



# BITTERROOT RESORT

*Life.Time.Experience*

## *Exemplary Conservation, Recreation, & Job Creation*

The Bitterroot Resort proposal includes areas of the Bitterroot & Lolo National Forests evaluated by the USFS over at least three decades from the 1960's into the 1990's, as described and imbedded in the current Lolo National Forest Plan, "... *the Lolo Peak-Carlton Ridge area has the potential to be developed as a national-class ski area*". (Pages III-17 & 24)

### **History**

The proposal has been developed based on the extensive USFS history of dedicating and managing all activities on this site for the overarching purpose of a national-class ski area since at least the 1960's, as evidenced by the following USFS records.

Preliminary Investigation of Lolo Peak Vicinity for Winter Sports, May 18, 1965, Ed Slusher, Chief, Primitive and Natural Environment Recreation Branch:  
*Part of the reason it is not a developed ski area is the past lack of a road to the elevation where early and dependable snow occurs.*  
*Two of the key factors in planning are the elevations at which Thanksgiving skiing could begin and when the entire slope down... could be skied.*  
*On April 5, Bob Brandenberger and I flew over the area and took photographs from a helicopter which landed...[on Carlton Ridge adjacent to the Wilderness] proposed upper terminal for some of the lifts...*

Lolo Peak Recreation Area; Multiple Use Survey Report, by Roger Lund, on reconnaissance completed the week of July 11, 1966 with Jack Fisher.  
*The skiable terrain lies on the north slopes of Lolo Peak in the drainages of Mormon, Mill and Cedar Creeks...*  
*2., A. Most of the Lolo area falls in Management Unit 3 of the general forest zone of the Ranger District multiple use plan. Management Unit 3 provides that the area be managed primarily for recreation with other uses restricted somewhat so they create the least possible conflict.*  
*3. A. Most of the Lolo Peak area has been placed in Management Unit 3 in anticipation of the development of a recreation area. The area borders on the Bitterroot-Selway Wilderness to the south of Carlton Ridge.*

E. F. Barry, Assistant Regional Forester; Development Report Memo, December 1, 1966; Lolo Peak Winter Sports Area (Proposed):  
*Roger Lund has made a good analysis and wrap-up of our current information and plans for Lolo Peak. Here are our comments on the multiple use survey report:*

*Under the section dealing with coordination of the ski area and timber management, it should be made very plain that the importance of the use of the land for skiing is of such predominance that timber will be managed primarily for the benefit of skiing. For example, a clear-cut block with a system of jammer roads would almost preclude skiing use. All access roads should be located so that they do not cross ski trails or terrain. This is a major restriction on the timber harvest.*

Lolo Ranger Donald G. Stevenson, Lolo Peak Winter Sports Site Memo, February 1971  
*“Lolo peak definitely is a unique area that has a value for recreational public use that overshadows all other uses. Other land uses such as timber cutting...etc., will be deferred until the area is developed for recreational use. This decision is made in the Missoula District Multiple Use Plan.”*

Jack Large, Lolo Forest Supervisor, September 27, 1971  
*“...recommended designation of winter sports and recreation as the key values in this area  
Further, we need to determine the specific area where timber harvest must be deferred to protect recreation values”.*

USFS Policy Statement to Resolve Recreation Issue No. 4, September 25, 1979  
*The Forest’s role in meeting demands for developed recreation ...Potential also exists for the construction of a new major ski area on the north slopes of Carlton Ridge and Lolo Peak. The Northern Region Ski Area inventory conducted in 1965 recognized this area as one of the best remaining ski development opportunities.*

February 1986 LNF Plan-Lolo National Forest management under this Forest plan does not create abrupt changes or sudden shifts from current direction. People can expect similar levels of goods and services from the Forest, and minimal change in land use patterns....The rich variant of recreation experiences available on the Forest will continue.

B. Objectives; 1. Resources/Activity Summaries; II-1

## **Maclay Ranch Property Recognized for Ideal Ski Area Startup**

USFS Ski Recreation Specialist Roger Lund joined the Missoula Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest around 1966. His family obtained deeded ownership of a site that held key development aspects for what he had stated to be one of the best ski area opportunities in America.

1966, November 16, Lolo Peak Winter Sports Area: Memorandum to the Lolo District Ranger from FS ski recreation specialist Roger Lund,  
*“The area offers one of the largest vertical drops and some of the longest ski runs in North America. The apparent potential of Lolo Peak as a winter sports center is so great that it can properly be classified as a national resource. Full development of this resource is in the best interest of the American public and should be a recognized goal of the Forest Service. Any development allowed on the area should be directed toward the ultimate full development of the resource. No facilities should be permitted that would detract from this ultimate goal”.*

The parcel Lund purchased was adjacent to USFS property near the top of the Maclay Ranch, but did not have development access. After 1963 USFS 1311 road construction, based on a 1961 road right-of-way purchase under the threat of condemnation from Holmes and Bruce Maclay, failed due to a landslide there were numerous USFS attempts to obtain additional road access easements to Carlton Ridge from the Maclay Family.

Tom Maclay was asked by USFS researchers for access to a Research Natural Area on Carlton Ridge. Tom was glad to provide access for the advancement of science, but would not allow an expanded 'general use' easement at his time.

1980-Recreation Management Forester R.O. Brandenberger:

*Meeting a proposed target is the only rational cited for the proposed RNA. ...the establishment of the RNA (if needed) should be deferred until the ski area potential is studied in more detail.*

It was never explained to the Maclay Family why it was not desirable for the USFS to use the functional portion of the original road to create a connection to the Carlton Ridge Road from the North, though this alignment would not have created development access for the Lund property to the south.

BNF 1980 Carlton-One Horse Transportation Plan: *"No road construction through wet areas without approval by soil scientist and hydrologist".*

Within weeks of Tom Maclay confirming to the Stevensville District Ranger, in a 1981 meeting, that a 'prescriptive easement' across Maclay Ranch would not be allowed to develop-the Maclay Family had allowed public access through the ranch to the Carlton Ridge & Lake Road for a number of years while waiting for the USFS to create an alternative to their 1963 road which was blocked by a landslide-the USFS decided to build their road through a route their hydrologist had warned them to avoid,

In 1978 USFS Hydrologist Rod Prellwitz warned, *"Do not touch this moist unstable mass".*

The 1981 Carlton-One Horse Environmental Assessment stated that this section of proposed road construction had been looked at by an Engineering Geologist, continues: *"The only mitigation measure to prevent slides would be to construct a cutoff trench to intercept water above the road. This would be a costly adventure and probably not reduce the risk significantly".*

In 1984 the new USFS 1311 road construction occurred. The USFS road building briefly created development access to the Lund parcel, but triggered a massive landslide. An out of court settlement by a watchdog group, (Roush vs. USFS), shortly after the landslide became evident, may have complicated

what had previously been termed 'Alternative Ski Area Access' from this location.

June 18, 1986 Letter to the BNF Supervisor. ... staff meeting on June 9, "to discuss the Maple Creek timber sale and the options that we feel are available to us to handle the situation in the area...Actions in the court have resulted in the cancellation of the sale in May 1986".

The Maclay Ranch property has had all of the necessary ingredients for economical development of a 'National-Class Ski Area' ever since the inception of the idea by the USFS. The Maclay Ranch location had a longer ski season, better lands for a base area and village, better highway access, and a drastically lower cost of development than the Lolo Creek base area site that was repeatedly documented as the main base by the USFS planners.

1988 Lolo Peak Ski Area Preliminary Review, by Dave Stack; II. History:  
*Snow surveys were started in 1966... showed a shortage of snow below 6000 feet. Recommendations included locating the base facility above this elevation, but presented several problems, namely: 1) constructing a road to access a base facility at 6000 feet or higher; 2) finding enough level ground at 6000 feet to build a large enough facility to be a national resort; 4) the likelihood that long periods of time would be spent on the ski lifts to get to snow if road access to 6000 feet was not practical.*

The 1990 Lolo Peak Snow Evaluation updated the 1966-1971 SCS Snow Survey at the request of the U. S. Forest Service and reinforced the earlier conclusions:  
*Frequency analysis and correlations of data indicate the base area should be about 5900 feet to meet the criteria shown above for opening dates. None of the potential base area are at this high of elevation/ If lower elevation base areas are utilized, (1) The skiing will be greatly restricted; (2) artificial snow-making equipment will need to be incorporated into the initial design and construction; or (3) access will need to be provided to and from the area above 5900' until there is a enough snowfall to ski the lower elevations. Because of the shallow snowpack in lower elevations and temperatures that normally begin to rise above freezing by mid-March significant melt is likely to occur at the elevations below 5000 feet. This could also shorten the ski season unless provisions are made to maintain the snowpack in these lower elevations.*

January 15, 1986 The potential ski area is now being called 'North Summit', instead of Carlton Ridge-Lolo Peak, [The 1984 McClain Creek Road construction triggered landslide appears to be an important reason to now omit any reference to Carlton Ridge]. In a 3 hour USFS meeting where serious questions were raised about project feasibility, first and foremost, whether snowmaking is viable at the 4600 foot level, Jerry Covault states, "If the Forest Service could gain control of, (a large parcel of private land), then we would be in the position of offering a prospectus for a ski area development. [It appears that Jerry had been brought in as the new 'Ski Area Specialist' as Roger Lund had now traded the land to a timber company and transferred to a different forest].

I believe this approach would lead to a prospectus that would be in acceptable to industry because of the following reasons:...

- To make the project economically viable, I think the USFS would have to assure that, (certain privately owned land), would be available as fee land to be developed by the permittee.
- Another thing the FS could do is to construct...the access road to the logical location of the lift terminals...(@ \$100,000+ per mile).
- The benefits we could see primarily relate to strengthening the economy in this part of Montana”.

Tom & Bruce Maclay were asked by the USFS to file a Tort Claim against the US Government as their preferred method to obtain funds to stabilize the landslide. During this process the government attorneys brought in 2 appraisers in an attempt to create a ‘Tax Code-1033 Involuntary Exchange’ of the Maclay Ranch property, (the Maclay Family has now called this ranch home for 140 years). Tom Maclay explained that the appraisal did not reflect any aspect of the ski area long studied by the Lolo National Forest-and the USFS attorney’s immediately went into settlement negotiations. Our family had been shocked that we were asked to engage the government in a lawsuit, in a way that meant we could not recover attorney’s fees, for USFS road building actions that resulted from overriding the clear warning of the USFS’ own hydrologist. It was inconceivable to our family at the time that this road connected to the property of a USFS employee who had, in the first case, purchased the property adjacent to the National Forest, in the second case, did so when it didn’t have developable access, and in the third case, that this was the very Ski Recreation Specialist planning the Lolo Peak Recreation Area project.

After the landslide became evident in 1985 the 13 year period that it took to resolve the landslide issue meant that the Maclay Family, for conflict of interest reasons, was unable to be involved in the 1986-1991 Missoula Community evaluation of the ski area. Within weeks of resolving the landslide issue Tom Maclay sat down with the Lolo Forest Ranger to pursue the ski area project, thinking that somehow the attributes of the Maclay Ranch had been overlooked in prior USFS evaluations.

To allow for better understanding the Bitterroot Resort SUP proposal map will detail the USFS/Roger Lund plan ski lifts, which created access for ski trails through some of the best ski terrain to be found anywhere, and which would have been easily accessed from the Lund property. As the Maclay Ranch property has always been better positioned for the development of the ski area than even the Lund Property, it will be easy to understand why much of the USFS/Lund plan would ideally be incorporated in our submittal.

## **Proposed Recreation & Activities**

Alpine skiing and snowboarding are the primary activities proposed under the Bitterroot Resort Special Use Permit proposal on the BNF & LNF. The size and variety of opportunity on this long considered site fit the broad recreation interests of many American, as well as international, guests. Importantly, the BR proposal for this site makes recreation accessible for all ages and abilities. A range of skier transportation lift types to be developed over time can create comfort and convenience that can allow many to enjoy mountain recreation at an earlier age, a later age, or despite physical challenges than might otherwise be considered.

Consistent with guest interest careful machine grooming of a number of ski slopes would be carried out to ensure an enjoyable experience, and similarly, a number of un-groomed options would ensure the ideal use of the deep powder snow found on this site. Also fitting the growth trends of skiing, some of the best side-country and backcountry skiing in the nation could be accessed from this site. The balance of terrain challenge on this site fits the proportional mix of skier & snowboarder skill levels.

In addition to alpine skiing & snowboarding, initial activities will focus on three public recreational opportunities, largely using the existing USFS road network in addition to private property adjoining the upper portion of the Maclay Ranch. These uses included the following recreational activities; Nordic skiing on groomed trails, mountain biking on the BNF trails and existing LNF roads and trails, & guided ski touring in the Carlton Basin. A trail connection between existing roads on the BNF can be made with 2.1 miles of new trail construction, creating a network of trails for all user capabilities of over 20 miles. The use of existing roads, with additional trail linkages in appropriate Management Areas, on the LNF can create an exceptional network of trails consistent with a National-Class ski area. This trail system is largely at 5500-6000 feet of elevation creating an ideal situation for snow accumulation, and retention, on what is largely a north aspect and well shaded location.

Cross-country mountain biking is proposed on the trails in the Forest. Downhill mountain bike features will be developed on the private land but are not proposed on the Forest. The abundance of terrain and constructed features on private land, with ready lift access will fill a void in the community and region for mountain bikers. This will likely take some pressure off of areas in the Forest where a due to a lack of alternatives 'pirate' trails have been developed.

## **Mountain Lifts & Facilities**

Based on considerable public input a key mitigation aspect we have incorporated is the minimal use of ridge line building structures, when compared to development plans and conceptals from as far back as 1966. A ski lift to the top of Lolo Peak has been removed from an earlier concept, and lodges on the tops of the three other most prominent points are not utilized as in earlier plans.

Out of view lifts on the BNF eliminate the use of a mile long, high visibility, ridge-line lift indicated in the USFS/Lund plan, thus protecting the multi-directional view planes cherished by many in the Missoula Valley of a peak known as the “North Summit”. Though North Summit is a mile away and substantially lower than Lolo Peak, it is the view most often associated with Lolo Peak. This Lift #7 from the USFS/Lund Plan hung along the edge of the ridgeline of North Summit exposing passengers to a potential 500’ fall onto a 45 degree slope, and a severely difficult potential evacuation. This alignment did have the effect, technically, of keeping the ski area planning off of the Bitterroot National Forest and thus kept the Maclay Family from having immediate standing in discussions about the ski area, so when our family members sought information about starting up a ski area we were told the Lolo National Forest was already working on a plan. It is easy to see why this Lift #7 alignment cascading for a mile along this prominent ridgeline would not be welcomed by people in the community.

Phasing of ski lifts, in conjunction with growing guest visitation, can be easily accomplished at Bitterroot Resort. An efficient lift layout provides exceptional terrain coverage with 9 initial lifts. Capacity can be then added as needed with lifts that augment the system, and include guest friendly features such as enclosed gondola cabins, higher travel speeds, and the ability to operate at higher wind speeds.

A proposed gondola is designed to carry guests from the base area village on private land to a point known as ‘Nordic Midway’, which would allow guests to directly access the heart of the Nordic trail network at about 6000 feet of elevation. This trip, with exceptional views of the McClain Creek Canyon, would take 7-10 minutes. The gondola route travels through a deep canyon (the North Fork of McClain Creek) beginning on private land that extends onto the BNF, minimizing visual impact. This conveyance is consistent with the intent for Management Area 3a where it is aligned, where that plan discusses the allowance for ‘Utility Corridors’.

Guests could then continue on the next leg of the gondola outside of the Research Natural Area, Management Area 6 on the Lolo National Forest, to

a central mountain lodge in about 20 minutes. In conjunction with the Forest Plan, an alternative gondola alignment across MA 6 would only take 8 minutes, (instead of 20 minutes for the second leg; thus a 15 minute total ride time, instead of 30 minutes).

There are 4 initial chairlifts proposed on the Bitterroot National Forest, and 5 chairlifts on the Lolo National Forest. These would allow for a broad range of skier and snowboarder experience for maximum beneficial public use. Over an expected 20+ year development timeline a total of 14 ski lifts are proposed on public land. This includes a gondola extension to what has previously been suggested as the main access point up Lolo Creek which would minimize traffic on Highway 12. In addition, the opportunity has been reserved for future connections via commuter train from Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley.

Much of the USFS/Lund Plan, including several ski lifts, ski trails, and a lodge at the base, focused on the excellent skiing in what is now Management Area 6, in the Mormon Creek drainage.

Lolo Peak Recreation Area; Multiple Use Survey Report, by Roger Lund, on reconnaissance completed the week of July 11, 1966 with Jack Fisher.  
"The skiable terrain lies on the north slopes of Lolo Peak in the drainages of Mormon, Mill and Cedar Creeks..."

MA 6 is a Research Natural Area that the Forest Plan assures will work in conjunction with the national-class ski area on Lolo Peak and Carlton Ridge, which is included in Forest Plan as MA 8.

In a March 1 1988 letter LNF Supervisor Orville Daniels states, "*Management Area 8 discusses National Forest land with potential for ski area development and specifically recognizes Lolo Peak-Carlton Ridge area as having potential to be developed as a national-class ski area*".

And in an April 13, 1988 letter to Missoula County Planner Pat O'Herren, Daniels clarified, "*Although the Forest Plan recognized Lolo Peak as having potential for alpine ski development, the area was allocated to other uses... Since development of a ski area was speculative, it was not appropriate to allocate lands for this purpose... This plan is dynamic and can be amended to accommodate a specific development proposal*".

Rather than have ski trails through the middle of MA 6, as in the USFS/Lund Plan, the BR plan proposes ski trails along the edges of this management area. The Mormon Creek Ski Lodge and chairlift loading terminals have been eliminated from the USFS/Lund Plan so as not to

encourage skiing in this zone. Bitterroot Resort will work with the USFS to satisfy the Forest Plan goals of skiing and research.

Lolo Forest Plan (Lolo-Carlton Ski Area Potential), Wm. A Worf/ROB, May 29, 1981  
*We agreed that establishment of an RNA, as proposed would preclude future consideration of the RNA for ski area development. At this time we cannot say how much, if any, of the proposed RNA would be needed or desirable for a ski area; but a 11/2/1966 "Lolo Peak Plan" we have on hand shows ski runs and lifts within the proposed RNA. We believe establishment of the RNA should be deferred until the ski area issue is resolved. A viable alternative would be to establish the RNA in similar habitat types in the adjacent wilderness.*

*Management prescriptions such as, [MA-6, 11, 16, 21, 24, 25], will be interpreted by many as precluding ski area development. The question isn't one of procedure or intent, but rather the public's perception. Management prescriptions for these units should specifically state that development of the ski area potential on Lolo-Carlton will be an alternative if a study determines ski area development is feasible.*

*The plan should point out that the Lolo-Carlton ski area potential is for a major-national class development...*

Lolo Peak-Carlton Ridge Ski Area/Carlton Ridge Coordinating Meeting, H. Bowles, Charles Tribe, Program Officer, Long Range Planning, July 3, 1981:

*...meeting was held to discuss the compatibility of managing the Carlton Ridge-Lolo Peak Area to provide for both a potential ski area development and a Research Natural Area. The purpose of the meeting was to reach a decision on how each of these proposals should be addressed in the Lolo Forest Plan.*

*1. The Carlton Ridge-Lolo Peak area is one of the best potential major-national class ski areas within the Northern Region of the National Forest System. Assets include a good balance of slopes (beginner, intermediate and expert), excellent vertical drop, north aspect, and proximity to Missoula and a commercial airport.*

*3. The two areas are not mutually exclusive. Approximately 900 acres are wanted for research, but not necessarily in one block. Three blocks of 300 acres would be acceptable to researchers.*

*6. RNA designations are made by the Chief of the FS, not Congress. Boundary adjustments could be made if necessary within Service. In some instances, roads have been constructed through RNA's.*

*7. RNA's sometimes require up to 10 years for establishment. The ski area would likely be at least 10 years off as well.*

*Decision: Language should be placed in the Lolo Forest Plan and in the RNA establishment report specifying that neither proposal will exclude the other. Both an RNA and an alpine ski area can be compatible with each other in the Carlton Ridge area. Researchers will work with the ski area planners to work out a location for the RNA units which is mutually acceptable.*

The Lolo Forest Plan does in fact point this out in Management Area 8:

- 8) Portions of 3 local ski areas containing ski runs, ski lifts, and lodges under special use permits issued to private operators.  
...the Lolo Peak-Carlton Ridge area has the potential to be developed as a national-class ski area.

And a key statement in section MA 6 regarding the creation of a RNA reads;  
Management Area 6-Research Natural Areas:

1. *The Lolo Peak-Carlton Ridge area has the potential for a ski area of national class. The location appears to contain sufficient room for both opportunities. Researchers have indicated that the area for research need not be in one solid block. Page III-17*

Furthermore, Section C. Standards, Item 7 on Page III-19 states: *Road construction is permitted as necessary to meet the area objectives.*  
And item 10. *The Carlton Ridge RNA proposal should not preclude the development of the potential ski area on the north slopes of Lolo Peak and Carlton Ridge. The establishment report for this RNA must discuss alternatives available for making the RNA compatible with the potential ski area development while ensuring retention of the principal research opportunities (e.g., alpine larch/western larch hybridization studies).*

With the use of a ski trail across MA 6, skiers unloading from lift terminals that reach the top of Carlton Ridge on the eastern side of MA 6 could traverse west into the Mill Creek Basin. This would allow for economical phasing of improved guest service. A trail across MA 6 might also allow for improved awareness and education of one of the most beautiful alpine zones in the region, previously a favorite of off-road vehicles along the Carlton Lake Road. The popularity of enjoying the uniqueness and beauty of this area was one of the reasons the Maclay Family endeavored to extended permission of public access through the ranch road system, for as long as was possible.

Ski Lifts to the eastern edge of LNF-MA 6 would travel from private land through BNF-MA 5. MA5 was approved for a mosaic pattern of fuel reduction logging in 1983 though much of this work was not completed at this time, perhaps due to the death of the logging contractor. While, as was anticipated by the USFS, amendment to various aspects of the Forest Plan would be necessary to allow a ski area if a developer made a proposal, it would clearly be in keeping with the history for this area. A mosaic of snow fields would be ideal for skiing, and allow for an uneven pattern for significant visual blending into the forest.

Consistent with the 50 year history and evolution of planning this area for ski recreation amendments to the Forest Plan, or approvals by the Chief Forester, may be necessary.

### **Construction Techniques**

Clearing of ski trails can be largely accomplished by current high-floatation logging equipment such as cut-to-length log forwarders that limit impact to

the ground by driving on unused materials from the trees they harvest. Areas with merchantable timber largely have road access. BR pledges to work with the USFS to plan and execute clearing of trails in a manner consistent with, or exceeding, the Best Management Practices and management area requirements.

Road access along Carlton Ridge, and also in areas of the mountain below 6000 feet of elevation, is generally adequate for the construction of the top and bottom terminals of ski lifts. Ski lift tower construction can be achieved between these proposed terminal locations with a range of low impact equipment and techniques including; handwork, spider-hoes, hi-flotation equipment tracks, helicopters, and extended length concrete pumping hoses.

### **Guest Facilities**

A combination day lodge and restaurant is proposed in a natural clearing, near an existing road, at an elevation of 8250 feet. This 8250 lodge is at a strategic location where guests of all skill levels can warm up or gather for a meal with friends and family without the need for an extended trip down the mountain to base lodge services. Bathrooms and essential ski sundries and services will also occur here. All other lifts can be easily reached from this site. Importantly, this is also where the most reliable snow on the mountain is found, above the 8000 foot level of elevation. The ability to have some of the most reliable snow cover in the United States will help ensure that Bitterroot Resort and the surrounding community are a first choice for family vacations due to the earliest openings and longest seasons. Though forested, this site is also at a location that showcases the diversity of the alpine environment in a way that is inclusive for all ages and abilities of both our skiing and our non-skiing guests.

Additional guest convenience buildings are proposed to be added over time located at the Nordic Midway, the Mill Creek Base 4650', Mill Creek 6000', Lantern Ridge at 6250', Mill Creek 6600', Carlton Ridge at about 7600', and Carlton Lake Cabin 8000'. One of the most frequent comments about our mountain plan that we hear from skiers is that they prefer to be able to enjoy an intimate setting when they take a break. By comparison the USFS/Lund Plan had 11 Day Lodges. The Carlton Lake Cabin is proposed as an historical reference to the original 'Dam Tender's' cabin, the structure remaining of which is near the main lake. Ski Patrol, and other safety structures, would also be sited as to appropriate needs after further evaluation and input.

Water and wastewater for the Mountain Lodge would be transmitted to and from Bitterroot Resort's adjacent private land. These facilities would be designed and constructed under permits from the state of Montana utilizing the most current technologies at the time of implementation and use Best Management Practices (BMP's). The existing, historic road bed will provide a suitable routing for these pipes and other infrastructure wherever possible. The utilization of clean power sources such as electricity or natural gas is preferred. Solar applications may also be considered. "LEED" and other green certification programs will be studied and pursued. Because Bitterroot Resort would be one of our nation's only new "resorts from scratch" in over two decades, there are many new and highly suitable leading technologies to employ. The lodge could be built with temporary or semi-permanent construction techniques. Ski Patrol huts could be of temporary construction, and distributed for superior guest safety and service.

A gondola will be the preferred transportation to facilitate activities and administration at central lodge site, allowing access to this environment for all ages and a mix of abilities, including for activities other than skiing. A gondola would minimize the need for vehicle trips to this site by staff and for supplies. Ample guest parking would occur on private land at the base area convenient to the snow front. This would allow earlier season skiing and race training at this higher elevation than most ski areas in the state, with an option for some Nordic trails at the 8000' elevation for even greater "snow insurance" and Olympic quality training at altitude. The gondola is also an easy way for all guests to return to the base without the need to ski the lower terrain.

Several ski trails per lift are proposed, which would fit the variety of terrain and range of skier skill categories and will be balanced with the uphill lift capacity providing for more efficiencies in land area used; this is difficult to attain in retrofitting old line, existing resorts. Importantly, all skill levels are amply provided for at this early, and naturally reliable, USFS snow site. Proposed ski trail widths would range between 100'-150' making use of the terrain for skiing character and also creating a visual mosaic that blends into the landscape when possible, consistent with prior USFS ski area planning expectations for this site. Similarly, the ski trails are in an area that has been carefully reserved over time from logging and road building, to ensure the best guest experience when a ski development was proposed.

Snowmaking at lower elevation is proposed on a small portion of the USFS property in order to provide exceptional guest experiences, and the ability ensure a reliable winter season for the community. Having reliable snow from Thanksgiving through mid-January is what really puts a ski area, and a community, on the map. In the past year many areas didn't have good snow until mid-February. Because of substantial snow fall, favorable aspect, and retention properties long ago identified in the Carlton Ridge area a small amount of snowmaking will go a long way towards making Bitterroot Resort one of the most desirable vacation choices in the nation. The compacted snow should also extend the run-off period for the local watersheds. Maclay Ranch water rights appear quite sufficient to be utilized for this, with a likely benefit for the local fisheries. This use would be consistent with Montana Water Law, and not impact other water rights. Snowmaking infrastructure and utilities would be largely underground.

Since this proposal is at the concept stage, final design features may change in response to further data collection, public comment, design and engineering, currency in technology and agencies input. A master development plan for the mountain would be prepared that will finalize lift, ski run and infrastructure requirements.

Over a 3 year period of guest snowcat skiing experience (about 1500 skiers), the Bitterroot Resort team has proven the ability to safely provide exceptional winter recreation, garnering over 4000 signatures of support for this project. Executive and senior management professionals with decades of demonstrated national and international experience in ski industry design, construction, operations, and maintenance, are at the ready to respond to this unique National level professional opportunity. This is largely due to the exceptional opportunity and nature of this project. For example, Mountain Planner Don Murray, a principle of ECOSIGN in Whistler, B.C., which has provided services to over 300 of the world's major resorts and has been guiding this project carefully since inception. ECOSIGN was chosen to assist the plan that was developed during the intensive Missoula community ski area review and evaluation between 1986 and 1991. The prospectus developed from this effort through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Lolo National Forest, the Missoula County Commissioner, the Missoula County Planning Office, and the Missoula Economic Development Corporation did not create a proposal from a developer. This likely was due to the issues identified previously by the USFS, as the cost of initial development from the Maclay Ranch was probably on the order of 5% of the

cost to develop from the Lolo Creek base location. However, this prior analysis did allow for the Bitterroot Resort team to build on the strengths of the project that were identified by both the 1986-1991 USFS & Missoula Community, and the 1966-1971 Lund/USFS, ski area planning exercises.

ECOSIGN Technical & Feasibility Analysis, and other technical data, is included in our submittal package.

During SUP-Screen Level 2, and also prior to construction, the proponents will demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Forest Service the ability to finance all capital improvements by phase, annual operations, regular maintenance, and termination of the resort.

The proposed period of SUP use for skiing would be from mid-November through April, and with a gondola there would likely be strong summer demand for access. An average of about 1000 guests per day ride the Jackson Hole Tram during the summer.

Presently the Mormon Peak road is open for public travel from May 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>, and these hikers would also have access to the 8250 lodge facilities. The trail access to Carlton Ridge from Mormon Lookout road was improved after the 'Big Landslide' curtailed public driving access to Carlton Ridge, Carlton Lakes, One Horse Basin, One Horse Peak, and Lolo Peak. The area has proven to be popular overtime, and it is one of very few alpine sites in the area that could be developed for access for all ages and abilities.

The future Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness addition in the Falls Creek area, Management Area 12, is fully supported by this proposal. Though there is excellent skiing in this area on the west side of Lolo Peak, no lifts are proposed in that location. Similar to many existing ski resorts on USFS land this resort proposal creates a transition zone, from vast Montana wilderness, to forested recreation lands, to populated and nearly urban areas. The resort site is at the extreme tip of about 3 million acres of wilderness. The proposal includes about 4000 acres of public ground for Nordic skiing, and about 8000 acres for lift served skiing and snowboarding. This constitutes about .4% of these two National Forests, and about .9% of the area of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Land adjacent to the current and proposed wilderness area is presently in a motorized zone, and a private easement is held on the Carlton Lake Reservoir which predates the USFS.

In all likelihood this location would be the last “national level resort” permitted in the nation, because of the USFS long standing recognition of its’ unique qualities, and delineation recognizing its exceptional site characteristics. It will fill community, regional, state, and national goals for recreation and economic development. In addition this is one of the few American resorts with the scenery, accessibility, and breadth of skiing terrain to become a national and international draw. This proposed resort is an ideal example of transition from an extractive resource economy, to a major year around employment center without resource extraction. Given the very large number of predominately summer tourists in Montana, a permit for Bitterroot Resort will create a large number of year round jobs while utilizing many existing facilities and businesses within our larger community. Bitterroot Resort will become one of the larger employers in the valley.

Due to the reliable and high quality snow that can be found at the Bitterroot Resort site, it likely would be highly regarded as an alternative location by the nation’s skiers as and when other areas receive insufficient snowfall. The US ski industry has achieved record visitation levels in recent years, but visits declined over 15% this past season due to limited snow in many places of the nation in the early season. The fact that skier visitation has been high in recent years despite economic turmoil underscores the strength of the economic model, and the reliance a community can place on this opportunity for economic stability. Rocky Mountain skiing remains the most preferred in the nation with about one third of the nations guest visits. Despite the northern latitude and reliable snow Utah and Colorado have about 5 and 10 times, respectively, the number of skier visits that occur in Montana. This suggests that there is a lot of opportunity for local and regional Montana ski areas to benefit from guests attracted to the region by a new national resort, again adding strength to our local economy.

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Like the beautiful and resilient Bitterroot flower, this resort opportunity has the potential to help the USFS satisfy community economic need, fill a national void with reliable early snow, provide exceptional recreation at an international level, with exemplary resource protection and environmental stewardship; all together, setting new standards for resorts around the world.