Proposed Action Description
for
Heavenly Mountain Resort's 2010 Capital Projects

USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Douglas County, NV and El Dorado County, CA

Proposed 2010 Capital Projects are consistent with the improvements in Heavenly's accepted Master Plan Amendment (MPA); some of the plans have been modified to account for site specific conditions. Construction of all proposed projects would be conducted in accordance with applicable portions of the revised Construction Erosion Reduction Program (CERP), as outlined in the MPA and 2007 Environmental Impact Statement. The following project summary describes the proposal in detail, and corresponds with the attached maps.

I. Existing Conditions

Top of the Gondola Area

Gondola Lodge

Heavenly's MPA identifies the top of the Gondola as Heavenly's predominant destination access point—roughly 40% of skiers and riders, and all of summer guests, access the mountain from the Gondola. The top of the Gondola is a focal point for summer and winter activities (for example, the snowtubing lift and Heavenly Flyer), hosting Adventure Peak and teaching terrain, restrooms, as well as the Tamarack Express and Big Easy lift.

Given the importance of this area for Heavenly's year-round operations, indoor guest service facilities at the top of the Gondola are currently limited to the Umbrella Bar, which provides limited indoor space (room for approximately 100 people). Therefore, during periods of cold temperatures and inclement weather, resort visitors do not have an opportunity to get inside to eat, relax, or escape the elements.

Given the guest services situation at the top of the Gondola, beginner level guests must download the Gondola for access to indoor facilities in Heavenly Village. More experienced guests can disperse across the mountain to locations with indoor guest service facilities. However, due to the limited number of on-mountain, indoor seats (approximately 1,060, compared to 5,131 total seats approved in the MPA) across Heavenly these facilities often experience crowding.

Magic Carpet Conveyor Lift

The magic carpet lift is located near the ski school and serves beginner skiers. If a new lodge is constructed in the same location as this existing current magic carpet conveyor lift it would need to be relocated.

Snow Beach

This facility is located at the base of Patsy's and Maggie's ski trails and serves visitors using Patsy's trail and those returning from upper portions of the California side of the resort with restrooms and food service. The existing facility is approximately 790 square feet and serves a limited function. Currently there are 80 outdoor seats and no indoor or covered seats.

California Trail

California Trail is an important component of the intermediate skiing and riding experience at Heavenly. This high-capacity, intermediate trail is easily accessible from the top of the Gondola area and is served by a single lift—the Tamarack Express.

Currently, the height of natural obstacles such as boulders and downed trees on California Trail require up to five feet of snow coverage before this terrain can be opened. Therefore, in the early season and during low-snow years, Heavenly focuses a great deal of energy and water resources on making snow on California Trail. There are also existing populations of Tahoe draba (*Draba asterophora v. asterophora*, a sensitive plant species) found on and along this ski trail.

Galaxy Pod

The Galaxy Pod consists of one fix-grip double chairlift (Galaxy) and two trails—Perimeter (U1) and Galaxy (U2)—on the Nevada side of the resort. The Galaxy Pod is located outside of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) regional boundary. The existing Galaxy lift has an uphill capacity of 1,200 persons-per-hour (pph), and the overall capacity of the Galaxy Pod has been calculated at 720 guests. Due to the limited amount of terrain and long lift ride (12.5 minutes), the Galaxy Pod is underutilized while similar pods such as Stagecoach and Dipper Express with high-speed lift technology experience crowding. Lift line wait times at all lifts vary based on day (e.g., mid-week, weekends, holiday periods) and snow/weather conditions. However, wait times can approach 25 minutes at the Dipper Express and 12 minutes on the Stagecoach Express during busy periods.

Currently there is no snowmaking in the Galaxy Pod; therefore opening these runs is often delayed as compared to other terrain across the Special Use Permit (SUP) area where snow can be made to provide adequate cover.

There are also numerous cultural resource sites located in this area.

II. Desired Conditions

The desired conditions for the area at the top of the gondola, snow beach, and galaxy pod were further refined at the project level and resulted in some changes from what was originally described in the MPA. The changes are described at the beginning of each respective section.

Top of the Gondola Area

Gondola Lodge

This was conceptually referred to as "Von Schmidt's Lodge" in the MPA, and was conceptually located slightly northeast of the currently proposed location. Since the MPA was accepted, Heavenly has completed a detailed site analysis of the entire Von Schmidt's area to identify the ideal location for the lodge in relation to the existing Magic Carpet, tubing lift, and summer maintenance road. The preferred lodge site was chosen based on its ability to:

- Be located at the center of all activities at the top of the Gondola area including the Tamarack lift, Big Easy lift, Tubing lift, Heavenly Flyer, Ski School and Adventure Peak;
- accommodate existing skier and other visitor circulation patterns;
- provide the ability to operate and maintain the facility (e.g., snow grooming in winter, food and beverage deliveries out of the public views);

- facilitate interaction with nearby ski school and tubing activities;
- provide an outdoor seating opportunity that would optimize sun exposure;
- make use of existing underground utilities; and
- minimize tree removal by locating the lodge in an existing disturbed area.

There is also a desire to locate an amphitheater near the lodge site, but it is not a part of this proposed action. The desired condition for the Lodge is to:

- Provide a guest services facility at the top of the Gondola situated to accommodate current visitor circulation patterns, and offering an adequate number of indoor and outdoor seats for existing and future use.

Magic Carpet Conveyor Lift

The desired condition for the Magic Carpet Conveyor Lift is to:

- Provide a lift that will continue to serve beginner skiers and the ski school that is in a convenient and easily accessible location given the proposed changes to the location of the gondola lodge affecting the current location of this lift.

Snow Beach

As indicated in the MPA, Heavenly's vision for Snow Beach includes changing the design of facilities to be outdoor-oriented and to incorporate a "California-based" theme (e.g., snowboarding and surfing). A seasonal, open-air shelter is included in the MPA for Snow Beach. The desired condition for Snow Beach is to:

- Provide sheltered seating in an area that currently provides only outdoor seating.

California Trail

The desired condition for California Trail is to:

- Reduce the amount of energy and water resources which are currently necessary in order to provide adequate manufactured snow coverage on California Trail while avoiding existing populations of Tahoe draba (Draba asterophora v. asterophora, a sensitive plant species).

Galaxy Pod

Trails U3, U4, 14 and 15 have been slightly re-aligned from the conceptual alignment contained in the MPA in order to avoid known cultural resources and provide better fall-line skiing and riding opportunities. Therefore the proposed trail lengths differ from what was shown in the MP. All four new trails are described in Chapter 3 of the MPA. The following lengths and areas are what were proposed in the MPA.

- Proposed Trail U3 in the MPA, Trail U3 was planned at 2,520 feet in length and 7.2 acres in area.
- Proposed Trail U4 in the MPA, Trail U4 was planned at 788 feet in length and 2.3 acres in area.

- Proposed Trail 14 in the MPA, Trail 14 was planned at 2,100 feet in length and 6.4 acres in area.

- Proposed Trail 15 in the MPA, Trail 15 was planned at 2,754 feet in length and 6.3 acres in area.

Design features included in the Revised Construction Erosion Reduction Program for new snowmaking infrastructure at Heavenly include constructing snowmaking pipelines above ground on new ski trails.[1] However this erosion protection measure was primarily included to be consistent with TRPA Best Management Practices (BMPs) although the entire Galaxy pod is located outside the TRPA regional boundary. Above ground snowmaking infrastructure presents maintenance and operational issues in addition to requiring adequate snow cover over snowmaking lines. Therefore, below ground snowmaking lines are proposed on trails U3, U4, 14 and 15.

The desired conditions for the Galaxy Pod are to:

- Provide a better balance of uphill and downhill capacities within the Galaxy Pod, thereby promoting return-cycle skiing and riding of this pod.

- Encourage repeat use of the Galaxy Pod.

- Enhance skier/rider connection from the Stagecoach Pod to the Galaxy Pod.

- Enhance the ability to open this pod in the early season and during low-snow years to better distribute mid level skiers across the resort.

III. Purpose & Need

The 2010 Capital Projects are directly linked to Heavenly's MPA, the purpose of which is:

> *"to improve the overall quality of the visitor experience at the resort, creating an improved, multi-seasonal visitor and skier/snowboarder experience that is competitive with the experience offered by other destination resorts and that reflects current market trends and preferences."*

In the Purpose and Need section of the 2007 Final EIS, it is stated that: "All of the overall MPA 07 projects and those projects which are ready for immediate implementation are linked to the same purpose and need for action…"[2] The purpose and need of Heavenly's 2010 Capital Projects is tied to Section 1.3 of the 2007 Final EIS, which analyzed the entire MP programmatically.

Given the existing and desired conditions, there is need for:

Top of the Gondola Area

Gondola Lodge

- A guest services facility at the top of the Gondola offering an adequate number of indoor and outdoor seats, given the importance of this area for Heavenly's winter and summer operations.

- Locating the guest services facility at the center of all activities at the top of the Gondola area including the Tamarack lift, Big Easy lift, Tubing lift, Heavenly Flyer, Ski School and Adventure Peak in order to accommodate existing visitor use patterns.

[1] Appendix 2-B of the Heavenly Mountain Resort Master Plan Amendment 2005 Final EIS/EIS/EIR
[2] Page 1-4

Magic Carpet Conveyor Lift

- Maintain beginner-level ski school opportunities at the top of the Gondola if the new lodge is constructed in the location outlined in this proposed action.

Snow Beach

- Provide indoor seating at Snow Beach.

California Trail

- Implement the Easy Street Run Hazard Reduction (ESRHR) prescription in order to reduce unnecessary obstacle heights which would minimize the amount of snow needed to adequately cover the trail, without negatively affecting runoff and erosion/sedimentation potential3 while protecting known populations of Tahoe draba.

Galaxy Pod

- Improve skier/rider distribution between the Galaxy Pod and Heavenly's other intermediate pods with high-speed lifts, including the Stagecoach, Comet and Dipper pods by encouraging repeat use of the Galaxy Pod.

- Enhance skier/rider connection from the Stagecoach Pod to the Galaxy Pod

- Improve the ability to open Galaxy Pod in the early season and during low-snow years to utilize a currently underutilized portion of the resort.

IV. Proposed Action

Top of Gondola

Gondola Lodge

Heavenly proposes to construct a new day lodge approximately 400 feet north of the top terminal of the Gondola (see Figure 2). The lodge is proposed to be a single-story building providing self-service dining, a small bar, open seating and restrooms. The building would have a 14,750-square foot footprint (not accounting for the patio). Indoor seating capacity would be approximately 500 seats. Additionally a 4,320-square foot (24 feet by 180 feet) poured-in-place concrete patio, located on the south side of the lodge facing the Adventure Point, would accommodate tables and chairs for outside dining as weather permits. The 4,250-square foot increase would be accounted for by re-allocating square footage from the Sand Dunes Lodge.

The lodge would be set back into a hill to optimize skier circulation on the flat area in front of the lodge. During construction, the building site would be leveled. The western end of the site would be excavated so that it is the same elevation as the east end of the site. The resulting retained slope behind the western side of the lodge would be a maximum of approximately 33 feet high and 75 feet long with a 1.5:1 slope. Spoils from the excavation would be used to level the area in front of the Tamarack Express chairlift to reduce the amount of snowmaking needed in the winter, and to level out the old snow tubing area.

The existing Von Schmidt's lift summer maintenance road crosses the proposed lodge site. As a result, approximately 300 feet of the maintenance road would be relocated to the east near the existing handle tow lift (Red Fir lift). A delivery road, approximately 300 feet long, would be added from the existing

[3] The ESRHR prescription is defined in Section 3.2 of the MPA under the heading "Ski Trail Hazard Reduction Program." The full problem statement and prescription is attached in Appendix 3 of the MPA.

maintenance road to the rear of the lodge for service and delivery purposes (snow would be removed from the back of the lodge). Other than the delivery spur, no new roads would be needed for lodge construction or operations (see Figure 2).

The lodge would be open in the summer to support the Adventure Peak activities. The existing barbecue at Adventure Peak adjacent to the top of the gondola would remain, however, the kitchen building and Umbrella Bar would be removed and the Umbrella Bar would be relocated, as described below.

The building would be designed to be consistent with applicable provisions of the Forest Service Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG), and use natural exterior materials. It would be a single-story building with a simple shed roof that slopes from front to back in order to take advantage of existing views. The maximum height of the building would be 39 feet.

Existing utilities and infrastructure in the area would be used to connect the lodge to water, electricity, natural gas, fiber-optic and communication lines. Each utility extension would be approximately 150 feet long and would be installed within the maintenance road. Existing electrical switch gear that is near the proposed lodge site would be relocated to the north and be combined with other existing electrical switch gear.

Magic Carpet Conveyor Lift

In conjunction with construction of the Gondola Lodge (the lodge will be constructed where the lift is currently located), the existing children's Magic Carpet ski school lift would be relocated to the Discovery Forest area near the Big Easy trail (see Figure 2). This would enable Heavenly to maintain beginner-level ski school opportunities for children and to provide adequate distance separation between the lift and the lodge.

Snow Beach

The Umbrella Bar would be relocated from the top of the gondola to Snow Beach—an on-mountain hub of activity at the bottom terminals of Patsy's, Powder Bowl and Groove lifts on the California side (see Figure 4). The new location of the Umbrella Bar would increase the guest service capacity in a centralized location to these lift pods. Relocation would include pouring new footings for placement of the Umbrella structure and routing utilities to the new location. This would replace the open air structure currently shown in the MPA.

California Trail

The ESRHR prescription would be implemented on a section of California Trail (see Figure 2). This prescription—named for the trail it was initially implemented on—would be used to carefully and selectively reduce the height of natural obstacles (e.g. boulders and felled trees), thereby minimizing the amount of snow needed to adequately cover the trail. By design, the ESRHR prescription removes large obstacles while keeping ground cover intact, thereby avoiding additional runoff and erosion/sedimentation potential that is associated with more traditional grading practices. The extent of this prescription on California Trail would be determined as based on identified Tahoe draba (a sensitive plant species) populations. An adequate buffer zone would be identified in relation to the lowest (in elevation) known occupied draba habitat to ensure the protection of plants during project implementation.

Galaxy Pod

Galaxy Replacement Lift

Heavenly proposes to replace the existing fixed grip Galaxy lift with a new high-speed detachable lift as included in the MPA (see Figure 3). Installing a high-speed lift would better meet guest expectations,

encouraging repeat skiing of the Galaxy pod. The alignment and terminal locations would be the same as the existing lift, keeping the disturbance associated with the lift upgrade to a minimum. The proposed high-speed quad lift would double the uphill capacity of the Galaxy pod—from 1,200 pph to 2,400 pph. With the upgraded lift, the capacity of this pod has been calculated to increase from approximately 720 persons to 1,160 persons.

The lift corridor would be widened to a maximum width of approximately 33 feet in order to accommodate a widened lift gauge, requiring the removal of trees, as necessary. Trees would be cut over the snow and placed in a location that is accessible by truck for removal during the dry season. Minor road surface improvements, including runoff control improvements and obstacle removal, would occur along segments of the existing summer maintenance road to the base terminal as part of the project.

Proposed New Trails with Snowmaking in the Galaxy Pod

Heavenly proposes to increase the skiable terrain in the Galaxy Pod by constructing four new trails, which would supplement the existing *Galaxy* and *Perimeter* trails (see Figure 3). Trees would be cut over the snow and placed in a location that is accessible by truck for removal during the dry season. Trails proposed for the Galaxy pod would naturally accommodate skiers and snowboarders that learned in the teaching area at the top of the Gondola and that are ready to progress to intermediate terrain. All of the trails in the Galaxy pod are proposed to be intermediate, allowing true intermediate guests' separation from beginners and more advanced skiers and riders.

All four new trails are described in Chapter 3 of the MPA. The following lengths and areas are slightly different from the MPA and reflect contemporary trail planning.

- Proposed Trail U3 would be roughly 2,360 feet in length and approximately 5.4 acres in area.
- Proposed Trail U4 would be roughly 1,500 feet in length and approximately 4.2 acres are area.

Proposed Trails 14 and 15 are intended to serve as important access trails between the Stagecoach and Galaxy pods.

- Proposed Trail 14 is roughly 3,500 feet in length and approximately 8.7 acres in area.
- Proposed Trail 15 is roughly 2,060 feet in length and approximately 5.3 acres in area.

Below ground snowmaking infrastructure is proposed for all new trails in the Galaxy Pod—U3, U4, 14 and 15—totaling approximately 23.6 acres of coverage. Approximately 9,500 linear feet of underground snowmaking line would be installed on these four new trails. Snowmaking lines would be buried to a sufficient depth below the frost line. Heavenly uses a 30-foot wide disturbance corridor for installation of snowmaking lines to accommodate the trench, excavation equipment, and a temporary spoils pile. This equates to approximately 6.5 acres of temporary ground disturbance, as disturbed areas will be promptly stabilized and revegetated.

The trails and snowmaking would be implemented consistent with the applicable provisions of the CERP. The trails would be constructed using the ESRHR prescription contained in the MPA in order to reduce unnecessary obstacle heights without negatively affecting runoff and erosion/sedimentation potential. Heavenly has successfully implemented the ESRHR prescription in conjunction with snowmaking line installation in the past, and has found that the excavator used to dig the trench helped facilitate the treatment of the logs, stumps and rock "topping" that is a part of the prescription.

Proposed Snowmaking on Existing Trails in the Galaxy Pod

Heavenly proposes to install snowmaking infrastructure on the existing Perimeter and Galaxy trails, which currently rely on natural snow for coverage. Both Perimeter and Galaxy have been graded in the past, and therefore the installation of below-ground snowmaking lines would be consistent with design features in the CERP. Approximately 10,800 feet of snowmaking line is proposed for these two trails, which would provide approximately 24.6 acres of new snowmaking coverage. This would entail roughly 7.4 acres of temporary ground disturbance necessary for installation of snowmaking lines.

V. Project Design Features Incorporated into the Proposed Action

The following Project Design Features have been incorporated into the Proposed Action in order to reduce or eliminate potential resource impacts. Project Design Features may be modified, or supplemented, throughout the upcoming environmental analysis as new information becomes available.

Cultural Resources

- In the event historic properties are discovered during the implementation of this undertaking, all project related work must stop immediately, the LTBMU's Heritage Resources personnel be notified at once and the procedures as set forth in Section 800.13 of the Council's regulations must be implemented in accordance with the guidance as stated in this sub-section.

- Avoid and protect all known historic properties during construction.

Watershed

- In areas where mechanical equipment is used for construction, it may require sub-soiling, blading, returning the area to existing grade, and/or providing ground cover to return the area to the condition that existed prior to construction. The need for rehabilitation work would be determined by a Watershed Specialist.

- Implement the Revised Construction Erosion Reduction Program (Appendix 2-B, Heavenly Mountain Resort MPA 2005 Final EIS/EIS/EIR) during all construction activities.

- Within the TRPA regional boundary, surface disturbance activities would begin after May 1 and conclude no later than October 15, depending on weather conditions unless a grading ordinance exemption is obtained from the TRPA and Lahontan Water Quality Control Board.

Noxious Weeds

- Equipment used in the project must be sanitized and free of non-native invasive species before moving into the project area to ensure that the equipment is free of soil, seeds, vegetative material, or other debris that could contain or hold seeds of non-native invasive species. It is recommended that all vehicles, especially large, off-road and/or earthmoving vehicles are cleaned when they come into the Basin or come from an area known to contain non-native invasive species. Equipment will be considered clean when visual inspection does not reveal soil, seeds, plant material, or other such debris.

- Weed infestations identified before project implementation that are within the project area should be treated or "flagged and avoided" according to the species present and project constraints. Tall white-top (Lepidium latifolium) and bull thistle (Cirsium vulgare) currently occur by Snow Beach Hut as well as along access roads.

- When working in areas known to harbor non-native invasive species, equipment shall then be cleaned at a washing station before moving to other National Forest System lands which do not contain invasive species.

- Staging areas for equipment, materials, or crews will not be situated in areas infested by non-native invasive species. Areas containing non-native invasive species should be "flagged and avoided" before implementation. Contact the noxious weeds coordinator before project implementation so the area can be avoided.

- All gravel, fill, or other materials are required to be "weed-free". Use onsite sand, gravel, rock, or organic matter when possible. Otherwise, obtain "weed-free" materials from gravel pits and fill sources that have been surveyed and approved by Nevada Department of Agriculture or by the noxious weed coordinator. See annual report of "Material Pit Surveys for Noxious Weeds" for suitable sources of gravel & fill, available upon request.

- Use "weed-free" mulches, and seed sources. Salvage topsoil from project area for use in onsite revegetation, unless contaminated with non-native invasive species. Do not use soil or materials from areas contaminated by cheat grass.

- Minimize the amount of ground and vegetation disturbance in the construction areas. Reestablish vegetation where feasible on disturbed bare ground to minimize non-native invasive species establishment and infestation. Revegetation is especially important in staging areas.

- Utilize locally collected native seed sources when possible. Plant and seed material should be collected from or near the project area, from within the same watershed, and at a similar elevation when possible. Persistent non-natives such as Phleum pratense (cultivated timothy), Dactylis glomerata (orchard grass), or Lolium spp. (ryegrass) will not be used.

- Seed mixes must be approved by a Forest Service botanist or a professional appointed by the forest botanist who has knowledge on local flora.

- After the project is completed the noxious weed coordinator should be notified so that the areas disturbed by the project area can be monitored for 3 years subsequent to project implementation to ensure additional non-native invasive species do not become established in the areas affected by the project and to ensure that known non-native invasive species do not spread.

Vegetation

- Smaller material (generally less than 6") would be chipped and left in place along with small logs. Small logs may be dragged to the edge of proposed ski trails and placed perpendicular to the slope. Larger material (generally >6") would be chipped on-site or hauled off-site.

- Surveys for Tahoe draba will be performed prior to construction of any approved projects. MPA 07 Mitigation Measures 7.5-20 Protect Tahoe Draba Populations within Heavenly Mountain Resort, Veg 1-A Tahoe Draba Long-Term Conservation Strategy and Veg 1-B Minimize loss/Degradation of Sensitive Plant Species will be followed in order to protect sensitive plan species.

- If sensitive plants are present in project area then at a minimum, a 100-foot buffer will be placed around the plants and the facility shall be sited outside of the buffer.

- Because of limited information pertaining to the effect of man-made snow on sensitive plants, snow guns shall not be placed where snowmaking would directly affect any sensitive plant species.

- A Forest Service botanist/ecologist, or another qualified botanist approved by the Forest Service will determine the extent of activity on California Trail as based on identified Tahoe draba populations. An adequate buffer zone will be identified in relation to the lowest (in elevation) known occupied draba habitat to ensure the protection of plants during project implementation. Temporary fencing will be used to delineate the extent of Tahoe draba and signs will indicate entry to the area is prohibited to construction vehicles and activity. The fencing and signage shall be maintained throughout project construction, and then removed following the completion of construction activities. At no time shall the flagged stakes marking the boundary of a Tahoe draba population site be removed.

- Fencing at least 4 feet in height shall be installed annually at the end of each ski season (prior to the onset of summer construction) along the edge of any road or trail that is to be used in the vicinity of construction activities that borders existing Tahoe draba population sites to prohibit access by vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian traffic. The fencing shall be maintained throughout duration of construction activities and removed upon completion of construction and prior to the opening of the ski season.

Wildlife

- Remove all refuse generated from project activities every day to avoid human-wildlife conflicts and/or utilize bear proof dumpsters to conceal human refuse at the construction site.

- If any nests are located during California spotted owl and northern goshawk surveys, a Limited Operating Period (LOP) will be implemented. Adequate advance notice will be made for closure of the area prior to commencement of the LOP.

Visuals

- Designs for structures, signs and lighting would be approved by a Forest Service Landscape Architect or Recreation Specialist.

- Design of all structures will comply with the Forest Service BEIG and would incorporate materials and colors that blend with the surrounding landscape, appropriate roof slopes, building massing, and minimize earth grading work where possible.

VI. Decision to be Made

The environmental review process will culminate with a decision being issued by the Forest Supervisor. Based on the environmental analysis presented in the upcoming EA, the decision would:

1. Authorize implementation of the Proposed Action or another alternative developed in response to specific issues, including the requisite No Action Alternative.

2. Determine whether or not a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be supported by the environmental analysis.