

Mt Ashland Ski Area Expansion Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Record of Decision

Questions & Answers

Q. Why is an expansion of the ski area desired?

A. The current ski area's terrain primarily accommodates advanced and expert skiers. A ski area expansion will provide runs on more gentle terrain, allowing more people with varying abilities to enjoy the mountain. Additional parking and new visitor facilities will enhance the overall recreation experience.

Q. What is the purpose of the Final Supplemental EIS for the Mt Ashland Ski Area Expansion?

A. The purpose is to analyze and correct specific violations identified by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in September 2007 based on the decision to allow expansion in 2004. This includes additional analysis and evaluation of the proposed expansion on the Pacific fisher and to identify and analyze effects under the Rogue River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan.

Q. What are the Rogue River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP)?

A. Both documents provide management direction for the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest through the use of land management strategies (or allocations) for particular areas on the Forest. The plans include over 20 separate allocations. As directed by the Court of appeals, the FSEIS analyzes and discloses the effects within three land allocations: Restricted Riparian, Restricted Watershed, and Riparian Reserve.

Q. What effect will the ski area expansion have on the Pacific fisher?

A. The ski area expansion won't have much of an impact on the Pacific fisher. During the winter season, fisher primarily use lower elevation areas. During the summer season, the males primarily migrate through vegetative corridors on either side of the ski area.

Q. What are the effects to Riparian Reserves, Restricted Watershed, and Restricted Riparian?

A. All of the effects from ski area expansion will meet the LRMP and NWFP Standards & Guidelines. The FSEIS redefines the delineations of Riparian Reserves, Restricted Watersheds and Restricted Riparian areas; however, the affected area remains unchanged.

Q. What has the Forest Service done to address new information since the 2004 Record of Decision?

A. New information evaluations were performed in 2007, 2009, and 2010. These evaluations did not present a substantially different picture of environmental consequences from what was already analyzed and considered in 2004.

Q. Will the expansion of the ski area affect water quality in the Ashland Watershed?

A: With required mitigation measures such as those that control erosion and potential petrochemical pollutants, any effects to water quality will be low to not measurable. Implementation of watershed restoration projects will enhance water quality over current conditions by enhancing watershed function. Water quality will continue to be monitored during and after implementation.

Q. Where can I find copies of the FSEIS/SROD?

A. Electronic copies are available on the Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/projects/mtashlandski/

Hard copies of the FSEIS/SROD are being mailed on May 23 to those on the Mt. Ashland mailing list and will be available at all Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest offices and the following locations:

Klamath National Forest Supervisor's Office, 1312 Fairlane Rd, Yreka, CA 96097

Libraries:

Jackson County Library-Medford Branch, 205 S. Central, Medford, OR 97591

Jackson County Library-Ashland Branch, 410 Siskiyou Boulevard, Ashland, OR 97520

Siskiyou County Library-Yreka, 719 4th St, Yreka, CA 96097

Southern Oregon University Library, 1250 Siskiyou Boulevard, Ashland 97520

Q. What is the process for appealing this decision?

A: Once the legal notice for this project is posted in the newspaper of record, the Medford Mail Tribune, appellants have 45 days to file an appeal. Expected publication date for the legal notice is June 2, 2011. The Regional Forester (RF) has 45 days after the appeal period ends to render an appeal decision. If the RF affirms the project, the Forest Service can proceed with implementation. However, the appellant has the option to sue once the administrative appeal process has been exhausted.

Q. What expansion is being authorized?

A: The Special Use Permit holder, the City of Ashland, and their agent Mt. Ashland Association, is authorized to construct two chairlifts, two surface lifts, three guest services buildings and approximately 71 acres of associated new ski terrain primarily within the western half of the permit area, including widening of existing runs. Parking lot expansion is authorized for adding 220 spaces. A four acre tubing facility in the southern portion of the Special Use Permit area; a yurt and additional infrastructure have also been authorized.

Q. What is the 2004 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) & Record of Decision (ROD)?

A: The 2004 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is a detailed analysis of the proposal to expand the Mt. Ashland Ski Area located primarily in the Ashland Watershed on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and Klamath National Forest in Southwestern Oregon. The 2004 Record of Decision (ROD) is the formal decision made by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor after careful consideration of the analysis contained within the FEIS. The 2004 decision was the result of an analysis begun in 1998 for ski area expansion. The Forest Service received thousands of public comments during this six year timeframe.

Q. If you heard our comments and we don't agree with the construction of a ski run, then why are you moving forward with plans for expansion?

A. From a social, economic and environmental standpoint, we have determined that ski area expansion is a reasonable action as authorized by the 1991 Master Plan. In 1991, following a seven-year public planning process, the Forest Service documented authorization for a programmatic Master Plan expansion of the ski area. This Master Plan required site-specific environmental analysis before expansion could proceed, which was the subject of the 2004 FEIS. The site-specific 2004 Record of Decision is consistent and in compliance with the Master Plan authorization. We have done a thorough job of evaluating the expansion proposal through extensive analysis, consideration of public concerns, and development of mitigations to minimize impacts to natural resources. We combined alternatives to arrive at the least impactful action that would meet the objectives of the ski area expansion.

Q: What will change in the McDonald Peak Inventoried Roadless Area with this decision?

A: Forty acres of the 9,459 acre Inventoried Roadless Area will be changed by tree clearing to establish new ski runs in the lower portion of the expansion area. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule permits the cutting, sale, and removal of timber "incidental to the implementation of an activity not otherwise prohibited by this rule...such as ski runs" (Federal Register, Volume 66, No. 9, Jan 12, 2001). In this case, the management activity is developed recreation.

Q: Will threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species be affected?

A: Although the Northern Spotted Owl does not have any nesting sites in the project area, the decision changes 44 acres of habitat they sometimes use for roosting and foraging; however, their existence is not threatened by implementation of this decision.

Q: Are streams and wetlands changed with implementation of this decision?

A: One-half acre of wetland will be changed primarily as a result of building the wetland crossing near the base of the Middle Fork Chair Lift in the Ashland Watershed. The crossing design and construction requirements will assure that the function of the wetland as an ecosystem will not be adversely affected. Parking lot construction will be mitigated to prevent sedimentation into the Cottonwood Creek drainage.

Q. Where can I review a copy of the 2004 FEIS/ROD?

A. The 2004 FEIS/ROD and maps are posted on the Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest internet site at: www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/projects/mtashlandski/

Hard copy documents are available at the Ashland Ranger Station and the Medford Interagency Office and can be made available at other Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest offices upon request.