

White Pass Ski Area Expansion Environmental Impact Statement Update June 2004

The White Pass Ski Area Expansion Proposal

White Pass Ski Area

White Pass Ski Area is located on U.S. Highway 12, 55 miles west of Yakima., and 20 miles east of Packwood, Washington on both the Naches Ranger District of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests and the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. White Pass Ski Area is located in both Yakima and Lewis Counties of Washington State.

White Pass operates under a Special Use Permit issued by the U.S. Forest Service. This permit encompasses approximately 710 acres and has a term extending until December 31, 2035.

The White Pass Ski Area Expansion's draft environmental impact statement (EIS) will be ready by September for public comment. Originally, the draft EIS was to be released in May, but changes to the proposal and a thorough analysis of alternatives have delayed the release.

The White Pass Ski Area has proposed an expansion that would add approximately 767 acres to its current Special Use Permit. Two chairlifts and 15 ski trails would be added. Lift and trail development would encompass 73 acres of the 767 acres. Within these 73 acres, approximately 15 acres of trees would be removed. A mid-mountain lodge would be located between the chairlifts. The two-level lodge would be approximately 2,000 square feet, seat about 150 guests,

and provide limited food service and composting toilets.

In November 2003, the U.S. Forest Service mailed information packets describing this proposal to over 500 individuals and organizations. Three public meetings were held in Naches, Morton, and Packwood.

Over 800 scoping comments have been received to date. Comments received by January 5, 2004 were reviewed to identify the public issues. Issues determined to be significant were used to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

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Or visit our Website at:

www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/planning/white-pass/.

To Comment by email:

Scoping_comments_naches@fs.fed.us

(include White Pass expansion on the subject line)



Partners in Recreation

White Pass Ski Area is located in the Gifford Pinchot and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests and operates in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service

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Scoping Comments Reviewed and Issues Defined

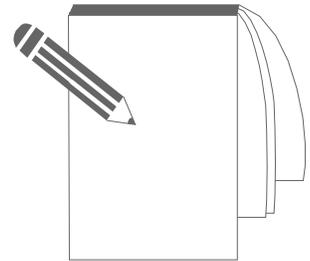
The formal scoping period ended in January 2004. Comments received between November 2003 and January 2004 were reviewed. Over 746 letters and emails provided a total of 2,448 comments to the proposed expansion. Comments were received from individuals, government agencies, citizen's groups, and elected officials. Comments were categorized to determine the significant issues.

Significant issues identified include:

- * Water and watershed impacts
- * Wetland impacts
- * Backcountry skiing impacts
- * Public safety
- * Pacific Crest Trail User Impacts
- * Overcrowding/skier dispersal

- * Impacts on Wilderness
- * Boundary management
- * Visual effects to PCT
- * Local Economic Impacts
- * Traffic on Highway 12
- * Parking
- * Roadless Character
- * Washington Wilderness Bill

To date, over 800 different individuals and agencies have commented on the proposed action. The formal scoping period has closed, although comments are still accepted and reviewed to determine if new issues have arisen. At this point, the most helpful time to comment will be after publication of the draft EIS in September 2004.



Alternatives Developed for Analysis

Several alternatives have been developed to address significant issues, and will be analyzed in the draft EIS.

- **No Action:** The White Pass Ski Area Special Use Permit would not be expanded, and additional facilities would not be developed. Existing operations would continue.
- **Proposed Action :** The Special Use Permit area would be expanded by approximately 767 acres. Two chairlifts and 15 ski runs would be developed. A mid-mountain lodge (including limited food service and rest-rooms) would be constructed. The lodge would have a 2,000 square foot footprint, a 10,000 gallon water tank and .25 acre drain-field for grey water disposal.
- **Other action alternatives** are being analyzed in detail to respond to significant issues raised from the public scoping process. Particulars of the alternatives include:
 - Shortening or realigning chairlifts, and narrowing ski trails to avoid wetlands and streams.
 - Changing the proposed location of a mid-mountain lodge, or eliminating development of a mid-mountain lodge.
 - Developing a Nordic Trail system in

the Hogback Basin.

- Decreasing the number of acres proposed for addition in the Special Use Permit Area.
- Decreasing the number of facilities proposed for development in the Special Use Permit Area.
- Changing the existing location of the Pacific Crest Trail.
- Developing the eastern side of the existing Special Use Permit area with an additional chairlift and associated trails.
- Developing additional parking.



Draft EIS Timeline Update

The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) is expected to be ready for public review in September 2004. There will be a 45 day public comment period.

After the comment period is over, comments will be reviewed and revisions made to the EIS. After revisions are complete, a final EIS will be issued. The Gifford Pinchot and Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Supervisors will make a decision upon issuance of the final EIS.

