

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region



February
2005

RECORD OF DECISION

Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements Final EIS and Forest Plan Amendment #21

**Peaks Ranger District
Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona**

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USDA Forest Service
Peaks Ranger District, Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona

BACKGROUND

The San Francisco Peaks, which rise above the Colorado Plateau to a height of 12,633 feet, dominate the landscape in Northern Arizona. This landscape is also home to many people, including Native Americans that inhabited the area long before others migrated here and created communities near the mountain, like Flagstaff. People near and far are connected to the Peaks. Native Americans who live in tribal communities as far away as 250 miles consider the Peaks sacred, and a significant and integral part of their culture. People from the metropolitan area of Phoenix, 150 miles to the south of Flagstaff, are drawn to the Peaks to enjoy the setting and other opportunities. The Peaks are valued for many reasons by the people and communities surrounding them, they are a sacred place for Native Americans, a source of water for the Flagstaff community, a place for people to hike and camp, and a place for people to enjoy snow in the winter.

The San Francisco Peaks are part of the 1.8 million acres of public land, designated by the United States government over 100 years ago, which is currently known as the Coconino National Forest. The USDA Forest Service is the federal agency responsible for managing the public land and uses on the Peaks. Management of these National Forest System (NFS) lands is guided by laws, regulations, and policies that have been created and influenced by Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Supreme Court over the last 100 years. More specifically, the Coconino National Forest is managed in accordance with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan approved in 1987. Although the Peaks have been administered for over 100 years by the Forest Service, the tribes that hold the Peaks sacred have long considered themselves stewards of the Peaks.

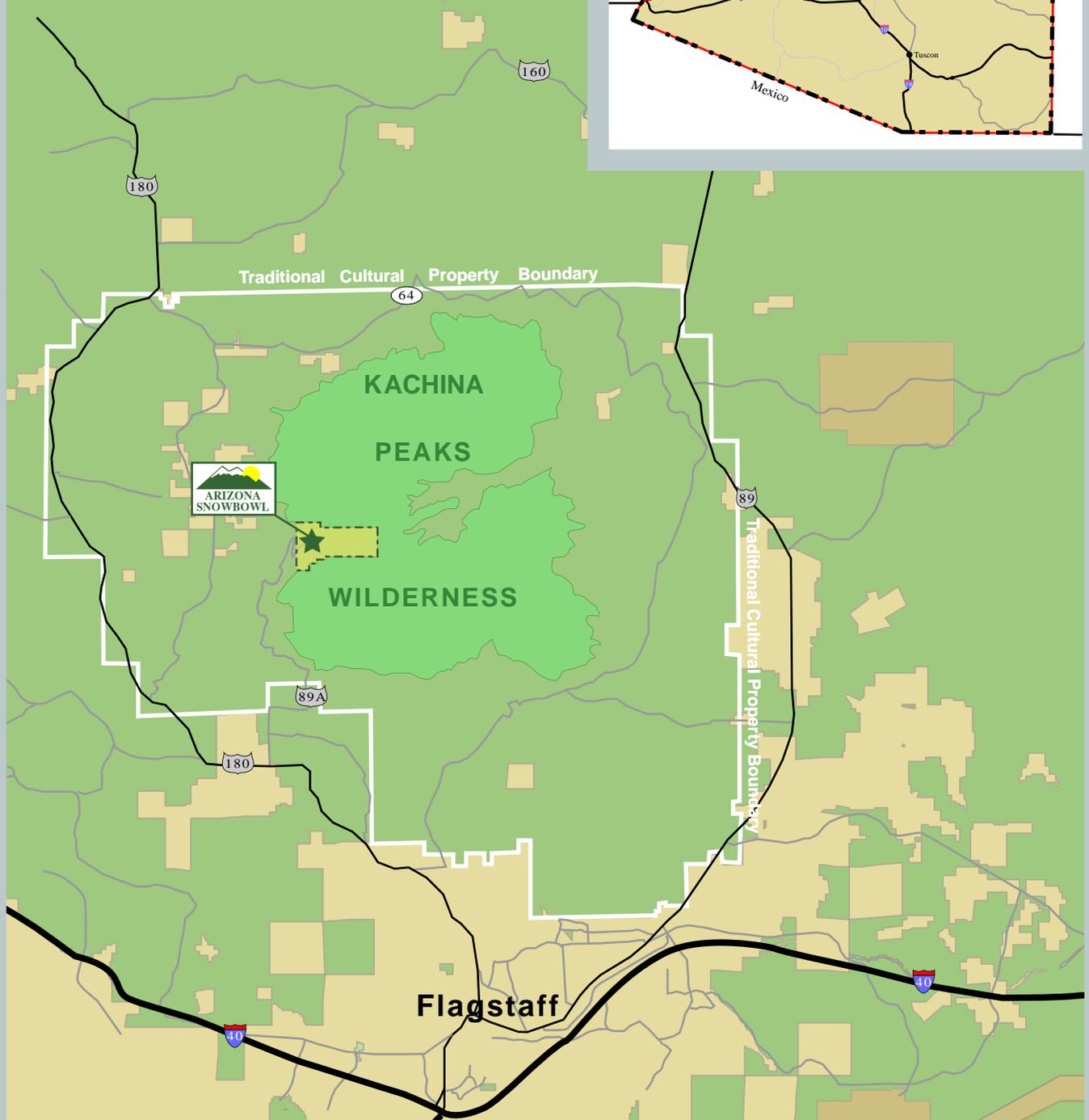
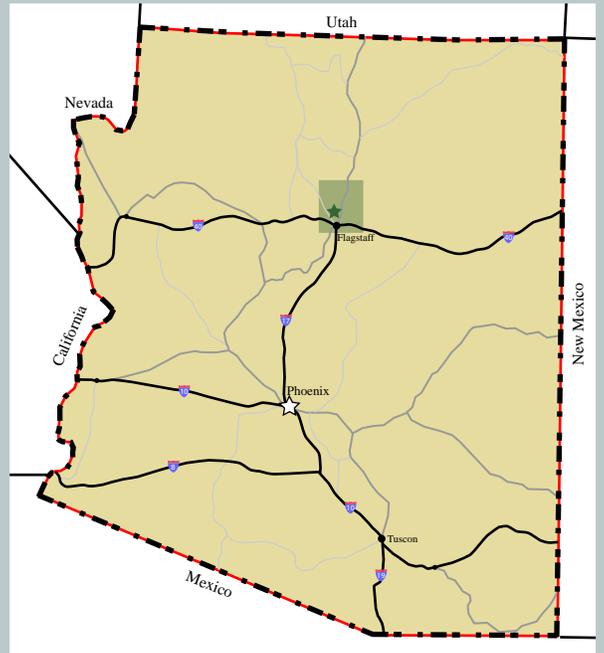
Since the 1930s people have been attracted to the snow-covered slopes of the Peaks for skiing and winter recreation activities. Throughout the years, as this use increased, a ski area was developed and expanded on the western flank of the Peaks to accommodate and facilitate this use. The ski area, currently known as the Arizona Snowbowl, encompasses 777 acres of NFS lands, and operates under a Special Use Permit issued by the Coconino National Forest.

A vicinity map is included in Figure ROD-1.



FIGURE ROD - 1

Arizona Snowbowl and Vicinity



Over the years, the tribes have continued to state their opposition to development at the Snowbowl. One of the most significant decisions the tribes opposed occurred in 1979 when the Forest Service issued a Final Environmental Statement which analyzed several alternatives, including an alternative that would allow further development of the ski area and an alternative which specifically assessed the removal of the ski area facilities. In the Record of Decision that accompanied the Environmental Statement, the Forest Supervisor selected an alternative that approved further development of the ski area. This decision was appealed and dealt with administratively by the Regional Forester and then the Chief of the Forest Service, who ultimately upheld the Forest Supervisor's decision. The Forest Service decision was litigated by six plaintiffs seeking to halt further development and removal of the existing ski facilities. The Forest Service decision was reviewed and eventually upheld by the US District Court and then the US Court of Appeals. The US Supreme Court refused to hear the case, effectively upholding the decision of the US Court of Appeals. In 1987, the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan was adopted. It included the continued operation of Snowbowl in accordance with the 1979 Environmental Statement as part of direction for Developed Recreation Sites provided for in Management Area 15.

Over the 25 years since the 1979 Snowbowl decision, significant legislation, accompanied by Executive Orders, amendments, and agency policy directives, has been enacted that further defines federal agencies' duties and responsibilities towards Native Americans. During this time, the relationships that have developed between the Forest Service and the tribes have resulted in a better appreciation of tribal interests. In recognition of our shared interests the Forest Service, with the support of the tribes, initiated the designation of 18,960 acres of the mountain around the Snowbowl as a Wilderness to protect it from future development. In 1984, this was approved by the United States Congress as the Kachina Peaks Wilderness. In 2002, the Forest Service acted to withdraw 74,380 acres encompassing the Peaks from mineral entry protecting the area from mining activity (refer to Figure ROD-1). This action was supported by the tribes, environmentalists, and other community members. The Forest is also working with the tribes to complete the nomination of the San Francisco Peaks to the National Register as a Traditional Cultural Property.

Today, skiing continues to be a valued recreational use on the San Francisco Peaks for many people. However, there are significant decisions that need to be made regarding the future of the ski area. Two specific needs were identified in relation to the continued existence and operation of the ski area: 1) to provide a consistent and reliable operating season to maintain the economic viability of the Snowbowl; and 2) to bring terrain and infrastructure into balance with current use levels to improve safety, skiing conditions, and recreational opportunities (refer to FEIS Volume 1, Chapter 1). The Forest Service and the Snowbowl developed a proposal to address these desired conditions, which eventually became the basis for this environmental analysis.

As with the 1979 decision, the proposal to improve the facilities at the Snowbowl has been met with adamant opposition from the tribes, even though there have been changes in laws, improvements in working relationships and successes in working together on other projects, there are still situations that are not easily reconciled because of the differences in cultural perspectives about the relationship between people and the land. Sometimes, there are difficult decisions to be made regarding the use and management of NFS lands.

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision whether to approve Alternative 1, 2, or 3 as analyzed in the February 2004 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements (DEIS) and the February 2005 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements (FEIS). My decision, documented below, is based on and supported by the DEIS and FEIS, as well as key documents, analyses and participants (Forest Service staff, consultants, tribes and the public) that contributed to this in-depth analysis conducted in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This ROD pertains to a federal action that affects NFS lands within the existing SUP boundary and NFS lands along the pipeline.

This Record of Decision contains the following major sections:

- Background
- Purpose and Need
- Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation
- Decision
- Alternatives
- Decision Rationale
- Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations
- Environmentally Preferable Alternative
- Implementation Date
- Administrative Review or Appeal Provisions
- Contact Person

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The overall Purpose and Need for the proposed action responds to two broad categories: 1) to provide a consistent and reliable operating season, and; 2) to improve safety, skiing conditions, and recreational opportunities by bringing terrain and infrastructure into balance with existing demand.

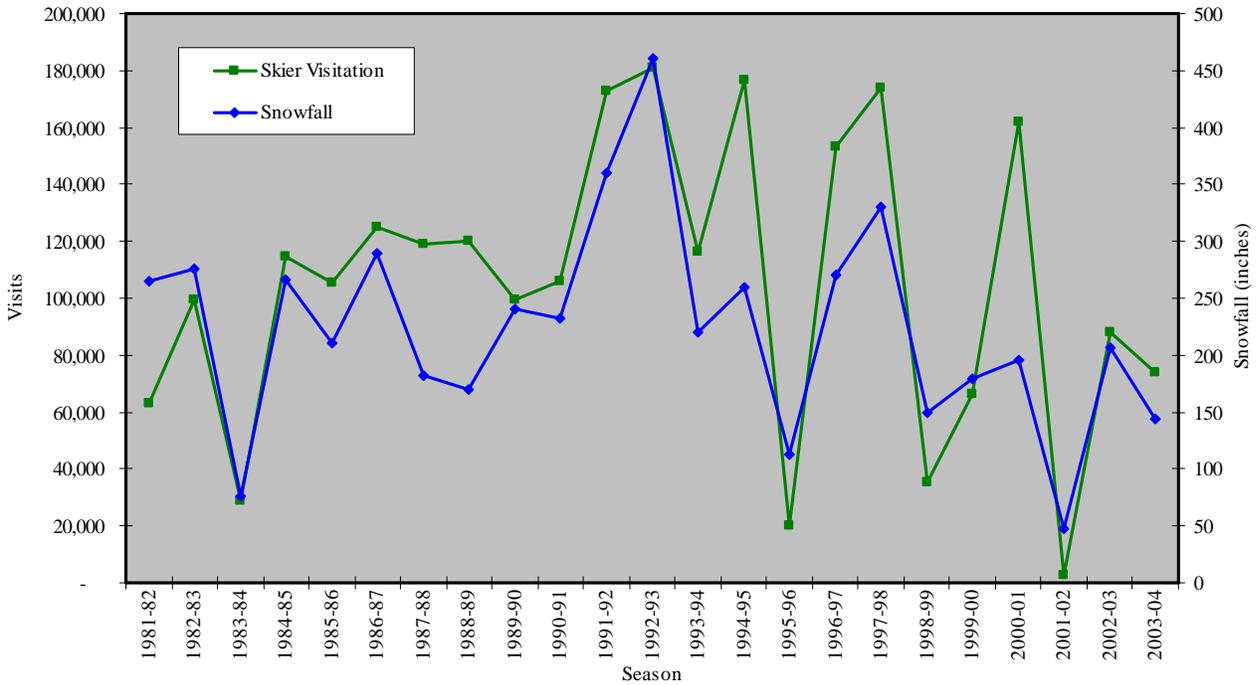
Purpose #1:

To ensure a consistent and reliable operating season, thereby maintaining the economic viability of the Snowbowl, and stabilizing employment levels and winter tourism within the local community.

Existing Condition:

Inconsistent annual snowfall has historically led to a sporadic operating season and therefore broad fluctuations in annual visitation. This has created unstable employment levels and has affected local winter tourism. The Snowbowl's ability to maintain or improve its current level of service and endure the business conditions caused by unreliable snowfall is questionable. Figure ROD-2 correlates annual snowfall (inches) with annual visitation for the past 22 seasons at the Snowbowl:

**Figure ROD-2
Comparison of Natural Snowfall and Skier Visits
1981/82 through 2003/04**



Need:

The installation and operation of snowmaking infrastructure would provide a reliable and consistent operating season, helping to stabilize Snowbowl’s investment, increase local employment levels, and boost winter tourism within the community.

Purpose #2:

To improve safety, skiing conditions, and recreational opportunities, bringing terrain and infrastructure into balance with current use levels.

Existing Condition:

Currently, areas of intermediate and beginner terrain are inadequately sized to accommodate the public’s demand for terrain of these ability levels on peak days. This lack of terrain often results in very high skier densities on peak days. This creates safety issues because of overcrowded ski runs. When compared to ski industry norms (and guest expectations), the Snowbowl exhibits a deficit of intermediate and beginner level terrain and a surplus of novice level terrain as shown in Table ROD-1.

Need:

Improve the quantity and distribution of beginner and intermediate terrain and skier safety by developing additional terrain within the existing special-use permit area.

**Table ROD-1
Existing Terrain Distribution**

Skier/Rider Ability Level	Trail Area (acres)	Skiing Terrain Capacity (guests)	Existing Skier Distribution (percent)	Typical Skier Market (percent)	Difference
Beginner	0.5	15	1%	5%	-4
Novice	44.0	790	44%	15%	+29
Low Intermediate	31.3	438	25%	25%	0
Intermediate	38.1	381	22%	35%	-13
Adv. Intermediate	15.4	108	6%	15%	-9
Expert	9.4	28	2%	5%	-3
Total	138.6	1,760	100%	100%	

Existing Condition:

Public demand at the Snowbowl has grown significantly in the past 20 years, increasing from 63,000 annual visits in 1981/82 to 162,175 during the 2000/01 season, an increase of 157 percent. The inadequate size and limited conditions of on-mountain facilities have resulted in a crowded, undesirable guest experience in many areas, such as in the lodges and on the chairlifts. Additionally, the Snowbowl frequently experiences peak demand days which greatly exceed the current comfortable carrying capacity (CCC)¹ of the existing facilities and infrastructure.

Need:

To increase the capacities of the day lodges, chairlifts, and other ski area infrastructure, bringing it into balance with *current* use levels, while remaining within the ski area's approved CCC of 2,825 skiers.

Existing Condition:

Approximately 30,000 visitors ride the summer Scenic Sky ride annually. Although numerous summer visitors express interest, guests are not allowed to hike down the mountain due to the steep grades and cobbled surface.

Need:

To allow guests to hike from the top back to the base area by providing an established hiking trail from the top of the Agassiz Chairlift. Additionally, this trail would allow Snowbowl lift maintenance personnel to periodically access the top terminal of the Agassiz Chairlift using all terrain vehicles during the summer.

¹ Approved in the 1979 Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area Proposal Final Environmental Statement and subsequently incorporated by reference the CNF Forest Plan.

Existing Condition:

In the past, numerous snowplayers illegally parked along the Snowbowl road and at the ski area to sled, slide, and saucer in existing openings off the edge of the road and at the ski area. This unmanaged, dispersed use often leads to injuries, traffic management issues, garbage, and sanitation problems. In 2002 the Forest Service prohibited parking along the Snowbowl road which eliminated these unmanaged snowplay activities. This action relocated the displaced snowplayers to other unmanaged areas on the forest, primarily along Highway 180, and has produced numerous management challenges associated with widespread, unregulated snowplay.

Need:

To develop a managed and professionally designed snowplay/tubing facility at the ski area to fill the demonstrated public demand for snowplay. The facility would provide restrooms, a warming building, ticketing, concessions, parking, and trash receptacles.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

PUBLIC SCOPING AND COMMENTS ON THE DEIS

In September, 2002, a scoping notice was mailed to approximately 350 community residents, interested individuals, public agencies, and other organizations. This notice was designed to elicit comments, concerns, and issues pertaining to the Proposed Action. A press release and legal notice were distributed to key local and regional media. On October 7, 2002, the Forest Service published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register. In addition, two public open houses were held in Flagstaff on October 10, and 26, 2002. Forest Service representatives and members of the consultant team were present to answer questions and collect comments on the proposal. In response to public and tribal scoping (described below), approximately 1,200 comment letters were received. Based upon the responses received during scoping, the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) prepared a list of resource issues and areas that were analyzed within the DEIS.

The DEIS was released to the public in February, 2004. On February 25, a public open house was held at the Flagstaff High School (302 people signed in). In addition, other meetings were held with the tribes as described in the tribal consultation section. In response to the 60-day comment period for the DEIS, 5,716 commenters submitted comments via many forms, including: letters, emails, form letters, petitions and phone calls. Substantive comments were extracted and responded to, either individually or “thematically” in the Response to Comments (RTC - Volume 2 of the FEIS). The total number of substantive comments was 9,887. The RTC not only provides responses to all substantive comments received, but also includes a table with the names and general comment themes of all commenters. The reader is referred to Volume 2 of the FEIS for additional clarification on how substantive comments were extracted, grouped, and responded to. Changes or modifications to the DEIS resulting from public comments have been incorporated into the FEIS.

TRIBAL SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

The Forest has been consulting with approximately 13 tribal groups, representing the Acoma, Apache, Havasupai, Hopi, Hualapai, Navajo, Southern Paiute, Yavapai, and Zuni about the cultural significance of the San Francisco Peaks since the 1970s. The Forest Service initiated formal tribal consultation on the Proposed Action prior to commencement of the NEPA process in June, 2002 with a formal letter from the Forest Supervisor to 13 tribal leaders. Also in June, 2002, the Peaks District Ranger contacted tribal representatives from the Cultural Preservation Offices of the tribes to discuss the Snowbowl proposal and suggest pre-proposal meetings. Replies to this led to telephone contacts between the Peaks District Archaeologist and the cultural preservation offices of the Hopi, Navajo, Hualapai, San Carlos Apache, and Yavapai-Apache during the months of June through December, 2002. In addition, follow-up phone calls to interested tribes were made by the District Archaeologist to ensure receipt of letters.

On December 9, 2002, formal public meetings were held on the Navajo and Hopi Reservations (Tuba City and Kykotsmovi). The emphasis of these two public meetings was to explain the Proposed Action to tribal members and to elicit comment/concerns on behalf of individuals as well as the tribal governments of the Navajo and Hopi Tribes. Additionally, as part of the Proposed Action discussions, the District Archaeologist and the Navajo Liaison set up an information booth at the Navajo Western Agency Fair; the Navajo Liaison met with five Chapter Houses on several occasions; Forest personnel met with Hopi Tribal officials and Cultural Preservation Office personnel; the Navajo Liaison attended the Western Agency Council Meeting; and the District Archaeologist met with the Hopi Cultural Resource Advisory Task Team three times.

When the DEIS was released in February, 2004, the Forest again contacted all 13 tribal offices both by telephone and fax to advise them they would be receiving the DEIS and to extend an invitation to meet with them to discuss it. The DEIS was also distributed to Chapters in the Western Navajo Agency by the Forest Service Navajo Liaison. The Navajo Liaison met numerous times with various Chapters to discuss the DEIS and has been available on a constant basis throughout the NEPA process. Numerous tribal people participated in the Flagstaff public meeting on February 25, 2004 and discussed issues with various Forest managers and specialists. At the request of several tribes, throughout 2004, the Forest Supervisor and other Forest personnel met or spoke with tribal government officials, cultural preservation office personnel, traditional leaders and practitioners, and tribal members from most of the 13 tribal groups to discuss the DEIS, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)² for this proposal, and the San Francisco Peaks National Register Nomination. Public meetings were held at the Hopi Veteran's Center on March 23, 2004; at the Cameron Chapter House on April 3, 2004; and at the Hualapai Tribal Office on August 6, 2004. During most meetings, in order to provide better communication and understanding of the issues, tribal concerns, and the decision-making process, other tribal members would interpret information and statements for the benefit of both Forest Service and tribal people present at the meetings. The Forest Archaeologist met with representatives of the Yavapai-Apache Nation on March 22, 2004 and the Yavapai-Prescott Tribe on September 30, 2004 to discuss the DEIS and the MOA.

² Appendix D of the FEIS includes the signed MOA.

Forest personnel met with representatives of the Save the Peaks organization and representatives of the Indigenous Youth Experience program to hear their concerns. On November 18, 2004, the Forest Archaeologist participated in a panel discussion about the Snowbowl proposal for the Flagstaff Leadership Program.

On February 12, 2005, Forest personnel met with tribal elected officials, cultural preservation office staff, other tribal members, and representatives of Save the Peaks organization. At the meeting tribal leaders once again stated their opposition to the Proposed Action and preference for the No Action Alternative.

In all, over 200 phone calls were made, 41 meetings were held, and 245 letters were sent to Tribal officials, tribal historic preservation offices, traditional tribal leaders/practitioners, and the general tribal public. Press releases were sent out to generate information and comment, resulting in numerous articles in regional newspapers, including the *Arizona Republic*, the *Gallup Independent*, the *Arizona Daily Sun*, the *Navajo Times*, the *Navajo-Hopi Observer*, and *Tutuveni*, as well as radio and television news broadcasts throughout the Four Corners states about the proposed project. The MOA was sent out for tribal review and comment three times between April 26 and December 13, 2004.

DEIS COMMENT PERIOD AND TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Prior to the release of the DEIS, concerns were expressed that the minimum 45 day comment period for the DEIS would not provide sufficient time for the public and the tribes to provide comment. In response to this concern, when the DEIS was released I provided for a 60 day comment period. I monitored the flow and number of comments received during the comment period and concluded that the public and tribes were effectively able to provide their comments during the 60 days, thus the comment period was not extended further. However, in addition to the 60 day comment period, the tribes have been able to continue the dialogue and interaction with the Forest through the consultation associated with developing the MOA for the Snowbowl proposal. The tribes were formally invited to participate in the MOA development by letter on April 26, 2004. Over the following months we discussed the MOA through meetings and calls with interested tribal groups. The final MOA was submitted to the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office on December 13, 2004, in effect providing the tribes over seven months of additional time beyond the comment period to engage in consultation with the Forest. At the time of the signing of the ROD, some tribes are still considering signing the MOA which reinforces that consultation between the Forest and the tribes is an on-going process and opportunity for additional discussions.

DECISION

Based upon all of the information and analysis made available via the FEIS and the process that the Coconino National Forest followed to develop this analysis, I have decided to approve Alternative 2 - the Proposed Action - as described and analyzed in the FEIS.³ The Selected

³ The Proposed Action is referred to throughout the remainder of this document as the *Selected Alternative*.

Alternative provides for, among other things, snowmaking using reclaimed water as a source, additions and modifications to the Snowbowl's lift and terrain network, improvements to day lodges and parking, and a lift-served snowtubing facility. With the exception of the 14.8-mile reclaimed water pipeline – which will be constructed in existing road or utility corridor right-of-ways between Flagstaff and the Snowbowl – all of the approved projects will occur on NFS lands within the Snowbowl's 777-acre Ski Area Term Special Use Permit Area (SUP). This decision also includes a Forest Plan amendment and required mitigation and monitoring which are described in more detail below and in the FEIS Volume 1, Chapter 2. A description of the selected alternative follows, along with other alternatives analyzed in the FEIS and considered. The rationale for the decision appears after the following description of alternatives.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The Selected Alternative will result in the creation of a Master Development Plan (MDP) that includes all of the following projects and capacities.

With the Selected Alternative, the Snowbowl's Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC) will be 2,825 skiers-at-one-time. Peak day visitation is expected to continue to reach in excess of 3,400 skiers-at-one-time.

All costs associated with the planning, development, construction, operation, and maintenance of all approved infrastructure will be the responsibility of the Arizona Snowbowl.

The Selected Alternative is depicted in Figure ROD-3, after the following description.

Snowmaking

The Selected Alternative includes installing the necessary snowmaking infrastructure to cover 205.3 acres of terrain throughout the duration of its winter operating season (refer to FEIS Figure 2-3). Snowbowl would be authorized to cover the full extent of this area with human-made snow during the pre- and early season (approximately November through December) each year in order to create a sufficient base layer that would subsequently be covered by natural snowfall. However, the ski area may continue to produce snow throughout the winter to compensate for inadequate natural snowfall, depending on weather trends.

The City of Flagstaff has agreed to provide the ski area with up to 1.5 million gallons per day (gpd) of Class A+ reclaimed water from the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) between November 1st and the end of February, for a period of five years from March 20, 2002. The agreement allows for renewal for three additional five year periods. Currently, reclaimed water from the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant is used to irrigate city parks, school playgrounds, and golf courses during the summer, but goes unused throughout the winter, being allowed to flow down the Rio de Flag channel. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) allows reclaimed water with an "A" rating to be used for snowmaking

purposes. The reclaimed water produced by the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant currently exceeds this standard.⁴

The reclaimed water originating from the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant will be transported to the ski area via an approximate 14.8-mile buried pipeline (refer to Figure FEIS 2-4). The waterline connects to the reclaimed water circulation system currently used by the City of Flagstaff near Thorpe Park and follows existing utility corridors and Forest roads across a mix of federal, state, and private lands to the intersection of U.S. Highway 180 and the Snowbowl road. From this point the waterline follows the Snowbowl road to the ski area and is subsequently routed up a ski trail to a 10 million gallon impoundment (explained below). Two booster stations will be installed along the pipeline to maintain appropriate pressure. These will be located near Thorpe Park and along the Snowbowl road. Each pump station will entail the construction of a small pump house building.

The pipeline route was identified after discussions with Transwestern Pipeline Company, the Forest Service, Arizona State Land Department, and Lowell Observatory. Lowell Observatory is very interested in providing fire hydrants on observatory property west of their campus and also in replacing a private and antiquated potable water delivery system to the campus from Flagstaff. In accordance with Forest Plan direction to locate additional uses within existing utility corridors, the reclaimed water pipeline route follows the Transwestern Lateral Natural Gas Pipeline from west of the observatory to the intersection of U.S. Highway 180 and the Snowbowl road. The remainder of the pipeline route is located on Observatory private property and existing Forest Service roads. The route was also selected to minimize impacts and inconveniences to traffic and private property during construction of the pipeline.

A 10 million gallon water storage impoundment (approximately 30.7 acre-feet in volume and 1.9 acres in surface area) will be constructed near the top terminal of the existing Sunset Chairlift for operation of the snowmaking system (refer to Appendix A of the FEIS for more detail on the impoundment's design specifications). Ten million gallons of capacity will not only provide for early and mid-season snowmaking, but will help ensure a sufficient water supply of snowmaking water past the end of February, when the City of Flagstaff will discontinue reclaimed water service through the summer. Necessary pumps and a compressor will be installed within a primary pumphouse building to be located near the impoundment. Preliminary discussions with City officials have identified a potential desire to maintain pressure in the snowmaking pipeline throughout the year to provide a water source for fire suppression needs within the residential communities proximate to the pipeline between Flagstaff and the ski area. Hydrants could be situated along the pipeline to provide emergency access to this water.⁵ Additionally, a residual pool will be maintained within the impoundment during the summer months to allow for potential use for wildland fire suppression.

⁴ Should additional water quality standards be promulgated by EPA and/or ADEQ subsequent to, or following, an approval to use reclaimed water, the City of Flagstaff would be held in compliance with the new standard.

⁵ The exact number and locations of hydrants is yet to be determined.

Generally, “airless” style fan-gun snowmaking technology will be used in the base area, while high-tech air/water tower guns are used for the upper portions of the mountain. Construction of the snowmaking system will involve the burial of air, water, and power lines along the edges of trails to be covered, as well as the construction of a 3,000 to 4,000 square foot snowmaking control building in the vicinity of the existing maintenance shop (refer to Figure ROD-3 and FEIS Figure 2-4).

Because of rocky terrain, it is anticipated that burying the snowmaking water lines to a depth that prevents freezing will be impractical and expensive. Therefore, the snowmaking system has been designed to back drain after each snowmaking period in order to empty the entire system and avoid damage to due freezing. Construction of a back draining system would allow for the water lines to be buried at shallower depths. Depending on location, orientation, and distance of the water lines from the snowmaking water impoundment, the back drainage system would return residual reclaimed water to the main snowmaking water impoundment or an additional smaller catchment pond to be located north of the snowtubing parking lots. The catchment pond would have an approximate one-acre foot capacity (approximately 336,000 gallons) – approximately one-tenth of an acre in size and ten feet deep. Water would be returned to the main water impoundment via pumps. The catchment pond location is indicated on Figure ROD-3, item “O”.

Approximately 178 million gallons of water will be available to Snowbowl between November 1 and February 28 of each year.⁶ At 325,852 gallons of water per acre foot (AF), this equates to approximately 548 AF of water available to Snowbowl each season.

However, annual water use for the snowmaking system will vary according to natural conditions, and has been modeled according to dry, wet, and average precipitation years.⁷

Snowplay/Tubing Facility

The Selected Alternative includes the development of a managed and professionally designed snowplay/tubing facility at the base area. The snowtubing area will entail dedicating approximately eight acres of terrain in the Hart Prairie area to the development of six-to-eight tubing lanes (refer to Figure ROD-3). These lanes will be serviced by a combination of up to four surface lifts. While the surface of the snowtubing area will be graded, construction of the individual lanes will be completed with snow each season (and is dependant upon snowmaking). The snowtubing facility has been designed with a capacity of approximately 600 tubers-at-one-time.

A 400-space parking area (approximately 3.3 acres) will be constructed to service the approved tubing facility. Skiers will not be allowed to use this facility. From the parking area, guests will have foot access to a guest service facility adjacent to the tubing area. Constructed and located specifically for snowplaying activities, this 5,000 square foot building will offer food service, restrooms (necessitating construction of an on-site septic system), ticket sales, and a sun deck. A

⁶ 1.5 million gpd x 119 days.

⁷ Refer to either the Watershed (Section 3H) or Soils (Section 3I) analyses of the FEIS for additional details.

buried 10,000-gallon water storage tank will be located proximate to the facility containing reclaimed water for use in toilets.

Lifts/Uphill Capacity

Antiquated lift equipment will be replaced with more modern and efficient chairlift technology as detailed below (refer to Figure ROD-3). The reader will note that there is no proposed or approved modification to the Agassiz Chairlift.

Sunset Chairlift

The Sunset Chairlift will be replaced and realigned with a high speed chair. It will also be realigned and lengthened with a new top-drive terminal located at 10,900 feet in elevation – approximately 300 feet south/southwest of the existing mid-station on the Agassiz Chairlift.

Humphreys Chairlift

The existing Sunset Chairlift will be relocated and installed as the Humphreys Chairlift, accessing a new pod of ski trails. The lift will start near the Agassiz Lodge and extend approximately 3,000 linear feet to terminate at an elevation of approximately 10,400 feet. The Humphreys Chairlift will require vehicular access to both terminals. Permanent access to the top terminal will be via the existing mountain access road and temporary access will be via a portion of one of the ski trails. Power will be supplied to the bottom terminal via a spur from the Agassiz Lodge power line.

Hart Prairie Chairlift

The Hart Prairie Chairlift will be upgraded to a high-speed, detachable lift; it will remain top-driven with the bottom terminal being relocated approximately 200 feet downhill and 250 feet north of the present terminal site.

Aspen Chairlift

The Aspen Chairlift will be upgraded and realigned, swinging the bottom terminal approximately 500 feet north, within the existing SUP boundary. This realignment will also improve on-fall-line skiing within the pod.

Surface Lifts

Three 150-foot surface conveyor (Magic carpet) type lifts are planned for the area north of the Hart Prairie Lodge, which will be redesigned and designated as a beginner/learning area. One additional 300-foot handle tow (surface lift) will service the planned halfpipe and terrain park (detailed below).

Snowtubing Surface Lifts

As noted, a combination of four surface lifts will service the snowtubing facility. Snowtubing lifts are designed and engineered specifically for pulling snowtubes.

Terrain

Approximately 65.6 acres of new skiing terrain will service primarily intermediate and advanced intermediate skill levels, bringing total developed skiable terrain (i.e., excluding glades) at the Snowbowl to approximately 204.2 acres. Specific areas planned for additional skiing terrain include an extension of the *Spur Catwalk* (trail #27), widening of the existing lift line below the *Spur Catwalk* paralleling the Agassiz Chairlift (trail #43B), widening of *White Lightning* (trail #28) and *Tiger* (trail #18), the creation of new trails under the Sunset and Humphreys chairlifts, the construction of one new trail connecting *Lower Ridge* (trail #21) with *Wild Turkey* (trail #20), and the development of a skiway (trail #44) (providing skier, ski patrol, and maintenance/construction access) from *Upper Logjam* (trail #25) to the top terminal of the Humphreys Chairlift.

Additionally, approximately 47.4 acres of tree thinning/glading will occur within the Agassiz and Sunset pods to create improved gladed skiing opportunities. Thinning within these pods will address recreational, fuel reduction, and forest health objectives. Timber removal will be concentrated on unhealthy/dead trees. Overall, the thinning has been designed to maintain 80 percent of the existing overstory vegetation.

The following table describes the nature of the approved terrain additions and associated skier distributions compared to existing conditions.

Table ROD-2
Comparison of Terrain Allocations and Skier Distributions
Existing Conditions Vs. Selected Alternative

Ability Level	Existing Skiable Terrain (acres)	Existing Skiable Terrain (% of total)	Selected Alternative Skiable Terrain (acres)	Selected Alternative Skiable Terrain (% of total)	Skier Distribution Across Total Skiable Terrain		
					Market Demand	Existing	Selected Alternative
Beginner	0.5	0.4%	2.0	1.0%	5%	1%	3%
Novice	43.9	31.7%	44.0	21.5%	15%	44%	35%
Low Intermediate	31.3	22.6%	34.5	16.9%	25%	25%	22%
Intermediate	38.1	27.5%	51.0	25.0%	35%	22%	23%
Advanced Intermediate	15.4	11.1%	40.9	20.0%	15%	6%	13%
Expert	9.4	6.8%	31.8	15.6%	5%	2%	4%
Total	138.6	100%	204.2	100%	100%	100%	100%

With approval of the Selected Alternative, the developed terrain network at the Snowbowl will increase from approximately 139 acres to approximately 204 acres (a 47 percent increase). The nature of the developed terrain additions will primarily benefit Snowbowl's intermediate guests, with the development of approximately 41 acres of additional intermediate (including low intermediate, intermediate, and advanced intermediate) terrain. Due to the nature of the natural terrain in the SUP area, beginner and novice guests will gain only a modest amount of new terrain (1.6 acres), however, the additional intermediate opportunities will decrease skier densities on beginner terrain, thereby improving safety and enjoyment. Advanced skiers will

gain roughly 22 acres of developed terrain. The additional 47 acres of improved glades will enhance the skiing experience for Snowbowl's advanced and expert clientele. In total, the quality of the recreational experience at Snowbowl will improve as lifts are replaced and skiers are better distributed across additional terrain. (Note: the 47 acres of improved glades are not reflected in Table 3F-7 in the FEIS.)

In association with the creation of additional terrain and snowmaking coverage, a number of areas will be graded and smoothed to improve the skiing experience. Two separate methods of earthwork are planned for specific areas: grading and stumping/smoothing. Graded areas will be carefully stripped of topsoil resources, reshaped and re-contoured, followed by redistribution of topsoil and immediate revegetation. In areas to be stumped/smoothed, rocks and stumps protruding from the surface will be disposed of. Disturbed areas will be promptly revegetated per mitigation measures in FEIS Table 2-2.

A dedicated teaching area will be developed near the Hart Prairie Lodge in order to better accommodate beginner skiers. Construction of the teaching area will require re-contouring approximately three acres.

In order to meet the growing expectations of an evolving skiing and snowboarding market, a halfpipe⁸ will also be built approximately 300 feet southeast of the bottom terminal of the Sunset Chairlift. The contour of the halfpipe will be rough-shaped out of dirt to minimize the total snowmaking coverage necessary for its use. Additionally, a small surface lift will be installed immediately parallel to the halfpipe.

Guest Service Facilities

In order to better accommodate existing use levels, both the Hart Prairie and Agassiz day lodges will be enlarged and upgraded. The Hart Prairie Lodge will increase by approximately 6,000 square feet. A new guest services facility totaling approximately 10,000 square feet will be developed immediately adjacent to the existing Agassiz Lodge. The increased building space will allow for guest functions, such as additional restrooms, lockers, dining and kitchen areas, and first aid services. This will increase Snowbowl's total guest/administrative square footage from approximately 23,500 square feet to approximately 39,500 square feet. All guest services will be designed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

I am approving the development of a 2,500 square foot Native American cultural and education center, which would be constructed within the Agassiz Lodge. However, development of this facility would only be pursued with tribal collaboration and participation. If the tribes do not confirm an interest in this facility, it will not be developed.

On the mountain, three new ski team buildings will replace the existing buildings. The start and finish race facilities will be approximately 100 square feet each; the start will be located on *Phoenix* (trail #16) just below the split with *Lower Ridge* (trail #21), and the finish will be

⁸ Halfpipes are linear, U-shaped terrain features constructed down appropriately steep slopes used for freestyle skiing and snowboarding. Halfpipes are common amenities at ski areas all over the world.

located on the skier's right near the bottom of *Agassiz* (trail #12). The third building will be a clubhouse approximately 640 square feet in size located approximately 150 feet south of the *Agassiz* Lodge.

Summer Trails

I am approving construction of a trail from the existing *Agassiz* Chairlift mid-station to the top terminal.⁹ (Refer to Figure ROD-3) Hikers will primarily use the trail; however, the trail will be wide enough to permit ski area maintenance personnel to access the top terminal using all terrain vehicles (e.g., four wheelers). Additionally, the trail will provide a method of moving guests from the upper reaches of the *Agassiz* Chairlift should a summer lift evacuation be necessary. This trail will be approximately 5,280 feet in length and constructed to a width of five feet (slightly wider at switchbacks) to allow for ATV use. Vegetation removal associated with construction of this trail will be focused on understory and dead/dying trees, however, incidental removal of live overstory trees may be necessary to maintain proper grades along the trail alignment.

The trail has been designed to allow guests to hike from the observation deck at the top of the *Agassiz* Chairlift down to the mid-station, then follow *Midway Catwalk* (trail #24 – refer to Figure ROD-2 for specific location) north to trail #44. Guests can then descend through the Humphreys pod to trail #33 for access to Hart Prairie. The main base area can be accessed through Hart Prairie.

Additionally, an ADA compliant summer access trail will be constructed into Hart Prairie from the parking lot near *Agassiz* Lodge.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Wastewater

The Snowbowl is currently dependent on vehicular delivery for 100 percent of its water needs (potable and non-potable alike). This results in potable water being used for non-potable uses.¹⁰ In order to reduce the environmental impacts and costs associated with the vehicular delivery, a spur could connect the reclaimed water pipeline to the Hart Prairie and *Agassiz* day lodges, as well as the snowplay facility to service non-potable uses such as toilets. As discussed previously, a buried 10,000-gallon water storage tank will be constructed at each of the lodges and at the snowplay building to facilitate the use of reclaimed water for non-potable uses and needs.

Roads

There will be a redesigned entrance circle signage directing guests to parking lots, day lodges, and snowplay parking. Additionally, the traffic circle will allow the ski area to more effectively

⁹ Thirty percent of guests who participate in the summer Sky Ride express an interest in being allowed to hike off the mountain.

¹⁰ Arizona Snowbowl estimates that over 60 percent of the potable water transported to the ski area is ultimately consumed by toilet services.

manage capacity by providing a safe location to turn vehicles around once the parking areas are full.

In order to construct and maintain the snowmaking water impoundment, Snowbowl requires permanent access to the facility. This will be achieved by using a portion of an existing, although infrequently used, two-track road between the maintenance area and the top of the Sunset Chairlift. Approximately 3,650 feet of the existing two-track road will be used after bringing it up to a Forest Service maintenance level II road standard in order to accommodate construction and maintenance equipment with adequate drainage and surfacing as needed. However, an approximate 1,100-foot spur of new road will be constructed between the existing maintenance road that traverses *Sunset Boulevard* (trail #10) and *Southern Belle* (trail #9) and the upgraded impoundment access road. In total the road length will be approximately 4,760 feet. However, with the road construction and reconstruction, a 3,050-foot segment of the existing two-track road will be obliterated and reclaimed.

Parking

Skier Parking

To increase parking lot efficiency, facilitate snow removal, and improve pedestrian safety, the existing parking lots #1 and #2 will be combined by re-grading and leveling them (requiring a minimal amount of tree removal). See Figure ROD-3, item “F” for parking area location. This will add a small number of parking spaces – approximately 35 spaces across 0.3 acre.

Snowplay Parking

A 400-space parking lot for exclusive use by tubing customers will be constructed to the north of the entrance loop, as discussed within the snowplay/tubing section.

Pedestrian Access

A pedestrian underpass will be constructed to allow skiers to pass directly to and from the Hart Prairie lodge/parking areas and the Sunset Chairlift without walking across the main access road.



Facilities Improvements
Environmental Impact Statement

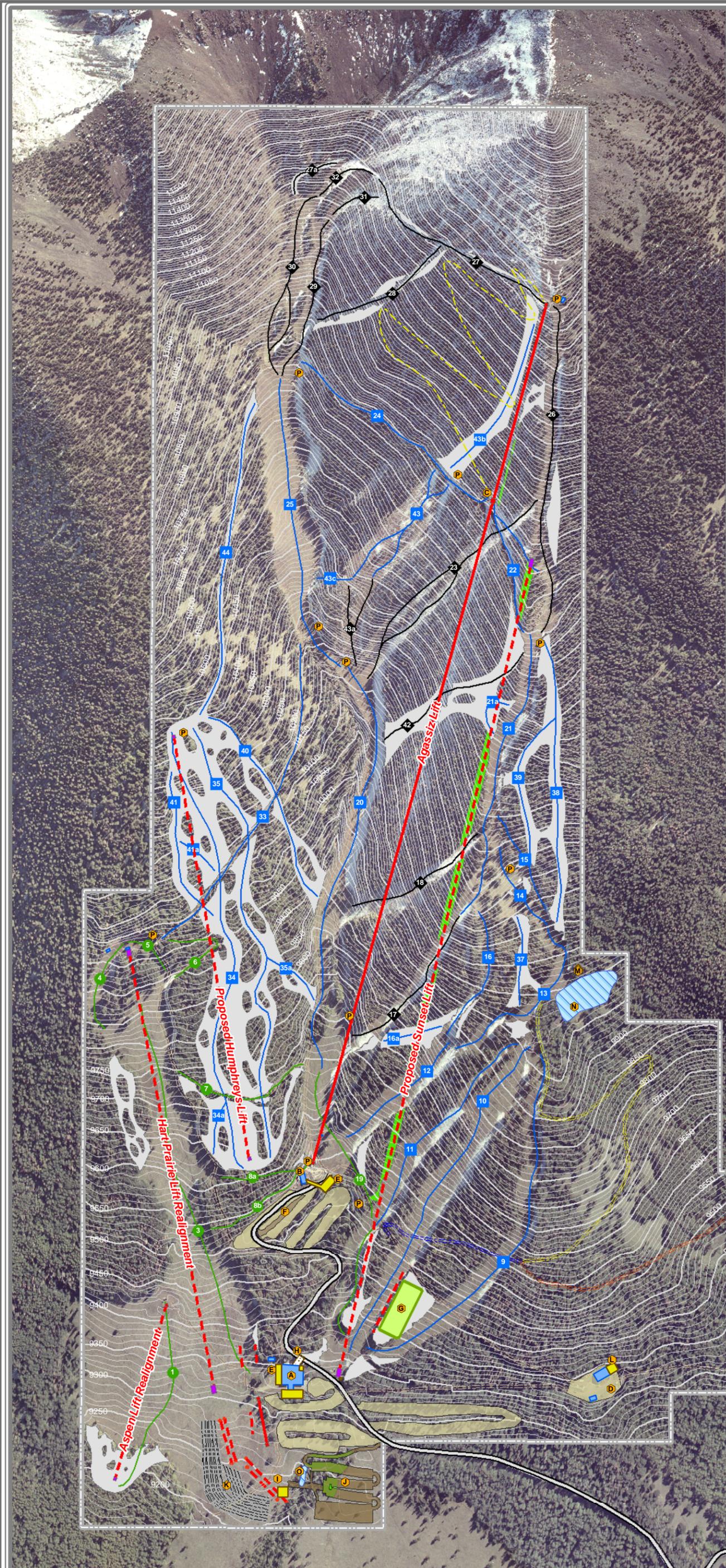
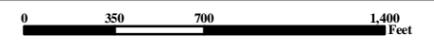
Figure ROD - 3
SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

LEGEND

- Existing Lift
- Proposed Lift
- Existing Facility
- Proposed Facility
- Existing Parking
- Proposed Parking
- Special Use Permit Boundary
- Proposed Trail Clearing
- Proposed Vegetation Clearing
- Proposed Hiking Trail
- Proposed Road Reconstruction
- Proposed New Road Construction
- Proposed Road Obliteration

FACILITIES

- Hart Prairie Lodge
- Agassiz Lodge
- Agassiz Lift Mid-Station
- Existing Maintenance Facilities
- Proposed Building Expansion
- Proposed Parking Lot Reconfiguration
- Proposed Half Pipe and Surface Lift
- Proposed Pedestrian Underpass
- Proposed Snowplay Facilities
- Proposed Snowplay Parking
- Proposed Snowplay Area
- Proposed Snowmaking Control Building
- Proposed Pumphouse
- Proposed Snowmaking Water Impoundment
- Proposed Snowmaking Catchment Pond
- Proposed Valve House



OTHER ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

NEPA requires that the Forest Service develop, describe, and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Action. In developing alternatives, they need to respond to significant issues identified during scoping. The FEIS analyzed a range of alternatives which I considered in arriving at my decision, including the option of not allowing the Snowbowl to implement any new projects. The following is a description of the alternatives, in addition to the Proposed Action, that were fully analyzed within the FEIS analysis. Additionally, Table 2-5 of the FEIS provides a summary comparison of environmental consequences of the projects for Alternatives 1 through 3. Chapter 2 of the FEIS Volume 1 (pages 2-32 through 2-39) includes information on alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO ACTION

As required by NEPA, a No Action Alternative was included in this analysis for review alongside the action alternatives.¹¹ The No Action Alternative reflects a continuation of existing management practices without changes, additions, or upgrades. Selection of Alternative 1 would result in creation of a new MDP which would provide for operation and maintenance of existing facilities. No new facilities, trail improvements, or snowmaking would be constructed under the No Action Alternative and the Snowbowl would continue to operate at its existing CCC of 1,880 skiers-at-one-time. Peak day visitation would continue to reach in excess of 3,400 skiers-at-one-time.¹² The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparing the effects of the Proposed Action and Alternative 3. All costs associated with the operation and maintenance of all existing infrastructure would be fully the responsibility of the Arizona Snowbowl.

The No Action Alternative is illustrated on Figure 2-1 in the FEIS.

Snowplay

Dispersed snowplay (sledding, tubing, building snowmen, etc.) is not permitted within the Snowbowl SUP area or at any point along the Snowbowl road. Parking along the Snowbowl road was recently prohibited in order to manage the level of dispersed snowplay activities and their attendant issues. Under the No Action Alternative, snowplay would continue to be prohibited within the Snowbowl SUP and along the Snowbowl road.

Lifts/Uphill Capacity

Under the No Action Alternative, the Snowbowl would continue to operate five lifts: Agassiz (triple); Sunset (triple); Hart Prairie (double); Aspen (double); and Spruce (portable surface). Over time, as the lifts age, their periodic replacement would become necessary and would occur.

Terrain

Under the No Action Alternative, Snowbowl's terrain would remain in its current configuration with 32 formal (named) trails comprising approximately 139 acres.

¹¹ 40 CFR 1502.14(d)

¹² Refer to the Recreation section presented in Chapter 3 for additional details regarding daily and annual visitation.

Guest Service Facilities

Existing on-mountain visitor services are provided in two buildings: the Hart Prairie Lodge (at the base of the Hart Prairie and Sunset chairlifts) and the Agassiz Lodge at the base of the Agassiz Chairlift. In total, these two buildings comprise approximately 23,500 square feet of guest service and administrative space. There are presently a total of 614 indoor, cafeteria style seats and 648 outdoor seats available between the two buildings. Under the No Action Alternative, neither building would change, with the exception of minor modifications and routine maintenance.

Summer Activities

Under Alternative 1, no change would occur to the Scenic Sky Ride program that operates daily (weather permitting) on the Agassiz Chairlift. As is currently the case, hiking from the top of the lift back to the base area is not allowed, guests would therefore continue to be required to return back to the base area via the lift.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Sewer and Wastewater

Snowbowl's existing septic system is adequate to meet the current demands of the ski area. Snowbowl currently relies on vehicular delivery for 100 percent of its potable and non-potable water demands. It is estimated that over 60 percent of the potable water transported to the ski area is ultimately consumed by toilet services. Under the No Action Alternative, this practice would continue.

Roads

Under the No Action Alternative, Snowbowl would not construct any new on-mountain maintenance roads.

Parking

Approximately 10.3 acres of parking are currently provided in the parking lots adjacent to the Hart Prairie Lodge, and the upper lots below the Agassiz Lodge. The combined capacity of the lots is approximately 1,200 vehicles. No additional parking areas would be constructed under Alternative 1.

Pedestrian Access

Under the No Action Alternative, pedestrian movement across the main access road (between the Hart Prairie lodge/parking areas and the Sunset Chairlift) would not change.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – NO SNOWMAKING OR SNOWPLAY

As with the Proposed Action, Alternative 3 would result in the creation of a MDP that includes all projects outlined in the Proposed Action description, with the exception of snowmaking (including the transmission line from Flagstaff, pipelines, the impoundment, and buried water tanks). Because construction and use of the proposed snowplay facility is dependant on

snowmaking, this facility and associated parking would not be constructed under Alternative 3; neither would the halfpipe facility. Finally, Alternative 3 does not include realignment of the Aspen Chairlift or associated vegetation clearing in the northwestern portion of Hart Prairie, as does the Proposed Action.

Under Alternative 3 the Snowbowl's CCC would increase to the previously approved¹³ level of 2,825 skiers-at-one-time. Peak day visitation would continue to reach in excess of 3,400 skiers-at-one-time. Developed skiing terrain would increase to approximately 202.6 acres. Peak day visitation would be expected to continue to exceed 3,400 skiers-at-one-time.

All costs associated with the planning, development, construction, operation and maintenance of all proposed infrastructure would be fully the responsibility of the Arizona Snowbowl.

Alternative 3 is illustrated in Figures 2-7 through 2-9 in the FEIS.

By excluding all snowmaking infrastructure and the associated use of reclaimed water on the San Francisco Peaks, tribal and public concerns over effects to traditional cultural values as well as effects to water quality within the watershed would be addressed. Alternative 3 also responds to Heritage Issue #2 (scarring of the San Francisco Peaks) with reduced ground and vegetation disturbance. When compared to the Proposed Action, Alternative 3 reduces permanent and temporary ground disturbance (refer to FEIS Table 2-4). However, with the absence of snowmaking in Alternative 3, additional grading is proposed on new and existing terrain to minimize the depth of natural snow required for skiing within the existing runs (refer to FEIS Figure 2-8).

As detailed within the Social and Economic Resources, and Recreation sections of Chapter 3, operations under Alternative 3 would continue to be heavily dependant upon natural snowfall. Correspondingly, skier visitation levels, and therefore revenues, are not anticipated to stabilize. As such, it is probable that the owners of the Snowbowl would be unable or unwilling to continue to infuse the recurring capital necessary to maintain the quality and service level currently offered, or to implement all of the projects included in Alternative 3. Likely, a portion of the Alternative 3 improvements - those requiring smaller investments - would be developed. Depending on which facilities are ultimately implemented, the actual effects to the human, physical, and biological environment would realistically be a blending of those effects described under the No Action Alternative and those detailed under Alternative 3.

For the purposes of comparison, the FEIS analyzed the anticipated effects of Alternative 3 assuming that *all* of the Alternative 3 improvements would be implemented.

REQUIRED MITIGATION AND MONITORING

Several operations and management requirements were developed and will be required for implementation of the Selected Alternative. The requirements listed in the FEIS, Table 2-2 were

¹³ Approved in the 1979 Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area Proposal Final Environmental Statement and subsequently incorporated by reference the CNF Forest Plan.

developed in response to specific ecological and cultural resource issues, and are hereby incorporated as part of the Selected Alternative. The listed mitigation measures, Best Management Practices (BMPs), and management requirements are designed to lessen potential effects on specific resources of concern. Responsible parties may include the Arizona Snowbowl, Forest Service resources specialists, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Each mitigation measure or BMP in FEIS Table 2-2 includes a rating of anticipated effectiveness and feasibility as well as an indicated objective. Responsibility for ensuring that these mitigation measures are implemented rests with the Snowbowl management and the Forest Service. In all cases, the ultimate enforcement mechanism for implementation of the specified mitigation measures is the ROD, extending to the Forest Service Special Use Permit Administrator, the Peaks District Ranger, and the Coconino National Forest Supervisor.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

Another part of this decision is to amend the Coconino Forest Plan with a non-significant amendment¹⁴ clarifying the direction in Management Area 15 – Developed Recreation Sites. Currently on page 188 there is a reference to the 1979 FEIS as guidance for the management of the Snowbowl Ski area. This management direction needs to reference the Ski Area (Master Development Plan) MDP based on approved NEPA decisions. The original management emphasis did not allow for the changed circumstances that may initiate a new environmental analysis of the ski area operations. The Forest Plan replacement pages are attached to this ROD.

DECISION RATIONALE

When I arrived on the Coconino National Forest in May, 2003, I soon realized that the decision on the Snowbowl proposal would be difficult. I focused on learning about the proposal by reviewing relevant documents and discussing the proposal with others who were more familiar with the details of the proposal as well as the long-term history of the relationship between the Arizona Snowbowl and the tribes. The project, which had been proceeding formally since September, 2002, moved into an important phase with the release of the DEIS in February, 2004. The release of the DEIS provided me, along with the public and the tribes, the best opportunity to see the whole picture: the Proposed Action, the issues identified during scoping, the resulting alternatives, and the affects of those alternatives. The information released in the DEIS provided a basis from which others could then engage with the Forest and provide comments through letters and at various meetings. I made it a priority to meet and consult with interested tribal leaders and representatives. I have discussed the project with city, county, state and national elected officials, and staff. I have engaged in discussions with ID Team members and with Forest Service personnel from the Forest, Regional, and National offices. I reviewed the comments we received on the DEIS and our responses to those comments. I reviewed the information in the FEIS and the items in the MOA in appendix D of the FEIS.

This decision was certainly made more difficult by the seemingly incompatible positions people expressed. As I better understand the interests and values behind these positions, I find there are

¹⁴ 36 CFR 219.10(f)

more shared values and interests than differences. However, the differences that do exist represent significant cultural differences regarding what is appropriate use and management of the Peaks. I have spoken with people who support the improvements at the ski area that are also concerned about respecting the tribes' cultures. This perspective indicates to me that some people do understand the cultural differences and dilemmas they present when considering management alternatives for the Peaks. As we move forward with implementing this decision, I hope these areas of shared values and respect for others' cultures can contribute to future conversations about the use and management of the San Francisco Peaks.

My decision was shaped by my conclusion that the ski area has and continues to provide a valuable recreational experience to many people, and that in order to continue providing that experience in today's physical and business environment, changes are needed. The FEIS discloses the qualitative and quantitative physical, biological, cultural, social, and economic effects anticipated to result with the implementation of the approved projects. I have considered the effects of the Selected Alternative and find they have been addressed through the design of the alternative, the implementation of mitigation measures, and the completion of the MOA. I concluded that the overall benefits of providing stable winter recreational opportunities for the public and the community that the Selected Alternative provides merit its selection.

Although I considered all the resource issues and concerns described in the FEIS, there were three particular areas that I focused on in reaching my decision: the Purpose and Need for the improvements, the potential effects on cultural resources; and the affects and risks associated with using reclaimed water for snowmaking.

RESPONSIVENESS TO PURPOSE AND NEED

The San Francisco Peaks are part of the Coconino National Forest which is managed by the USDA Forest Service. Management of National Forest System lands is guided by laws, regulations, and policies that have been created and influenced by Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Supreme Court over the last 100 years. More specifically, the Coconino National Forest is managed in accordance with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) which was approved in 1987. The Forest Plan includes the allocation of 777 acres of the San Francisco Peaks as a Developed Recreation Site under Special Use Permit.

The ski area has been in existence since 1938 and since that time has seen many changes and improvements fueled by increased interest in skiing and technological improvements in equipment. As noted previously, in 1979, the Forest Service completed a significant environmental analysis and released a decision that authorized the continued existence of the ski area and allowed for additional development. This decision resulted in appeals and lawsuits that ultimately upheld the decision to continue operating the ski area and allow for completion of its development within the limits of the SUP area. The Arizona Snowbowl is authorized to operate the ski area under a 40-year term permit issued in 1992.

Downhill skiing is an important component of the recreation opportunities offered by National Forests, and the Forest Service and the ski industry have forged a partnership to provide recreational opportunities on NFS lands. The National Recreation Strategy, a result of the 1987

President's Commission for America's Outdoors, gives the Forest Service a major role in providing recreational opportunities on NFS lands through partnerships such as those with the ski industry.

I have considered the laws that define the appropriateness of this use on NFS lands, and the Coconino National Forest Plan management direction for the ski area. I also considered the history associated with previous decisions that were ultimately tested in court. I have considered the commitment to continued ski area operations as evidenced by the issuance of the 40-year term permit in 1992. These considerations indicate to me that the ski area is an appropriate use of the Coconino National Forest.

However, inconsistent annual snowfall has historically led to a sporadic operating season and therefore broad fluctuations in annual visitation. The Snowbowl's ability to maintain or improve its current level of service and endure the business conditions caused by unreliable snowfall is questionable. I have concluded that the installation and operation of snowmaking infrastructure as provided for in the Selected Alternative will enable a reliable and consistent operating season, thereby helping to stabilize the Snowbowl's viability.

Public demand for skiing at the Snowbowl has grown significantly in the past 20 years, increasing from 63,000 annual visits during the 1981/82 season to 162,175 during the 2000/01 season. However, relatively few infrastructure improvements have been made within the ski area over the past two decades, which has led to a degradation of the recreational experience. The Selected Alternative will increase the capacities of the day lodges, chairlifts, and other ski area infrastructure, bringing it into proper balance with current use levels, while remaining within the ski area's approved comfortable carrying capacity of 2,825 skiers. In addition, the demand for a variety of snowplay opportunities is increasing. The development of a professionally designed and managed snowplay/tubing facility as described in the Selected Alternative will address some of this need.

Although the Forest Service has no obligation to ensure the Snowbowl's financial viability, the Forest recognizes and values the social and recreational functions that the Snowbowl serves in Flagstaff and other communities. Enhancing its economic viability will help to sustain these functions. The Forest supports the winter recreational role that the ski area has provided over the decades.

The Arizona Snowbowl represents an opportunity for the general public to access and enjoy our public lands. The Snowbowl provides a valuable service that the Coconino National Forest could not otherwise offer. The social, cultural, recreational, and economic roles that the Snowbowl contributes to the Flagstaff and Coconino County community are unique.

The Social and Economic Resources analysis provided in the FEIS indicates that, although the Snowbowl is a positive contributor to area tourism and thus to the Flagstaff economy, it is unrealistic to think that the Snowbowl is a significant driver of tourism or the economy. However, the Snowbowl is unique in that it offers a winter attraction in a region that is typically oriented toward summer tourism. Directly and indirectly, many of the businesses in Flagstaff are

affected by the operation of the ski area and I have no doubt that the Selected Alternative will bring with it economic benefits to the community.

While Alternative 1 will allow for the continued level of operation, significant uncertainty exists as to whether Snowbowl would be a viable business in the future. Alternative 1 does not address snowplay/tubing needs. Alternative 1 would have the least impacts to the tribes, although the continued existence and operation of the ski area may still have an adverse affect on the cultural and traditional values of the San Francisco Peaks Traditional Cultural Property. These potential affects were considered in the MOA.

As detailed within the Social and Economic Resources, and Recreation sections of Chapter 3, operations under Alternative 3 would continue to be heavily dependant upon natural snowfall. Correspondingly, skier visitation levels, and therefore revenues, are not anticipated to stabilize. As such, it is probable that a prudent investor or business person would be unwilling to continue to infuse the recurring capital necessary to maintain the quality and service level currently offered, or to implement all or a portion of the projects included in Alternative 3.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Forest has been consulting with approximately 13 tribal groups, representing the Acoma, Apache, Havasupai, Hopi, Hualapai, Navajo, Southern Paiute, Yavapai, and Zuni about the cultural significance of the San Francisco Peaks since the 1970s. During this time, Forest personnel came to know many individuals from these tribes and learned how important the San Francisco Peaks are to the religious beliefs and underlying traditional cultural practices of these tribes. Consultation with the tribes about projects proposed on the Peaks, as well as elsewhere on the Forest, became an annual practice for the Forest, well before more formalized consultations became legal requirement for federal agencies. The reader is referred to the FEIS Volume 1, Chapter 1 and Section 3A for more information.

Consequently, when the Arizona Snowbowl proposal was discussed with the Forest, we had a sense of the comments we would receive from the tribes. However, various laws, regulations, and Executive Orders that were passed over the intervening years between the initial Snowbowl decision and this latest proposal required specific public and tribal consultations for this proposal.

Now that we have completed these formal consultations, our understanding of the tribes' perspectives has been reinforced. The tribes have been emphatically consistent over the years with their responses to Forest Service proposals for projects on the Peaks. Projects that provide for conservation of the mountain and its natural resources, protection of shrines and special places, and that provide for the health, safety, and security of people are generally more tolerable; however, the tribes sometimes propose modifications to the project as originally planned. However, projects that disturb the earth or otherwise disrupt the mountain, or that only result in economic profits to a few, are consistently not supported by the tribes.

At the beginning of this project we thought the tribes would oppose any improvements at the Snowbowl due to cultural concerns. In response to the proposed action and DEIS the Forest

received letters and resolutions from the tribes adamantly opposing the proposed action. As noted throughout the DEIS and FEIS, these concerns have been identified as major issues and acknowledged as causing religious and cultural repercussions for which there may be no mitigating actions. Given the previous deliberations during the lawsuit on the 1979 Snowbowl decision and the Forest Plan (1987, as amended) where the decision was made to allow the continued operation of a ski resort on the Peaks, few options remain for the tribes that can satisfactorily mitigate the effects of the Snowbowl on traditional cultural values. This was validated during the consultations for the Memorandum of Agreement in Appendix D of the FEIS, in which no substantial mitigating actions beyond what we already do with the tribes, or revisions to the alternatives under consideration, were provided by any parties, even though the MOA was sent out for tribal review and comment three times between April 26 and December 13, 2004. However, the stipulations of the MOA do provide some assistance, securities, and safeguards that will be of service to traditional religious practitioners as they continue their time-honored ceremonies and uses of the San Francisco Peaks.

Through our consultations with the tribes, and because of changes in legislation and policy since the original 1979 Snowbowl decision, the San Francisco Peaks were identified as a Traditional Cultural Property as defined in National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 38. They were determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the San Francisco Mountain/Mount Elden Mineral Withdrawal in August 2000. With the approval and cooperation of the tribes, the Forest Service is completing a National Register nomination for the Peaks as a Traditional Cultural Property. The area to be nominated encompasses the mineral withdrawal area and involves 74,380 acres of NFS lands that includes the 777 acres under Special Use Permit to Arizona Snowbowl. Although several tribes have completed their review and input into the draft nomination, the Forest is waiting for other tribes to review and comment on the draft nomination before finalizing and submitting it to the National Register of Historic Places.

As a result of the determination of eligibility, the Forest Service is required to manage the San Francisco Peaks Traditional Cultural Property as if it were already on the National Register and consult with Tribes and interested parties regarding the impacts of the proposed actions upon the values that make the Peaks significant and eligible for nomination to the National Register. The Heritage and Cultural Resources analysis in the DEIS and FEIS acknowledge that the cultural impacts will be difficult, if not impossible, to fully mitigate and that all of the alternatives would potentially result in adverse effects to the traditional cultural values of the Peaks. The National Historic Preservation Act requires preparation of a MOA in consultation with the tribes, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation when adverse effects are identified. The development of the MOA provided the Forest Service and tribes with an avenue for the joint development of mitigation opportunities. The MOA represents a required and concerted effort to acknowledge and reduce impacts to the extent possible and practical.

The MOA has been completed and signed by the Regional Forester for the Forest Service, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In addition, the Arizona Snowbowl, and the Hualapai Tribe, the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation,

the Yavapai-Apache Nation, and the Yavapai-Prescott Tribe have signed as concurring parties. Some tribes and chapters are still considering the MOA, while others declined to sign or did not respond. The Forest Service has complied with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act in consulting with the tribes to complete the MOA. However, this does not mean that consultations are finished. Since consultation is an ongoing process and opportunity, discussions with tribes will continue whether or not they signed the MOA, as part of the Forest's annual consultation responsibilities. The signed MOA is contained in Appendix D of the FEIS.

One of the items in the Proposed Action was the proposal to develop a Native American cultural and education center within the Agassiz Lodge. This proposal was also included in the MOA as an opportunity for mitigation of effects. Some commenters objected to this proposal. Although I am approving the development of a 2,500 square foot Native American cultural and education center in this decision, the facility would only be pursued with tribal collaboration and participation. If the tribes do not confirm an interest in this facility it will not be developed.

As I consider the areas where management of the San Francisco Peaks is more closely aligned with tribal values and perspectives, I realize that although the Forest may not manage the entire area of the Peaks as wilderness, there are examples of how our perspectives about management are more closely aligned. Two examples are particularly important for maintaining the significant values of the Peaks. Management of the Kachina Peaks Wilderness, which was designated by the US Congress in 1984, closely aligns with the tribal values of maintaining a natural environment with minimal impacts by humans. In a remarkable display of common agreement, the Forest, tribes, environmentalists, and other community members all shared the goal of closing the White Vulcan Mine and withdrawing the Peaks from further mineral entry in order to protect the values of the mountain.

The Forest has worked with the tribes on previous projects to avoid or minimize impacts and some Forest management actions have resulted in reduced impacts on tribal activities. For example, we have worked with tribes on trails management to avoid special places by obliterating, moving, or rehabilitating trails. New proposed constructions (e.g. a cell tower) have been moved to previously disturbed locations. Trees cleared from runs were provided for kiva and house constructions and for stabilization of older tribal homes. As a result of closing the Snowbowl road to parking in the winter, there are fewer impacts to traditional practitioners using areas along the road. So, we do have a history of consulting with the tribes and finding ways to accommodate each others interests and values.

Still, there are places on the mountain where uses and activities may occur that are not in alignment with the tribes' cultural values. In these instances, it is incumbent upon the tribes and the Forest Service to work together to try to minimize and mitigate any impacts to the traditional cultural values of the Peaks.

In the FEIS, specific areas or issues are discussed that the Forest can try to address through the MOA and ongoing consultation. A concern was expressed about the affect of reclaimed water on the physical and spiritual properties of plants that are gathered for medicinal and ceremonial purposes. Current studies indicate the proposed use of reclaimed water for snowmaking

represents a low risk of adverse environmental impact to plants, wildlife, and humans. In addition, the tribes have not identified any locations where plants or other natural resource material are gathered within the Snowbowl SUP area. The FEIS acknowledges the tribal perspective that the use of reclaimed water for snowmaking may contaminate the natural resources needed to perform the required ceremonies that have been, and continue to be, the basis for the cultural identity for many tribes.

Most tribes acknowledge they have shrines on the Peaks, or specific places where ceremonies are conducted, although none have been identified directly within the Snowbowl SUP area. The Forest Service and the Snowbowl have facilitated tribal access to the Peaks for purposes of collecting plants, visitation to shrines, and other religious activities for years, and this assistance will continue in the future.

In conclusion, each alternative carries with it certain impacts to cultural resources and Native religious practices and beliefs, although to varying degrees. These potential effects are defined throughout the Heritage and Cultural Resources Environmental Consequences in Section 3A of the DEIS and FEIS.

Some tribes requested that Alternative 1, the no action alternative, be selected. Alternative 1 does not address the purpose and need for this project. Alternative 1 may still have adverse affects to the cultural resources, even with the implementation of the MOA. In addition, since Alternative 1 does not resolve the significant needs associated with the long term operation of the ski area, other proposals could be expected in the future. Alternative 3 was designed to address the most significant issue of using reclaimed water for snowmaking. Alternative 3 addresses some needs of the ski area; however, it does not address the critical need of providing for a consistent operating season. Most commenters either supported Alternative 1 – no action, or Alternative 2 – the selected alternative; there was little support for Alternative 3.

It is clear to me that the significant cultural differences regarding appropriate stewardship of the Peaks causes conflicts regarding management of the Peaks. Certainly, projects involving the ski area cause the most consternation. However, as described through out this ROD, operation of the ski area is consistent with laws concerning the use of National Forest System lands and specifically the Forest Plan. Through this analysis the Forest has developed the required MOA to try to address impacts to traditional cultural resources. Ultimately, the most significant changes in how the Peaks are managed may come from changes to the Forest Plan or through changes to laws that affect management of National Forest System lands, both of which would require the involvement of all interested parties and communities, and both of which are beyond the scope of this proposal.

In the meantime, the Forest will continue to consult with the tribes regarding potential impacts to cultural resources and attempt to find ways to mitigate the impacts. Although consultation does not always result in agreement, it is still the best way the tribes can influence decisions regarding management of National Forest System lands.

WATER RESOURCES

A major theme expressed throughout the scoping and DEIS comment period surrounded the proposed use of reclaimed water for snowmaking. The State of Arizona allows Class A and A+ reclaimed water for direct reuse in snowmaking. The ADEQ has developed strict and specific treatment requirements for reuse applications having higher degrees of public contact, such as skiing, that include secondary treatment, filtration, and disinfection. In meeting these requirements, the reclaimed water is considered acceptable for unrestricted recreational use. As stated in the FEIS, the reclaimed water produced at the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant, which will be used for snowmaking, meets all pertinent state and federal water quality standards for this use.

Many people who commented on the use of reclaimed water expressed concern regarding the presence and effects of chemicals generally referred to as pharmaceutical and personal care products (PPCPs). I have reviewed the FEIS, and based on the best scientific information available, find that the use of reclaimed water poses minimal risks to human health or the environment. The reader is referred to Volume 2 of the FEIS for responses to comments regarding the presence and effects of PPCPs, specifically sections 5.0 and 6.0.

The potential effects and risks associated with using reclaimed water are closely related to the fate of the reclaimed water in the environment. Snowmelt derived from machine-produced snow that is not sublimated will rapidly infiltrate into the permeable ground surface. There is little, if any, sustained runoff or surface water in the Snowbowl area. Due to the hydrogeologic characteristics of the site, the effects on vegetation would largely be limited to the ski trails that are already dominated by introduced grasses and forbs, and the areas immediately adjacent to them. Snowmaking would be authorized on approximately 205 acres within the 777 acre special use permit area.

The infiltrating snowmelt in the area will consist of a blend of natural and machine-produced snow, which will dilute solutes from the reclaimed water. Subsequent percolation through surface soils and underlying sediments will remove PPCPs, as shown by studies of soil aquifer treatment. Snowmelt seepage will combine with other groundwater in storage and infiltrate to underlying perched or regional aquifers. Using reclaimed water in snowmaking will not render the underlying groundwater non-potable. As indicated in the Watershed analysis (Section 3H) of the FEIS Volume 1, testing conducted by the City of Flagstaff indicates the reclaimed water meets all water quality standards designed for state surface water uses under the Clean Water Act and for groundwater under the Aquifer Protection Permit Program.

Some expressed concerns that the use of reclaimed water for snowmaking would reduce winter discharges of reclaimed water from the Rio de Flag Water Reclamation Plant (WRP), which in turn would decrease recharge to the regional C-aquifer and reduce groundwater availability to nearby Flagstaff wells. The City of Flagstaff is responsible for determining the most suitable and beneficial use of reclaimed water. The City has the legal right to put the reclaimed water to any reasonable use they determine appropriate. Although recharge from the Rio de Flag WRP outfall extends well beyond the scope of the FEIS, we have attempted to respond to substantive

comments on overall water resource impacts in the Response to Comments as well as in the DEIS and FEIS.

Some have suggested that the decision should be delayed or that Alternative 1, which does not include the use of reclaimed water, should be selected because the commenters felt more information is needed about the affects and risks of using reclaimed water. I find that the scientific information in the FEIS provides me a solid foundation for understanding these issues and making this decision and a delay is not necessary.

Alternatives 1 and 3 do not include snowmaking and the use of reclaimed water; so there are no affects to cultural and other resources from the use of reclaimed water. However, Alternative 1 does not meet the purpose and need identified for this project. Alternative 3 addresses some needs; however, it does not address the critical need of providing for a consistent operating season.

I have concluded that the Selected Alternative, which uses reclaimed water for snowmaking, represents a low risk of adverse environmental impacts to vegetation, wildlife, and humans. As stated in the FEIS, the reclaimed water produced at the Rio de Flag WRP, which will be used for snowmaking, meets all pertinent state and federal water quality standards for this use. The use of reclaimed water for snowmaking instead of potable water demonstrates the community's commitment to the prudent use of our valuable water resources, both potable and reclaimed.

CONCLUSION

I have learned through this environmental analysis that the San Francisco Peaks are not only a feature that dominates the landscape in Northern Arizona, they are also a feature that is deeply entwined in the hearts and minds of the people across this landscape. The San Francisco Peaks have been here for a long time and will undoubtedly remain. People have come and gone, yet cultures remain. Today, the people who occupy the landscape share many values and beliefs about the use and management of the Peaks. However, there are still some significant concerns because of the differing cultural perspectives about stewardship of the mountain. Even though the Selected Alternative garners the most attention, in reality all three alternatives considered, including the No Action Alternative that would allow the ski area to continue in its current state, have potential adverse effects to traditional cultural values. The different cultural perspectives about the appropriate use and management of the Peaks extend beyond this proposal. If these concerns are to be successfully addressed it will be necessary for all interested parties from all communities to work together so that everyone's perspectives and needs are considered. I would welcome the opportunity to work together with people from all of the communities that care so deeply about the future of the San Francisco Peaks.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision to approve the projects identified in the Selected Alternative for enhancing recreational opportunities at Arizona Snowbowl is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's

long term goals and objectives.¹⁵ The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan Forest-wide management direction and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidance for Developed Recreation Sites.

As Forest Supervisor for the Coconino National Forest, I am required to manage the Forest in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This authority, which includes approval of SUPs for ski areas, is delegated to me through agency policy described in Forest Service Manual 1200. In reviewing the FEIS, I have concluded that my decision is consistent with the following key laws, regulations, and requirements:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969
 - CEQ Regulations 40 CFR 1500-1508 were reviewed and the FEIS and this ROD comply with the requirements.
- National Forest Management Act of 1976
 - Review of the Forest Plan indicated that this project was in compliance with its management direction except for one item under Management Emphasis within Management 15 – Developed Recreation Sites. This decision also creates a non-significant Forest Plan Amendment (#21). This Amendment recognizes the on-going need to update the Ski Area Master Development Plan based on NEPA occurring subsequent to the 1979 Environmental Statement for the Snowbowl Ski Area. The Forest Plan replacement pages are attached to this ROD.
- National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986
 - This ROD documents the decision based on the environmental analysis of the Snowbowl Ski Area shown in the DEIS and FEIS to update their Master Development Plan. This action complies with the intent of the act to have ski area permits updated to accommodate changes in plans or operations of the ski area, while complying with other laws such as NEPA or NFMA.
- Clean Water Act as amended in 1977
 - This Act is the basis for the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the Forest Service for the control of non-point source pollution and maintenance of clean water. The agreement directs the Forest Service to control non-point source pollution through the development and implementation of preventive or mitigating practices, referred to as Best Management Practices (BMPs). The FEIS reflects that we have identified and will implement appropriate BMPs intended to meet State water quality standards for non-point source pollution.
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended
 - Section 106 consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has been completed. The FEIS and the project record reflects a summary of the consultation while

¹⁵ USDA Forest Service, 1987 (as amended). pages 21-26.

a separate record (protected under exemption 3 of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), specifically using section 9 of Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) as the enabling legislation for protection of sensitive archaeological information) reflects the complete record for consultation.

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
 - This Act provides for the maintenance of “access to sites ... freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” This decision allows for continued access and does not abridge any rights to continue “worship.”
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, Section 7 Consultation
 - Findings under ESA were “not likely to adversely affect” the threatened and endangered species listed for the analysis of effects from the project. USFWS concurred with these findings through the informal consultation process.
- Executive Order 13007 - Indian Sacred Sites
 - This EO indicates that federal land management agencies “shall, to the extent practicable, permitted by law, and not clearly inconsistent with essential agency functions, (1) accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and (2) avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites.” This EO is based on a “government to government” relationship between agencies and Tribal government. There have been on-going government to government consultations on this project under section 106 of NHPA. The resulting MOA documents mitigation agreed to between the Forest Service and the tribal governments. Access to sacred sites and their physical integrity has been maintained with this project.
- Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
 - Chapter 3 Section N – Environmental Justice presented information and referred to other locations in the FEIS for additional information that allows me to conclude that this project will likely have a disproportionately adverse effect on affected Native Americans. This EO requires the identification of affected minority and low-income populations and the disclosure of the potential environmental effects.

The Forest Service decision would apply only to NFS lands as analyzed within this FEIS. However, potential effects resulting from implementation of any of the action alternatives on lands and activities administered by other federal, state, and local jurisdictions are also disclosed within this FEIS.

Decisions by other jurisdictions to issue or not issue approvals related to this proposal may be aided by the analyses presented in this FEIS. While the Forest Service assumes no responsibility for enforcing laws, regulations, or ordinances under the jurisdiction of other governmental agencies, Forest Service regulations require permit holders to abide by applicable laws and conditions imposed by other jurisdictions. In addition to requisite Forest Service approvals, the following permits or approvals may be required to implement the Proposed Action:

- National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Storm Water Management Plan
- Approval from the State of Arizona Office of Water Engineering for construction of the water impoundment

I am not anticipating further site-specific NEPA to implement the approved projects. It is Forest Service policy that the review of environmental documentation for actions that are awaiting implementation and those of ongoing programs or projects occurs at least every three to five years to determine if the environmental analysis and documentation should be corrected, supplemented, or revised (FSH 1909.15, 18.03). If new information or changed circumstances relating to the environmental impacts of a Selected Alternative come to the attention of the responsible official after a decision has been made and prior to completion of the approved program or project, the responsible official must review the information carefully to determine its importance. If, after an interdisciplinary review and consideration of new information within the context of the overall program or project, the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to an environmental document is not necessary, implementation should continue. We would document the results of the interdisciplinary review in the appropriate program or project file.

If the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to an environmental document is necessary, we would follow the relevant direction in sections 18.2 - 18.4. (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 18) and complete a Correction, Supplement or Revision to the original environmental disclosure document and if necessary a reconsideration of decisions. (FSH 1909.15, 18.1)

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

40 CFR 1505.2(b) requires that, in cases where an EIS has been prepared, the ROD must identify all alternatives that were considered, "... specifying the alternative or alternatives which are considered environmentally preferable." FSH 1909.15, Section 05 defines "environmentally preferable" as:

"An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA... Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources."

Based on the review of the alternatives, I have identified that Alternative 1 – the No Action Alternative to be the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative 1 is the environmentally preferable alternative because it would not have approved any of the physical, cultural or biological impacts that are anticipated under the implementation of Alternative 2 or 3.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five business days after the close of the appeal filing period. When

appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL PROVISIONS

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer at:

USDA Forest Service
Region 3
Appeal Deciding Officer
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 842-3173 fax
appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to the email address listed above. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. All appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the Arizona Daily Sun, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45 day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the Arizona Daily Sun is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 36 CFR 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements specified at 36 CFR 215.14.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this Record of Decision, the Final Environmental Impact Statement, or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

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February 18, 2005

NORA B. RASURE
Forest Supervisor
Coconino National Forest

Date

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST PLAN
DIGEST
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #21
February 2005

Forest Plan amendments are numbered consecutively. Check the last transmittal to see if this amendment is in sequence. If it is not please contact the Supervisor's Office, Land management Planning to obtain the missing amendment.

Page Number	Superseded (Number of Sheets)	New
187-4 through 188	1	1

Digest:

Page 188 Corrects a reference in the Forest Plan to reflect the most current NEPA analysis for the Snowbowl Ski Area.



NORA B. RASURE
Forest Supervisor

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Developed Recreation Sites - Management Area 15

Analysis Areas 22, 23, 24, 58

Acres: 1,532

Developed recreation sites not included in the Oak Creek or Mogollon Rim Management Areas are included in this Management Area. Developed recreation facilities under special-use authorization include the Snow Bowl ski area, summer home areas near Mormon Lake and in 44 Canyon, organization camps, and resorts.

People have been and will continue to be attracted to these areas because:

- ◆ There is a scarcity of water in the Southwest and people are attracted to water environments. Most of the developed sites are near water.
- ◆ The areas provide climatic relief and a high degree of scenic quality.
- ◆ Campgrounds attract people and roads provide access.

These areas are not conducive to either intensive timber or forage production. Vegetative types include the broadest cross section of Forest vegetation. Climate is highly variable.

Management Emphasis

Emphasize developed recreation.

Highlights include:

- ◆ Manage for VQO's of Retention or Partial Retention with the exception of the Snow Bowl.
- ◆ Construct, reconstruct, or expand sites according to approved site plans and as funding permits.
- ◆ Facility development at the Snow Bowl ski area is guided by the **Ski Area Master Development Plan based on approved NEPA analysis.**

Timber Land Use Classes:

Nonforest	1,532 acres
Forested land withdrawn	
Ponderosa Pine/Mixed Conifer	0 acres
Pinyon-juniper	0 acres
Unsuitable (Pinyon-juniper)	0 acres
Unsuitable (physically unsuited or not capable)	0 acres
Forested lands not appropriate for timber harvest	0 acres
Suitable Timber lands	0 acres
<hr/>	
TOTAL	1,532 acres