



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Eastern Region Winter Sports Team
Green Mountain & Finger Lakes,
White Mountain National Forests

99 Ranger Road
Rochester, VT 05767-9431
Tel. (802) 767-4261
FAX (802) 767-4777

www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl

File Code: 2720-2-1

Date: November 15, 2006

**Invitation for Comments
Waterville Valley Ski Resort
Nordic Trail Relocation Projects
Please Reply by December 8, 2006**

I am writing to invite you to comment on the proposed trail re-location of a cross country ski trail on Snow's Mountain and a trail near the Depot Camp (Livermore Road) Parking Area. The projects are located within the Waterville Valley Ski Resort Nordic area Special Use Permit boundary, on the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) within the Town of Waterville Valley in Grafton County, New Hampshire.

The Waterville Valley Ski Resort (WV) is currently managed under a long-term Special Use Permit to Booth Creek Corporation (Permittee). Each year the Permittee submits project proposals that meet company objectives for growth, customer service, safety and resource protection. The projects in this Scoping Report were first proposed in March, 2006. The projects under consideration are 1) the relocation of a portion of a cross country ski trail at the base of Snow's Mountain and 2) the relocation of a short section of cross country ski trail in the vicinity of the Depot Camp Parking Lot.

The enclosed public comment or "scoping" report provides additional details about these projects and instructions on how to comment. This document is also posted on our WMNF web page: www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/, under Projects and Plans.

I am writing to you because you own property or live near the project area or have expressed interest in this or similar projects. I am interested in receiving your comments about the Permittee's proposal, including any information about the project area that could help us improve the projects. If you choose to comment on these proposals, please submit your comments no later than Friday, December 8, 2006.

If you would like additional information about these projects, please contact Susan Mathison at 603-536-1315 or smathison@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Beth LeClair
BETH LECLAIR
District Ranger/Team Leader



**Scoping Report
Waterville Valley Ski Area
Nordic Trail Relocation Projects
November, 2006**

The Eastern Region Winter Sports Team is conducting an environmental analysis in partnership with the White Mountain National Forest for two proposed projects in the Waterville Valley Ski Area.

The Waterville Valley Ski Area (WV) is currently managed under a long-term Special Use Permit (SUP) to Booth Creek Corporation (Permittee). Each year the Permittee submits project proposals that meet company objectives for growth, customer service, safety and resource protection. The two projects included in this public comment or “scoping” report were proposed in March, 2006. The projects under consideration are 1) the relocation of a portion of the Lower Snow’s Mountain cross country ski trail at the base of Snow’s Mountain and 2) the relocation of a short section of The Connector cross country ski trail in the vicinity of the Livermore Parking Lot. Please see the attached map.

Location of Project Area

The proposed projects are located within the Waterville Valley Special Use Permit Area on the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF), within the Town of Waterville Valley in Grafton County, New Hampshire. The Project Area is located almost entirely within National Forest System Lands; all of the National Forest System Lands within the Project Area are designated by the 2005 White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as Management Areas (MA) 7.1, Alpine Ski Areas and MA 9.2, Alpine Ski Area Expansion. A 100’ long trail segment bisects a sliver of land owned by the Waterville Valley Company. Because of the location and configuration of this parcel, its potential uses are somewhat constrained. It is anticipated that the property owner will provide written authorization to construct and maintain the proposed section of trail; this proposal will no longer be considered if suitable permissions are not granted and properly documented.

Purpose and Need

These projects are proposed and advocated by the Permittee who has specified the following purposes and needs:

1) Lower Snow’s Mountain Trail to Beanbender Trail: Encroachment from recent private development in the vicinity of Cascade Ridge and Moose Run has eliminated several short sections of cross country ski trails accessed from the Waterville Valley Nordic Center. This encroachment has occurred on non-federal land; the trail proposed and considered in this scoping notice would be constructed on lands administered by the White Mountain National Forest. The proposed trail from the

Snow's Mountain Beanbender Trail to Lower Snow's would help compensate for the loss of terrain on non-federal lands. The existing trail down the front of Snow's is very steep and poses a safety hazard for all but the most experienced cross country skiers. In addition, the trail meets a dead end at the road Cascade Ridge. The proposed trail would provide a safer trail for skiers to descend Snow's Mountain and connect with the rest of the trail network.

2) Connector Trail relocation: The current location of the noted section of the Connector Trail crosses the Livermore Road near the Livermore Parking Area and in close proximity to the Mad River Bridge. The bridge is narrow and is located between two sharp road curves. The current trail crossing has presented safety concerns because skiers, snowshoers, and trail groomers must cross the Livermore Road close to the bridge with limited sight distance. Skiers, snowshoers, and the trail groomer often cross in this location during non-daylight hours and during extremely adverse weather and road-surface conditions. The proposed relocation will provide improved sight distance for the trail groomer, skiers, and snowshoers and improve safety conditions of this crossing. The vacated portion of the Connector Trail will be obliterated.

Forest Plan

While this analysis considers a Project proposed by the Permittee, the purpose and need for the project must be in compliance with the Forest Plan. Indeed, in order for the Forest Service to consider this proposal, a number of conditions must be met, among them compliance with the WMNF Forest Plan.

At this point in the analysis, each of the Proposed Project's "Purpose and Need" meet three of the Forest Plan's Forest-wide Goals for Alpine Skiing, Recreation, and Recreation Special Uses:

- The White Mountain National Forest will maintain and provide quality alpine skiing and related opportunities on the Forest through partnerships with the private sector (Forest Plan, p. 1-4),
- The White Mountain National Forest will provide a range of quality recreation activities and opportunities (Forest Plan, p. 1-10), and
- The Forest Service will work with the private sector through Special Use permits to provide recreation opportunities (areas, facilities, services, and events) that the Forest Service alone is not able to offer, and that are consistent with the Desired Future Condition (Forest Plan, p. 1-15).

The Proposed Projects each meet the Purpose described for MA 7.1 and 9.2:

Maintain the range of recreation opportunities by recognizing the potential for alpine skiing, snowboarding, and year-round recreation activities at the four alpine ski areas managed by the private sector under Special Use Permit authority. Recognize the importance of current facilities in concentrating use within small areas (less than 0.05 percent of total acreage) of the National Forest (Forest Plan, p. 3-31).

Furthermore, the Proposed Projects would meet the Project Area's "Desired Future Condition" as described in the Forest Plan:

MA 7.1: These areas will be highly developed. Loon Mountain, Attitash/Bear Peak, and Waterville Valley Ski Areas are in close proximity to substantially developed environments on adjacent private lands. Wildcat Ski Area, surrounded by National Forest land, will not have this high level of neighboring development. Large numbers of users may be present, sights and sounds of human activity will be readily evident, and the interaction between users will be moderate to high. Facilities are designed for use by a large number of people. Facilities including parking lots, structures, and utilities will be evident, and are designed to be compatible with the values that make the area attractive to the users.

Management and operating practices are aimed at enhancing permitted recreation activities at the area while protecting the natural resources and visual characteristics.

Vegetation will be managed to meet the objectives of the alpine ski areas.

Each of these alpine ski areas is authorized by Special Use permit. The permit is a legal document that defines the area, describes management of the full range of recreation activities provided by the area, and incorporates resource protection requirements. Special use permits must be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines, goals and objectives, and management area direction. (Forest Plan, p. 3-31)

MA 9.2: Although adjacent to heavily developed alpine ski areas, these lands generally appear natural, with little evidence of management. Existing roads and trails may provide access.

These lands are contiguous to existing ski areas, and range in size from 40 to 1,000 acres.

A variety of land characteristics will occur. In the lower and middle elevations, extensive stands of northern hardwoods dominate the landscape. Conifers, such as red and white spruce and balsam fir, will be mixed with hardwoods at mid- to lower- elevations and will dominate at higher elevations. These stands tend toward a mix of tree sizes and ages, visually dominated by large mature trees. (Forest Plan, p. 3-79)

The Proposed Projects would meet the purposes and needs specified by the Permittee as well as the Goals, Objectives, and Desired Future Condition of the area as specified in the Forest Plan by:

- 1) providing improved safety and suitable access to the permitted Nordic ski trail system in an area adjacent to concentrated private building and development, and
- 2) improving public and permittee safety through trail relocation near the Livermore Parking area.

Proposed Actions

The Proposed Actions are outlined in the table below. Please see attached map for project locations within the permit area.

Project	Project Description	Important Considerations
1	<u>Lower Snow's Mountain Trail to Beanbender Trail</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of this proposed trail follows an old logging road, construction impacts are minimal. 2. Vegetation removal would include primarily small saplings and brush that have encroached upon the old logging road. 3. Work will include the use of chainsaws, hand tools, and a small excavator used to remove rocks and boulders and to level the trail surface. 4. Proposed trail construction would include a 12' trail tread surface and 4' clearing of overhanging vegetation on each side of the trail. The proposed trail length is 2,200'. 5. Resource specialists including soil, plant, wildlife, and trail specialists have visited the site; no resource concerns have been noted. 6. This project would not be authorized until the Waterville Valley Company provides suitable written authorization for the trail to cross its land which bisects the proposed trail route.
2	<u>Connector Trail Relocation</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of this proposed trail follows an old logging road, construction impacts are minimal. 2. Vegetation removal would include primarily small saplings and brush that have encroached upon the old logging road. 3. Work will include the use of chainsaws, hand tools, and a small excavator used to remove rocks and boulders and to level the trail surface. 4. Proposed trail construction would include a 12' trail tread surface and 4' clearing of overhanging vegetation on each side of the trail. The proposed trail length is 720'. 5. Resource specialists including soil, plant, wildlife, and trail specialists have visited the site; no resource concerns have been noted.

Environmental Analysis

Forest Service resource specialists have studied the Proposed Projects, conducted preliminary site-specific analysis and ensured that the Projects are consistent with the Forest Plan direction for resource management and protection.

It is anticipated that the Proposed Projects will not result in individual or cumulatively significant effects on the environment; the analysis of these Projects can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA) because they are within a category in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) Chapter 30, Section 31.2 (1) and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal. Specifically, this is within FSH 1909.15-2004-3, Chapter 31.2 (1) Construction and reconstruction of trails.

What decisions will be made?

An environmental analysis will evaluate the site-specific proposals, issues, and effects of the proposed projects. The Eastern Region Winter Sports Team District Ranger/Team Leader is the deciding

official for this project; the District Ranger/Team Leader will review the environmental analysis, including public comment and resource specialists' input and will decide:

1. Should the Proposed Projects be approved as proposed?
2. Is the information in the analysis sufficient to implement the proposed activities?
3. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements should the Forest Service apply to these proposed activities in the project area?

Public Involvement

At this time the Forest Service is inviting you to make site-specific comments on these two proposed projects. We suggest you consider the following questions when looking at the proposed projects:

- Do the Proposed Projects move the Project Area towards the desired condition envisioned in the Forest Plan while protecting the environment?
- Is there anything about this area that the Forest Service may not know which might affect the decision regarding the Proposed Projects?

At this time, your comments may be provided orally or in writing (phone, letter, FAX, or e-mail) and must be received by December 8, 2006. Please be sure that your comments are in specific reference to the Proposed Projects at the Waterville Valley Ski Area.

Please note that comments received in response to this scoping report, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Persons may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the submission will be returned, and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

Comments should be addressed to Beth LeClair, Eastern Region Winter Sports Team District Ranger/Team Leader in one of the following ways:

By Mail – Pemigewasset Ranger District, 1171 NH Route 175, Holderness, NH 03245, ATTN: Waterville Valley Ski Area, Nordic Trail Relocation Projects/Susan Mathison;

By FAX – (603) 536-5147, ATTN: Waterville Valley Ski Area, Nordic Trail Relocation Projects/Susan Mathison

By phone – (603) 536-1315 (voice) or 603- 536-3281 (TTY), ask for Susan Mathison

By email – smathison@fs.fed.us

Information about this proposal is also available on our website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/projects/projects/index.php

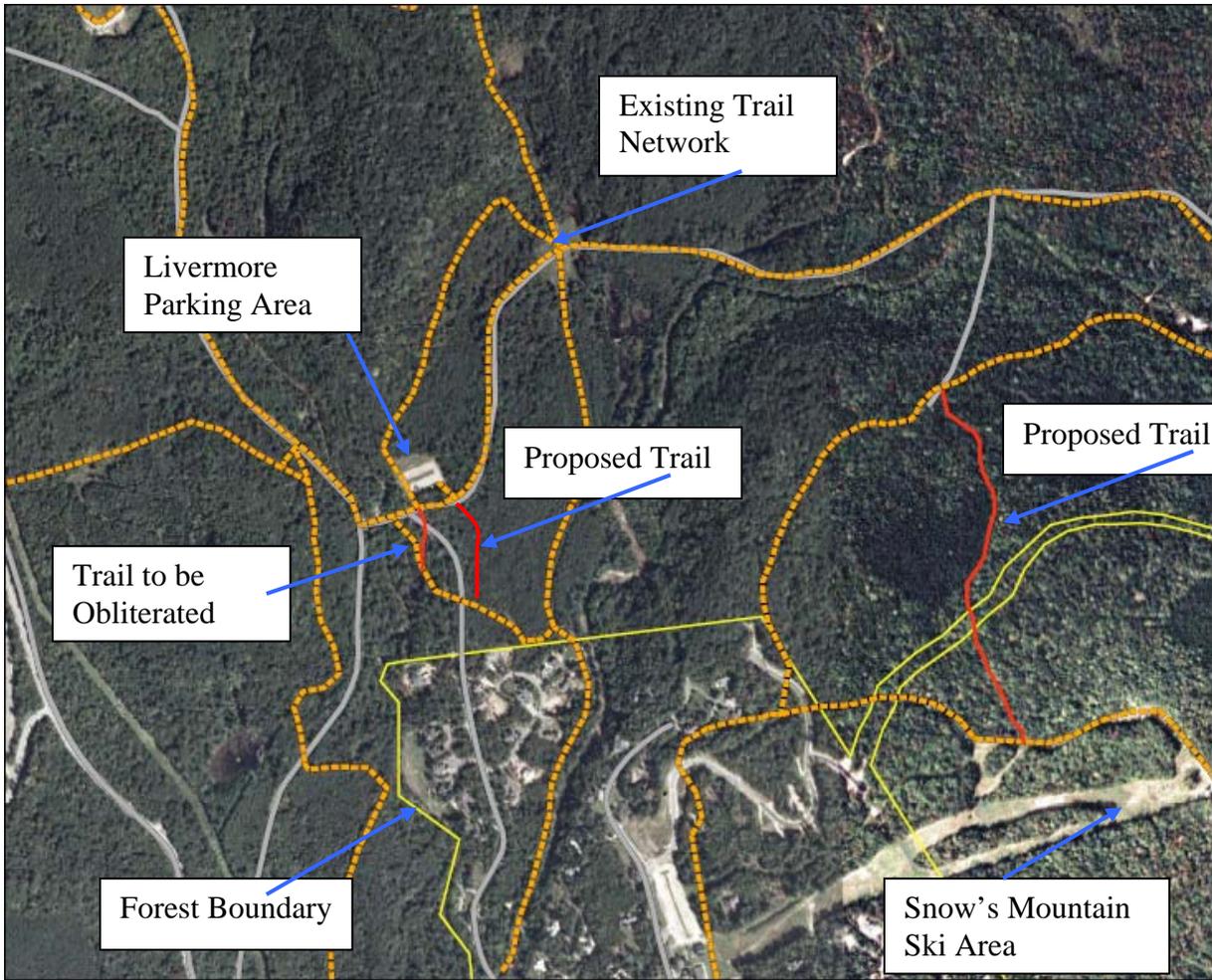
Please include the following information with your comments:

- Your name, address (include in any email correspondence), and, if possible, telephone number; and
- Site-specific facts or comments concerning the proposed Waterville Valley Ski Area, Nordic Trail Relocation Projects, along with supporting information that you believe should be consider in reaching a decision.

It is the responsibility of interested parties to respond to this notice within the established time period. No means of communication is perfect. Please contact us at the above address and/or phone number if a document is not available or delivered at the expected time, to ascertain its availability, and if necessary, arrange an alternate delivery method.

If you decide to provide comments, you will automatically receive a copy of the Decision Memo. It is important to note that decisions associated with projects that are categorically excluded cannot be appealed pursuant to 36 CFR 215. If you do not have specific comments, but wish to continue to receive information about these projects, please advise us accordingly.

Thank you for your interest in helping us to manage the Waterville Valley Ski Area on the White Mountain National Forest.



Existing Trail Network

Livermore Parking Area

Proposed Trail

Proposed Trail

Trail to be Obliterated

Forest Boundary

Snow's Mountain Ski Area