Effects to Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive or Survey and Manage plant species would be negligible as there are none known in the planning area.

There is a high risk of weed spread with the Proposed Action alternatives. Control of noxious weeds within the project area would be the same for alternatives B and C. See mitigation measures and management recommendations. There is a population of Spotted Knapweed along the highway within 300 feet of the proposed parking area and entrance road. This population is the responsibility of the Oregon Department of Transportation and is being sprayed with herbicides to control. The potential for the power line burial to invite invasion of weeds is fairly high due to the extensive nature of the disturbance on an existing open road. Seeds may invade the site via vehicle wheels.

Scenic Views

Under this alternative, the effect(s) on existing landscape character and scenic integrity level from the proposed management activities is generally expected to be minimal and well within acceptable level under the Deschutes National Forest's LRMP Standards and Guidelines for Scenic Views (MA-9).

Presently, a well-established wall of vegetation within the immediate foreground helps screen much of the proposed project area, as view from the Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byways. However, the upper part of the proposed snow play runs (on north facing slope) would be visible to the casual forest visitors from this sensitive highway. Such effect(s) is expected to be similar to some of the ski run corridors visible on Mt. Bachelor, but here the proposed snow play runs are expected to occur in a more immediate foreground and much smaller in scale. Therefore, the visible impact is expected to be much less than being seen on Mt. Bachelor. The majority of forest visitors have learned to accept and value Mt. Bachelor's ski runs as part of an "altered" natural landscape character. Similar result can be expected for this project as well with proper site planning, design, execution, and implementation of such a design.

Under this alternative, the Deschutes National Forest LRMP directions and the Desired Future Condition for Scenic and Recreation Resources would be moderately altered from the existing conditions. The desired future condition for recreation opportunity within this area is expected to be a marked improvement from the current condition.

Alternative C - Proposed Action with Closure of Skyliner

All effects concerning the project at Wanoga are the same as in Alternative B. The following describes the effects of closing the Skyliner snow play area by Special Forest Order.

Recreation

The current recreation habits of people using the Skyliner area as a snow play area would quickly change. For years, Skyliner has been a favorite place to snow play, even though that use is discouraged through signing and not a designated snow play area. With a legal closure as opposed to a physical closure, additional USFS presence of law enforcement personnel would be needed.

The opportunities for snow play in Central Oregon would be improved as there would be a variety of safe snow play hills available for use. Users would have a low/no cost option at a very accessible area from Bend.

Wildlife

There would be no change from alternative B in effects on wildlife.

Soils

There would be no change to the effects on soils from alternative B.

Botany

The effects on botany would be the same as Alternative B.

Scenic Views

Under this alternative, the effect(s) on existing landscape character and scenic integrity level from the proposed management activities is very much similar to Alternative B.

Under this alternative, the Deschutes National Forest LRMP directions and the Desired Future Condition for Scenic and Recreation Resources would be moderately altered from the existing conditions. The desired future condition for recreation opportunity within this area is expected to be a marked improvement from the current condition.

Effects Common to All Alternatives

Cultural

The Forest Specialist certifies that this project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, under the terms of the existing Programmatic Agreement.

An appropriate inventory has been conducted for this undertaking and no properties potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) have been located. Therefore, the undertaking meets the criteria given in Stipulation III.B.1 of the Programmatic Agreement among the USDA Forest Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer. There would be no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to these resources as there are no known cultural sites in the planning area and the undertaking may proceed.

Noise

Existing noise is presently associated with people using the area for recreation. Noise impacts from construction activities would be of short-term duration, less than 4 weeks total, and low to moderate intensity. The noise disturbance would not likely be different than the adjacent highway noise.

Fisheries/Hydrology

There are no water sources within or adjacent to the project area to be affected by any action alternative. Typical minor erosion events would occur from natural rain events and would be mitigated by best management/engineering practices.

The power line would be constructed on road 4614-200. The USGS map shows this same channel as virtually running down the road. Field inspection revealed a slight depression running adjacent to the road. The "channel" is ephemeral at best, but does not exhibit a defined channel or signs of annual scour or deposition, which would define it as an intermittent channel in the NWFP, for which a Riparian Reserve would have to be delineated. This "channel" does not qualify for Riparian Reserve delineation. The proposed project would have no effects to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives, fisheries,

or water resources.

Wetlands and Floodplains

All alternatives are consistent with Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, in that there would be no adverse effects to wetlands and floodplains as there are no floodplains or wetlands in the planning area.

Compliance With State and Local Laws

Implementation of all alternatives would be consistent with State and local laws, land use, and environmental policies.

Inventoried Roadless and Unroaded Areas

None of the project area is within an "Inventoried Roadless Area" (IRA) as identified by the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Figure 3, page 4).

Within the area planned for activities, there are no unroaded, roadless, or wilderness areas as defined by Forest Service Manual 7712.16a "Contiguous Unroaded Areas".

Prime Lands

There are no lands within the planning area that are classified as prime farm or rangelands. There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects to these resources and thus are in compliance with the Farmland Protection Act and Departmental Regulation 9500-3, "Land Use Policy".

Irreversible and Irretrievable Resource Commitments

The action alternatives are not expected to create any impacts that would cause irreversible damage to soil productivity. There is low risk for the proposed actions to cause soil mass failures (landslides) because there are no seeps, springs or seasonally wet soils on steep slopes.

Soils dedicated to recreational facilities are considered an irretrievable loss of soil productivity until their functions have been served and disturbed sites are returned back to a productive capacity. Under the action alternatives, the amount of land dedicated to facilities would be limited to the minimum necessary for management needs.

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

Civil Rights legislation and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice) direct an analysis of the proposed alternatives as they relate to specific subsets of the American population. The subsets of the general population include ethnic minorities, disabled people, and low-income groups. The purpose of the analysis is to determine whether adverse civil rights impacts are anticipated on an underrepresented population. The analysis is to determine also whether disparate or disproportionate impacts associated with the alternatives are anticipated. None were found and the alternatives do not discriminate between subsets of the general population as the low cost of the facility would be the same for all users and would not discriminate against the low income population.

List of Planning Participants

This section identifies the Forest Service personnel who participated in the analysis and the preparation of the EA. For a list of organizations and individuals contacted during the scoping process, as well as persons and organizations responding to the proposed action and copies of their comments, refer to the project file located at the Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District.

Marvin Lang	IDT Leader/Writer
Marcelle Boehme	Wildlife Biologist
Christine Lipscomb	Heritage Resources
Pat Joslin	Botanist
Larry Sharp	Engineering
Ronnie Yimsut	Landscape Architect
Thomas Walker	Fishery Biologist
John Davis	Writer/Editor
Rod Jorgenson	Soils

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