

**Scoping Notice
for
2013 Heavenly Summer Activities**

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

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) is seeking scoping comments on Heavenly Mountain Resort's (Heavenly) proposed 2013 capital improvement project described hereafter as the 2013 Heavenly Summer Activities. The 2013 Heavenly Summer Activities are consistent with the vision described in Heavenly's accepted Master Plan Amendment (MPA). Some of the activities have been modified to account for site specific conditions and those activities specifically approved by the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011. Construction of all proposed activities 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.

EXISTING CONDITION:

With passage of the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011, the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 was amended to allow additional summer uses of National Forest System (NFS) lands within winter resorts including ziplines, rope courses, and other outdoor recreation activities.

DESIRED CONDITION:

The desired condition is to provide additional summer and multi-seasonal recreational activities at the top of the gondola as described in the MPA and in response to the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011.

Because the gondola is the predominant destination resort access point in winter and summer, an opportunity exists to provide a wider range of multi-season resource-based activities for guests in addition to skiing and snowboarding.

The MPA identified the Gondola as the predominant resort access for destination visitors. It further identified the lack of a full array of services and activities to allow these guests to utilize the resort without using their automobiles or other means to drive from one access point to another.

These recreational activities will provide summer and non-skiing/riding guests with a variety of high-quality, resource based recreational opportunities while introducing them to their National Forest. Since 2001, the top of the gondola has been the center of summer activity at Heavenly and provides the ideal location for these activities in a managed environment. It allows National Forest visitors who are staying in lodging on the Stateline area to access recreation opportunities

without the need for the private automobile. The activities will directly implement the TRPA Environmental Threshold for Outdoor Recreation.

PURPOSE AND NEED:

Heavenly and the Forest Service have identified an opportunity consistent with the adopted Forest Plan and Heavenly's Master Development Plan to provide summer and non-skiing guests and visitors with recreational activities that allow them to experience the National Forests using existing infrastructure without creating adverse environmental effects.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

Tamarack Climbing Rock

The existing Adventure Peak climbing wall will be replaced with a larger, more realistic-three dimensional rock structure offering multiple routes for a variety of skill levels and a mechanical auto-belay system for participants, It will be approximately 30 feet in height and be designed to closely replicate the form, color and textures of a large wall of local Sierra Nevada granite . It will be staffed with trained rock climbing guides who will be on hand to assist the users. It will be located in the previously disturbed area adjacent to the existing Tamarack Lodge. No utilities are needed. No tree removal is needed.

Discovery Forest Zipline Canopy Tour

The Discovery Forest Zipline Canopy Tour is a tree-based zip line canopy tour designated for a wide range of visitors with differing ability levels. It will be implemented in the forested area that is located between the Tamarack Express lift and the Big Easy ski trail. It will occupy an area that is approximately 100 feet wide by 300 feet in length and is not used for skiing or snowboarding. The course is a self-paced aerial tour designed for children and young adults, but is appropriate for adult family members as well. It will have a number of platforms incorporating environmental education information. The platforms are intended to provide visual anchor points which define the feeling of entering and experiencing a raised village. Small gathering areas at both ends will allow the sharing of environmental and interpretive information between guides and visitors.

Trained guides will be stationed at key locations within the Discovery Forest to observe activities, provide interpretive information and ensure that platform transfers are done properly.

Discovery Forest Zipline Canopy Tour components include:

- 15-18 individual zip line and ropes course-style elements
- 4-5 entry and sky bridges
- 18-20 tree platforms
- 4 ground access and egress points
- Hiking trails from the Expedition Center and Tamarack Lodge to the Discovery Forest

No utilities or other infrastructure are necessary. Selective tree removal for individual challenge elements and bridges will be necessary.

Bear Cave Challenge Course

A self-guided climbing structure known as the Bear Cave Challenge Course will be located adjacent to the existing Bear Cave Expedition Center building. It includes two levels of rope bridges, walkways and similar climbing activities that are approximately 40 feet in height. The overall area of the Challenge Course will be approximately 40 feet by 80 feet. Participants will be tethered to the structure with safety harness equipment and can move back and forth across the different climbing elements as well as vertically on different levels. It will allow participants to develop skills and gain confidence as the level of difficulty increases. No utilities or other infrastructure are necessary. Selective tree removal for the course will be necessary.

Boulder Cove Challenge Park

The Boulder Cove Challenge Park is a self-guided challenge-type activity that consists of a series a series of vertical wooden columns, platforms and rope walkways/bridges. It will be located near the base of the gondola stairs behind the existing trail map signs. The park's layout will be curvilinear in nature and closely follow the landform into which it is set.

The Park will contain a number of alternate routes of varying degrees of difficulty. The routes are stacked vertically with two routes per level. It will be designed to accommodate skill levels that range from the very young to the very athletic. Participants will be outfitted with harnesses and are continually secured to an overhead belay line. The foot print is approximately 30 feet by 180 feet in area and will be approximately 30 feet in height. No utilities are needed. Limited tree removal and limbing is needed for implementation

Zip Line Center

A new four line Zip Line Center will be sited in area between the existing tubing runs and the Big Easy Lift. There will be four parallel lines approximately 1,000 feet in length. The lines will parallel the Big Easy lift and land near the base of the Red Fir handle tow lift. Participants will ride the Big Easy lift and utilize a new segment of hiking trail (approximately 75-80 feet in length) in order to access the top of the zip lines. Takeoff and landing platforms (approximately 40 feet in height) will be constructed at either end.

The Zip Line Center is intended to introduce participants to zip lining and provide a shorter opportunity than the Heavenly Flyer. Limited tree removal is needed for the top and bottom platforms, the course alignment and the walking path. Low voltage electrical and communication lines are needed and will be run from the top of the Big Easy lift about 75 feet away.

DESIGN FEATURES AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

The following design features and construction methods will be utilized in all projects as appropriate. The measures are taken directly from the Master Plan Construction Erosion Reduction Program (CERP).

Specific design features include:

- Installation of temporary water quality Best Management Practices (BMPs). These may include but will not be limited to: silt fences, straw wattles, coir logs, mulching, gravel/sand bags and construction fencing.
- Limited disturbance and construction staging areas.
- Limit tree removal to minimum amount necessary, including white bark pine where present.
- When conducting over-the-snow tree removal, ensure that a minimum of 12” compacted snow exists.
 - During over-the-snow tree removal, trees will be skidded over a minimum of 12” of compacted snow behind a snow cat to designated staging areas in order to prevent soil disturbance. Trees will be limbed and chipped at the staging area for use for erosion control and soil amendments.
- No areas of mapped archaeological features will be used. Off-limits areas will be identified and established jointly by Heavenly and Forest Service staff near these sensitive areas and lined with rope barriers in order to prevent access.
- Proper backfilling and compaction of all excavations.
- Separating top soil and duff layers from excavation spoils for later re-use in revegetation where possible.
- Implementing site-specific revegetation, soil erosion and sedimentation plans and specifications.
- Incorporating organic material into soil amendments to promote soil infiltration and plant establishment.
- Implementing permanent water quality BMPS following project construction.
- Re-establishing vegetation and soil function capacities at staging areas following project completion.
- Dust control measures, at construction sites and on roads.
- Using US EPA Tier2/Tier 3 level engines and power units to minimize emissions.
- Specific pre-construction and post-construction monitoring evaluations of disturbed areas and success of revegetation.
- Multi-year, post-construction monitoring and reporting of construction areas as required by the Forest Service BMP Effectiveness Protocol Program.

DECISION TO BE MADE:

CEQ regulations allow federal agencies to exclude from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment, based on the agency’s experience and knowledge. The proposed action fits under 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(3), “Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.”

These activities fit within this category because the activities are located within the special use permit area for Heavenly Mountain Resort and are less than 5 acres in total.