



SUMMIT HUTS ASSOCIATION PROPOSED WEBER GULCH BACKCOUNTRY HUT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE



June 2015

USDA Forest Service
White River National Forest
Dillon Ranger District



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Decision Notice

Summit Huts Association Weber Gulch Backcountry Hut Project Environmental Assessment

USDA Forest Service
Dillon Ranger District, White River National Forest
Summit County, Colorado

DECISION AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

After thoroughly considering the Purpose and Need for Action, issues, range of alternatives and analyses presented in the Summit Huts Association (SHA) Weber Gulch Backcountry Hut Project Environmental Assessment (EA), as well as public comments that were received, **I am approving Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action**. All Management Requirements identified in Table 2-2 of the EA (attached here at Appendix A) are hereby required as part of this decision.

The Selected Alternative will amend SHA's SUP to include construction and operation of a backcountry hut (including access trails and a dedicated parking lot) on NFS lands on the northern aspect of Bald Mountain. The attached figure identifies components of the Selected Alternative, which include:

Weber Gulch Backcountry Hut

SHA is approved to construct a backcountry hut. The hut has not been architecturally-designed, but is approved to be one- or two-stories and will be between 1,400 and 2,000 square feet in size. The overnight capacity of the hut is not to exceed 16 guests, in addition to a small hut master's quarters. The hut will be designed to conform to the Forest Service's Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG).

The hut is authorized for winter use only between the third week in November and April 30th of each year.

Guest Access to the Weber Gulch Backcountry Hut

Guest access to the hut will be accommodated by following a mix of existing and new roads/trails that begin at the existing *Sallie Barber Road* Trailhead. Hut users will access the hut as follows:

1. Climb (typically with backcountry/touring gear or snowshoes) *Sallie Barber Road* for approximately 1.3 miles (350 vertical feet). This is labeled as Trail Segment A.
2. At the Sallie Barber Mine (at the summit of the climb up *Sallie Barber Road*), hut users would turn left (south) and ascend approximately 0.9 mile (200 vertical feet) of the existing *Nightmare on Baldy* trail. This is labeled as Trail Segment B.

3. At that point, hut users would turn left (east) onto a new segment of single track trail that is proposed to be constructed. This new segment of single track would climb approximately 0.6 mile and 300 vertical feet (passing *Upper Trail of Tears*), continuing eastward for approximately 0.7 mile (200 vertical feet) to the proposed hut. These are labeled as Trail Segments C and E, respectively.

Parking

A dedicated overnight parking area (approximately 17 spaces) is approved to be constructed east of the existing *Sallie Barber Road* Trailhead, on the north side of French Gulch Road.

The approved parking area will accommodate Weber Gulch backcountry hut users during winter months. Approximately two parking spaces will be allocated to non-hut user overnight parking. Non-hut users will need to obtain authorization from Summit Huts Association to park overnight in the parking lot. When the Weber Gulch backcountry hut is not in operation (late spring, summer, and fall) the parking lot will be closed to public use. Parking at the Breckenridge Ice Rink will be an option for hut users; however, people who choose to park there will need to rely on the Summit Stage to access the trail system from the Bald Mountain trailhead and will need an overnight parking pass from the Town of Breckenridge.

Construction and Maintenance Access to the Proposed Weber Gulch Backcountry Hut

The hut will likely be assembled in modular sections off-site then transported to the construction site via helicopters and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). For construction and on-going maintenance access, Mt. Baldy Road will be used by motorized vehicles. Just beyond the Iowa Mill, an existing 4WD road will be utilized for approximately 1,000 feet. The *Upper Trail of Tears* (a singletrack trail on NFS lands) is approved to be widened and improved to create a 50-inch wide ATV trail. From that point, the trail becomes a dual-purpose access route for the final (approximately) 3,300 feet to the hut, accommodating non-motorized hut users in the winter, as well as motorized (ATV) administrative use in the summer. Refer to Sections “D” and “E” on the attached figure.

Public motorized use of the ATV route will be strictly prohibited. Gates and signage will be installed at key intersections along the proposed ATV route to discourage public motorized use.

Cuts and fills resulting from construction of the proposed ATV route will be revegetated to promote soil stabilization.

Supervisor’s Closure

The Analysis Area is functional as foraging, denning, diurnal security habitat, and is part of a Canada lynx movement corridor. Accordingly, a wildlife conservation measure—in the form of a Forest Supervisor’s closure—has been included in the Proposed Action to minimize disturbance to Canada lynx, also benefitting other forest carnivores and elk. The conservation measure is a required component of my decision.

During the summer, Trail Segment "E" will be closed (signed and gated) at its intersection with *Upper Trail of Tears* (Trail Segment D) and proposed Trail Segment "C." This Forest Supervisor's closure is designed to prevent hiking and biking use of Trail Segment "E" to the hut outside the winter operating season. Refer to Figure 2 for the location of Trail Segment "E."

BACKGROUND

Purpose and Need for Action

Colorado has one of the most well-established and heavily used networks of non-motorized backcountry huts in the United States. These huts have been very popular with the public since the founding of the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association (TMHA) in the mid-1980s, which manages and acts as reservation agent for 29 huts, including those managed by SHA. Since 1995 the TMHA has operated near capacity during the high season (defined as between late December through late March). Additionally, many of the huts experience moderate levels of use throughout the summer season.

The primary Purpose and Need for Action is to respond to the demand for backcountry huts in Summit County. The secondary purpose is to provide the public with, and to improve upon, an interconnected series of huts that were originally envisioned by SHA. As an indicator of demand, hut operators generally observe that as new huts are built, reservations for weekends and popular weeks are nearly immediately filled without decreasing the reservations of existing huts.¹ To meet the Purpose and Need for Action, numerous potential locations for a new hut in Summit County were considered by SHA and the WRNF; however, there were certain critical factors that ultimately led to the location in Weber Gulch. (Refer to the "Alternatives Considered but Eliminated" section in Chapter 2 of the EA for more information on the factors that go into a hut location, as well as other alternative locations that were considered but eliminated.)

DECISION RATIONALE

In reaching my decision I relied heavily upon an Interdisciplinary (ID) Team comprised of Forest Service resource specialists who analyzed the effects of the two alternatives documented in the EA. I fully considered public feedback received during the scoping and EA comment periods. In addition, I considered this proposal in the context of opportunities for dispersed recreation throughout Summit County.

SHA/WRNF Mission

SHA is a locally-based, non-profit corporation and special use permittee on the White River National Forest. It operates four backcountry huts in Summit and Park counties, emphasizing non-motorized, self-

¹ Filled reservations do not equate to 100 percent occupancy, as many parties will reserve an entire hut for a group that does not completely fill all of its beds. Mid-week availability is common throughout the season.
Zobbe, 2013

reliant backcountry travel and recreation, as well as a connection with the natural environment. SHA's mission is very much in alignment with that of the Forest Service, as we continually seek ways to better engage people with their National Forests.

NFS Lands in the Analysis Area

These are public lands that are managed for all to enjoy, and the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut will offer another opportunity for people to experience their National Forest. This proposal is fully consistent with pertinent management direction found in the WRNF's 2002 Forest Plan.

As a gateway to the White River National Forest, and given its proximity to Front Range communities, Summit County is an extremely important and popular year-round recreation destination. Although inbounds skiing at the four Summit County ski areas represents the most prominent winter activities locally, dispersed cross-county and backcountry skiing are important recreational components to locals and tourists alike.

The Analysis Area on the north side of Bald Mountain receives high year-round recreational use; this area is particularly important in the early winter as *Sallie Barber Road* is often one of the first locations in Summit County to receive and retain enough snow to support cross-country skiing. The popularity of *Sallie Barber Road* is due, in part, to how accessible it is from Breckenridge.

Note: The approved hut site is considered a special use area and located on public lands currently open to mineral entry. However, the Forest Service does not necessarily request mineral withdrawals of small special use areas such as campgrounds, recreation sites, scenic areas, or roadside zones. Potential incompatible uses between recreation and mining in such areas can be addressed by refusal to consent to leasing or restrictive stipulations associated with approval of mining plans of operations.

Dispersed Recreation and the Opportunities for Solitude

The sense of solitude that can accompany cross-country and backcountry skiing is an important part of the overall recreational experience throughout the Analysis Area. I wish to point out that there are, and will continue to be, abundant opportunities for backcountry activities and solitude within the Analysis Area, as well as on the WRNF throughout Summit County. An argument has been made that backcountry areas have been lost throughout Summit County over the years to developed skiing at the four Summit County resorts. That said, *no backcountry terrain will be lost as result of my approval* and this approval does not increase access to backcountry skiing on Bald Mountain; skiers will still need to get there on their own power. Beyond solitude, I understand that backcountry skiers search out untracked snow. While construction of the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut will certainly add to use of some backcountry terrain on Bald Mountain, I believe this is a good use of public lands and is consistent with the WRNF/SHA mission of promoting enjoyment of the natural environment.

While opportunities for solitude can be found occasionally on *Sallie Barber Road*, it is more notable for its connection to an array of Forest trails across Bald Mountain—many of which provide the user with varying degrees of solitude, depending on how far off the beaten path one is willing to venture. The Forest Service received comments that the potential for an additional 32 skiers per day associated with the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut will eliminate the sense of solitude that can be found on trails that branch off of *Sallie Barber Road*, including *Nightmare on Baldy* and the *Trail of Tears*.² To put it into context, the Selected Alternative incorporates a total of 3.5 miles of roads and trails to access the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut; *3.5 miles out of literally hundreds of miles of trails across the WRNF in Summit County alone*.³ Approximately 1.3 miles of this total are attributable to *Sallie Barber Road*, and another 1.3 miles are new trails that will be built specifically to access the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut. That leaves 0.9 mile of the existing *Nightmare on Baldy* trail that will experience higher use. In the context of the number of trails that offer opportunities for a backcountry experience and solitude throughout Summit County, I am convinced that this small impact to day users is outweighed by the recreational opportunities that the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut will bring to people who want to use their National Forest.

Sallie Barber Road Trailhead

The *Sallie Barber Road* Trailhead has limited parking available, and as a result of the popularity of this area, parking becomes an issue throughout the winter. The Forest Service and SHA factored this into the Proposed Action by including the hut-specific parking area located east of the existing day use parking area. The parking lot has been properly sized to accommodate an overlap in hut parties, as well as spaces allocated for overnight use. As a result, I do not anticipate any conflicts between day users and hut guests at the *Sallie Barber Road* Trailhead.

Changes to the Proposed Action and Additional Requirements

Removing the summer component from the proposal addressed some important issues—primarily wildlife and recreation. To be clear, the Selected Alternative does not approve summer uses at the hut, and no site-specific NEPA analysis has been performed on summer uses.

As indicated throughout the EA and Response to Comments, I am requiring SHA to coordinate with my staff at the Dillon Ranger District, as well as staff with the Town of Breckenridge and Summit County, for the preparation of an annual operations plan for the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut. The annual operations plans will define management of the parking lot during the hut's operating season to minimize the chance for conflict between hut guests and day users at the *Sallie Barber Road* Trailhead. Furthermore, the operations plan will address maintenance of the parking area during the winter and summer.

² This is considered a “worst case scenario” and assuming 100 percent occupancy of the hut. It accounts for skiers who are both accessing and departing from the hut throughout the day. Refer to page 3-12 of the EA.

³ This does not account for the 0.6 mile ATV route that would be used in the summer from Mt. Baldy Road.

Consideration of a Lower Capacity Hut

Throughout the EA the impacts to all biological, physical and human resources are analyzed based on a hut with an overnight capacity of 16 people. However, throughout both the scoping and EA comment periods, the suggestion was made to reduce the capacity to roughly eight persons to address potential impacts on recreation, traffic and parking in the analysis area. Although this concept is included in the “Alternatives and Design Components Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis” section of the EA (pages 2-5 through 2-8), I have further considered this option in making my decision. The potential impacts of a hut with an overnight capacity of 8 versus 16 are displayed in the following table. *Note: Although most of the analyses in the EA assume an average hut occupancy of 90 percent across the operating season, the following table uses 100 percent for comparative purposes.*

**Table DN-1:
Summary Comparison of Hut Capacity Impacts**

	HUT CAPACITY: 8	HUT CAPACITY: 16
Annual User Days <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 hut user = 1 user day. Therefore, a single guest who stays for 2 nights accounts for 2 user days• Assumes a 160-Day Operating Season	1,280 people	2,560 people
Average Daily Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumes an average vehicle occupancy of 2.8.• Does not account for parties staying for multiple nights	6 to 8 vehicles	12 to 16 vehicles
Daily Hut Users on <i>Sallie Barber Road</i> and <i>Nightmare on Baldy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accounts for both arriving and departing parties.• Assumes each party stays for a single night.	16 skiers	32 skiers
Average Daily Backcountry Use On Baldy Terrain <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assume 50% of hut guests venture into backcountry	4 skiers	8 skiers

My conclusion is that 16 additional overnight guests will have a minor impact on recreation, traffic and parking in the Analysis Area relative to current use. Therefore, reducing the overnight capacity to eight is not warranted.

Other Alternatives Considered

No alternatives to the Proposed Action were analyzed in detail in the EA; however, multiple alternatives and design components were considered early in the NEPA process. These included changes to hut location, hut design, trailhead locations and trail access, and parking lot locations. Each concept was thoroughly considered by the Forest Service (SHA was consulted, as necessary) and, for a mix of operational, recreational, and environmental factors, none were carried forward into detailed analysis. These concepts are explored in detail in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Four alternative parking lot locations were considered for providing dedicated overnight parking for SHA’s guests; three of these are located in the Lincoln Townsite (refer to Figure 4 of the EA for

locations). As explained in Chapter 2 of the EA, due to a mix of resource and logistical reasons, the Forest Service chose to eliminate each of these from detailed analysis.

As discussed previously, suggestions were made to minimize the overnight capacity of the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut in order to preserve a more intimate guest experience at the hut and on trails that would be used to access it. Backcountry huts have high overhead for management, operations, and upkeep; a capacity of 16 people, plus hut master's quarters, was determined to best balance these factors. For reference, other SHA-managed huts range in capacity from 12 to 20 people.

Alternative trailhead locations and access trails were suggested by commenters during the scoping period. While the Forest Service appreciates these suggestions, none of these locations were deemed suitable due to limited available parking space, current recreational use at these trailheads, and the unavailability of overnight parking. The suggestion to confine hut users to the old *Nightmare on Baldy* alignment (in order to avoid/minimize trail conflicts with day users on the realigned *Nightmare on Baldy* trail) was not carried forward because of its steepness and difficulty for ascending/descending on snow, particularly with backpacks and gear.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

On October 24, 2011 a scoping notice was released to the public initiating a 30-day comment period. Additionally, a public open house was held on November 3, 2011 at the Stephen C. West Ice Arena in Breckenridge. Representatives were present from the WRNF and SHA to answer questions and provide additional information on the project.

The 25 letters that were received during scoping were utilized by the Forest Service Interdisciplinary (ID) Team to identify substantive issues and to consider potential alternatives to the Proposed Action. After reviewing public comments, as well as internal concerns raised by Forest Service specialists, a list of issues was generated that guided the EA analysis. Issues are identified in Chapter 1 of the EA.

In August 2013, the EA was released for public review and comment. In response to the release of the EA, a total of 13 comment letters were received. The substantive comments included in those 13 comment letters form the basis for the Response to Comments, which is included with this Decision Notice.

Finally, a draft Decision Notice was released on July 30, 2014. This initiated a 45-day objection filing period, in which three objections were received. Conference calls or meetings were held with all objectors, who had the chance to clarify their issues. Attempts were made to resolve objections. As a result, the objection reviewing officer recommended changes to the EA and to this final Decision Notice. The reader is referred to the EA, which documents changes to management requirements/project design features, the range of alternatives, the cultural analysis, and the wildlife analysis.

In response to the objections, the Deputy Regional Forester for Region 2 instructed Forest Supervisor Fitzwilliams to address ten items in order to continue with the proposal. The instructions, along with how they have been addressed, are provided below:

1. Submit the Final BA to the USFWS requesting a letter of concurrence on the effects determination for lynx, including the issue of snow compaction.
 - The USFWS concurred with the Final BA on March 25, 2015. Refer to Chapter 3 Section E – Wildlife for additional information.
2. Provide additional explanation how consistency with management direction is being achieved in relation to snow compaction.
 - The decision to approve Alternative 2 will not result in a net increase in designated snow compaction routes on the DRD and thus snow compacting activities will not exceed the totals of the 2002 WRNF Snow Compaction Map for the Swan River LAU. Clarification has been made throughout the EA. Refer to Chapter 3 Section E – Wildlife for additional information.
3. Add the visitor use monitoring plan for the stand north of the proposed hut site as an appendix to the Decision Notice or EA. The monitoring plan will identify the trigger points to initiate adaptive management.
 - The monitoring plan is included in Appendix E. The monitoring plan may be amended over time to account for changes in visitor use patterns.
4. Explore access options to the proposed hut, including the shuttle bus. This may or may not result in a new alternative.
 - Access options, including alternate parking lot locations and a shuttle bus, were considered in the analysis. The option to utilize public transportation from the Stephen C. West Ice Arena will be available under Alternative 2. For additional information on the access options considered, refer to Section D in Chapter 2.
5. Fully explore the option of working in partnership with Summit County and Town of Breckenridge to utilize CDLT land interests to address the Weber Gulch backcountry hut parking needs in conjunction with addressing the existing parking issues along French Gulch road. This may or may not result in a new alternative.
 - The project team explored the option of utilizing CDLT land interests for a parking alternative. This option was dismissed from detailed study because the 2014 Cobb and Ebert Placer Open Space Management Plan did not contemplate the expansion of parking. There may be opportunities to work jointly with Summit County and the Town of Breckenridge to resolve existing parking issues outside of this analysis. Refer to Section D of Chapter 2 for additional information.

6. Consider a new alternative in detail that addresses the parking issue. This could include utilizing existing transit, a site on CDLT land, a site east of Humbug Road, or other alternative location. A decision addressing parking needs must be made in conjunction with a decision for the Weber Gulch backcountry hut and associated trail decision. The parking lot component of the project cannot be segmented from the rest of the project.
 - Several additional parking options were considered but eliminated from further analysis. The analysis took parking into account, along with each of the other resources discussed in Chapter 3. Refer to Section D of Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 Section B – Parking and Traffic for additional information.
7. If Alternative 2 is selected, then provide additional protection measures for the Milner gravesite, which could include the recommendation made by Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc. in their November 2014 report.
 - Protection measures for the Milner gravesite—including maximizing the distance between the gravesite and any ground disturbance, having a qualified archaeological monitor on-site during all surface-disturbing and excavation activities, and ground-truthing methods of determining if unmarked graves are present will be employed prior to construction of the parking lot—are all included in Chapter 3 Section D – Cultural Resources, and in Appendix A of this Decision Notice as Management Requirements.
8. Conduct additional SHPO consultation based on the new information provided by Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., including the National Register of Historic Places significance of the Milner grave, potential effects, and recommendations for protection.
 - Additional SHPO consultation regarding potential impacts to the Lincoln Townsite was conducted and SHPO concurred in a letter dated March 23, 2015 with a finding of *no adverse effect* (36 CFR §800.5(b)), provided the Forest Service provides for a yearly monitor of the resource to ensure it is not being vandalized. Refer to Chapter 3 Section D – Cultural Resources for additional information.
9. If Alternative 2 is selected, then specifically address the steps that would be taken in the event human remains are discovered. Include steps through final disposition of the remains.
 - The presence of an archaeological monitor during all surface-disturbing activities will ensure that human remains are appropriately handled and protected in the event that something is encountered. Refer to Chapter 3 Section D – Cultural Resources for additional information.
10. If Alternative 2 is selected, then edit the Cultural Resources Design Features in the Decision Notice to ensure the stipulations referring to unanticipated discoveries also address the discovery of human remains.

- The Management Requirements listed in Appendix A of this Decision Notice (specifically, the presence of a qualified archaeological monitor) address unmarked graves and cover the unanticipated discovery of human remains.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the 2002 White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as required by the National Forest Management Act and all other laws, regulations and policies that govern Forest Service actions. With modifications made mid-way through the NEPA process, the project was designed to conform to the Forest Plan and all other laws, regulations and policies. Site-specific Management Requirements (Table 2-2 of the EA) and Forest Plan standards and guidelines will be applied, as appropriate, to meet Forest Plan goals and desired conditions.

In addition, the Selected Alternative meets requirements under the following laws, regulations and policies:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990
- Clean Air Act of 1955, as amended
- Clean Water Act of 1948, as amended
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
- National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986, as amended
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended
- Protection of Wetlands Executive Order 11990

APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

This project was subject to the pre-decisional objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218. Three objections were filed. In an attempt to clarify and resolve the objections, the Forest Service held meetings/conference calls with the objectors. The objection reviewing officer recommended changes that resulted in preparation of the EA and this final Decision Notice. Approved projects may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

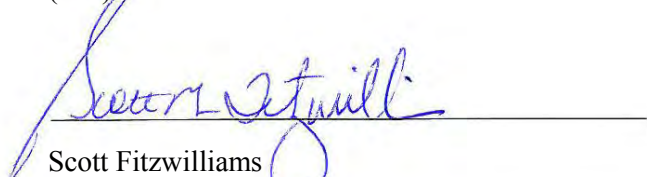
For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service objection process, contact:

Shelly Grail Braudis, Winter Sports Lead

Dillon Ranger District

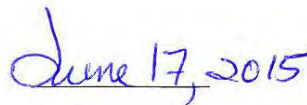
sgrail@fs.fed.us

(970) 262-3484



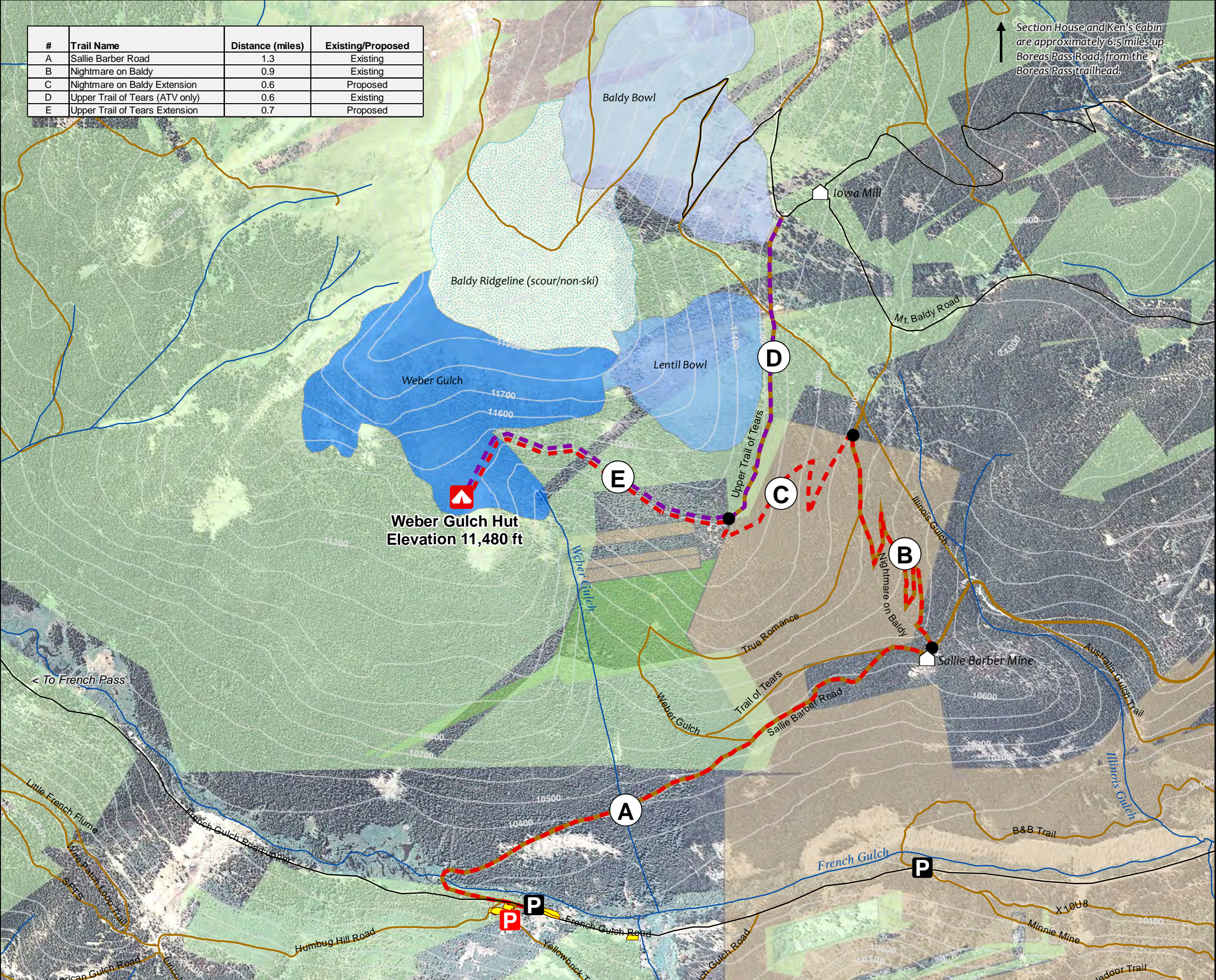
Scott Fitzwilliams

White River National Forest Supervisor



Date

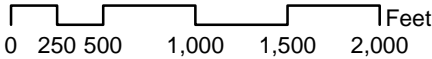
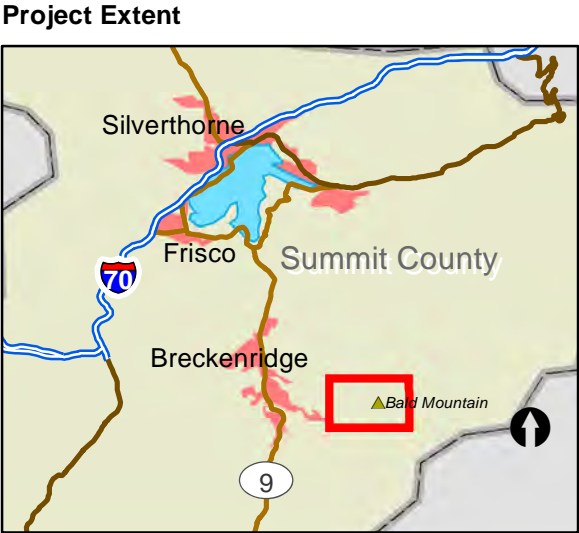
#	Trail Name	Distance (miles)	Existing/Proposed
A	Sallie Barber Road	1.3	Existing
B	Nightmare on Baldy	0.9	Existing
C	Nightmare on Baldy Extension	0.6	Proposed
D	Upper Trail of Tears (ATV only)	0.6	Existing
E	Upper Trail of Tears Extension	0.7	Proposed



Summit Huts Association

Selected Alternative

- Skiable Areas**
- Weber Gulch
 - Lentic Bowl
 - Baldy Bowl
- Parking**
- Existing Parking
 - Proposed Hut Parking
 - Proposed Parking Estimated Area
- Access**
- Proposed Ski/Snowshoe
 - Proposed Administrative Access (ATV)
 - Prop. Ski/Snowshoe on Existing Trail
 - Prop. Admin. Access (ATV) on Existing
 - Existing Trails
 - Existing Roads
- Land Ownership**
- Summit County
 - Summit County/Town of Breckenridge
 - National Forest
 - Non-Shaded Indicates Private



Contour Interval: 100 Feet



June 2015



Appendix A:

Environmental Assessment Table 2-2

**Table 2-2:
Management Requirements and Project Design Features**

CULTURAL
If undocumented historic and/or prehistoric properties are located during ground disturbing activities or planning activities associated with approved construction activities, all construction in the immediate vicinity would cease and they would be treated as specified in 36 CFR 800.11 concerning Properties Discovered During Implementation of an Undertaking.
The Lincoln Townsite grave will be avoided during construction and maintenance of the proposed parking lot to ensure that its integrity is not compromised.
Prior to construction of the parking lot, ground-truthing methods of determining if unmarked graves are present will be employed.
A qualified archaeological monitor will be present during all surface-disturbing and excavation activities for construction of the proposed parking lot. Further, the archaeologist should coordinate directly with the construction contractor to provide for careful removal of topsoil and subsoils on the east side of the parking area, at least until it appears clear that no unmarked graves are present.
The engineering of the proposed parking lot will be modified to allow for a retaining structure to prevent disturbance or subsequent erosion from coming in close proximity to the Milner grave. A distance of at least 30 feet between the grave and the extent of any surface modification will be maintained. This should also help prevent the grave from being impacted by snow storage when the parking area is plowed. Doing so will also help prevent exacerbating erosion that may result from changes to the slope in the vicinity of the grave.
SCENERY
Conform site development, sustainability, and architectural character of the Weber Gulch backcountry hut to the Forest Service's Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG).
WILDLIFE
All construction activities will be confined to daylight hours, excluding emergencies.
SHA's guests and construction workers are prohibited from bringing dogs to the hut site.
If boreal owl nests are detected within impact areas, direct mortality of eggs and/or nestlings will be avoided by avoiding trees that could support nest cavities, limbing (vs. cutting) trees to provide the required clearance, or conducting tree removal in potential nesting habitat outside of the May 21 to July 15 nesting (with eggs/young) period.
If olive-sided flycatcher nests are detected within impact areas, direct mortality of eggs and/or nestlings will be avoided by avoiding trees that could support nest cavities, limbing (vs. cutting) trees to provide the required clearance, or conducting tree removal in potential nesting habitat outside of the June 1 to July 15 nesting period.
If American marten dens are detected within impact areas, direct mortality of current year recruitment will be avoided by avoiding trees that could support dens, limbing (vs. cutting) trees to provide the required clearance, or conducting tree removal in potential denning habitat outside of the March 1 to June 15 period.

**Table 2-2:
Management Requirements and Project Design Features**

To minimize impacts to Canada lynx, elk, and forest carnivores, the new trail extension to the hut, where it departs from the existing <i>Upper Trail of Tears</i> (Segment E), shall be closed (signed and gated, via a Forest Supervisor's closure) to prevent hiking and bike access to the hut outside the winter operating season. Limiting hut use to the winter season only (i.e., no summer use) and preventing summer human access along those corridors to the hut is important to minimize potential impacts to lynx habitat use (including, but not limited to movements, denning, and diurnal security use) within this portion of the Southern Summit County lynx conservation corridor. A monitoring plan (refer to Appendix E) will be developed to identify unauthorized summer use of the area that is subject to the Supervisor's closure. The monitoring plan will identify trigger points for adaptive management actions.
Precluding skier use in terrain below (north of) the hut would reduce snow compaction while minimizing disturbances to lynx habitat (including potential denning) in a large, intact, higher quality habitat block. Display posters and other informational educational materials at the hut to inform guests about the local lynx issue, lynx natural history, the lynx movement corridor, proper waste disposal, and the habitat below the hut and access trail (see below).
Implement adaptive management to more effectively close the higher quality habitat block below the hut and access trail if periodic monitoring suggests that non-compliance is reaching levels that could adversely affect habitat values of lynx and its prey base. The monitoring plan will identify trigger points for adaptive management actions.
SHA and the Forest Service will ensure that maintenance trips involving the use of ATVs are conducted outside of the hunting season each year.
Minimize outdoor lighting at the hut and utilize downcast lighting to further minimize fugitive light.
The Great Flume Trail is identified on the WRNF's 2002 Baseline Snow Compaction map as a "compacted route." However, after two years of winter monitoring, it was documented that the Great Flume trail is not being used in the winter. This lack of use is likely due to thick timber in the area, combined with the fact that it is a single-track trail in the summer months, making it quite difficult to find in the winter. Because in reality the 8-mile long Great Flume trail is <i>not</i> compacted, the trail was removed from the WRNF's 2002 Baseline Snow Compaction map. This resulted in 8 fewer miles of mapped snow compaction in the Swan River LAU. For the access trail into the proposed Weber Gulch backcountry hut site, approximately 1.5 miles of new snow compaction will be created. When 1.5 miles is added to the 8-mile reduction, the net result is a reduction of 6.5 miles of mapped compaction in the LAU. This allowed the new trail to be consistent with the Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment (SRLA) HU G 10 (designated over-the-snow routes or designated play areas should not expand outside baseline areas of consistent snow compaction). <i>This was strictly an accounting exercise</i> ; the wildlife analysis contained in the Biological Assessment, and Chapter 3 Section E – Wildlife of this EA, discusses the biological impacts of snow compaction on lynx.
VEGETATION
As needed, re-vegetation would be completed around the proposed hut site and parking area using native species where feasible, preferably collected from local genetic stock or seed available from local Forests' Native Plant Materials programs. (Forest Plan Biodiversity Standard #1; Forest Plan Biodiversity Guideline #1; FSM 2070)
All mulch, hay and straw used will be certified weed-free. A seed mix will be approved by the USFS. (Forest Plan Weeds Standard #3)
Tree clearing limits would be adequately marked to minimize mistakes in clearing limits during construction.
Any Engelmann spruce that is felled must be either removed from the area or treated within one year after felling to prevent the buildup of spruce bark beetle. Treatments can include burning, burying or peeling the bark off felled Engelmann spruce.
A vegetation management plan would be prepared by SHA (in conjunction with the Forest Service), including measures to minimize overstory vegetation removal and adequately establish desirable vegetation in disturbed areas.

**Table 2-2:
Management Requirements and Project Design Features**

SOIL RESOURCES
Stabilize and maintain disturbed areas such as the parking lot, trail and the hut site during and after construction to control erosion (Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for Soils, #1)
Construct the parking lot, trail and hut site to minimize sediment discharge into streams, lakes, and wetlands (Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for Soils, #3)
Maintain or improve long-term levels of organic matter and nutrients on all lands. Stockpile topsoil and return surface soils after construction to restore site organic matter where possible surrounding hut, parking lot and trail disturbance (WCPH Management Measure 14).
WATER RESOURCES
Manage land treatments to conserve site moisture and to protect long-term stream health from damage by increased runoff. Specifically (a) minimize connected disturbed area by ensuring that parking areas, roads, road ditches, trails, and other disturbed areas drain to undisturbed soils rather than directly to streams; and (b) manipulate drainage from disturbed areas as necessary using natural topography, rolling dips, waterbars, ditch-relief culverts, etc., to disconnect disturbed areas from streams (WCPH Management Measure 1)
Slope disturbed sites, the parking lot and trail away from French Gulch and the Weber Gulch drainage. Use rolling grades, grade reversals and drain dips on trails, particularly where trails approach streams or swales, to minimize the length of trail surface that drains directly to streams.
Keep heavy equipment out of streams, swales, riparian areas, and wetlands, except to cross at designated points.
Keep logging slash and debris out of ditches and drainage channels.
Reclaim disturbed areas promptly to prevent resource damage and invasion of noxious weeds. (WCPH Management Measure 12)
After operations are completed provide stable drainage to disconnect disturbed areas.(WCPH Management Measure 12)
Keep equipment on designated trails. (WCPH Management Measure 13)
Locate vehicle service and fuel areas on gentle upland sites at least 100 feet away from streams to prevent pollutants from contaminating water. (WCPH Management Measure 15)
Design and construct water bars to discharge surface runoff originating from the parking area and trail areas away from the WIZ and into well-vegetated areas, effectively disconnecting disturbed areas from the stream channel.
Design water bars to encourage sediment separation and dispersion of flow by using straw bales and fiber logs or other appropriate management at discharge points.
Mulch and seed disturbed areas promptly upon project completion. Use appropriate revegetation tools such as weed-free straw, wood chips, bark, jute mat, etc.

**Table 2-2:
Management Requirements and Project Design Features**

NOXIOUS WEEDS
<p>To minimize the spread of noxious weeds during construction, the following measures would apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clean construction equipment prior to entry onto NFS land. Equipment may require USFS inspection prior to moving it from areas infested with invasive species of concern to areas free of such invasive species. Coordinate with the USFS Weed Program Manager. Take reasonable measures to make sure equipment is free of soil, seeds, vegetative matter, or other debris that could contain noxious weed seeds before moving into the Project Area. All equipment surfaces should be cleaned, especially drive systems, tracks and “pinch points” to ensure removal of potentially invasive debris. Reasonable measures include pressure-washing or steam cleaning in an offsite location so oil, grease, soil and plant debris can be contained and provide optimal protection of project areas. A USFS Representative shall be notified at least 24 hours in advance of off-road equipment arriving on the Forest, to provide the option of inspecting the equipment to ensure it has been cleaned as required. Equipment may also require inspection prior to moving it from areas infested with invasive species of concern to areas free of such invasive species. Those areas can be identified prior to project implementation with the USFS Weed Program Manager. Before implementing any approved ground-disturbing activities, coordinate with the Forest Service District Weed Coordinator to determine if surveys would be needed within project areas to document the presence of any pre-existing weed infestations. Treat infestations prior to ground-disturbing activities and remove all weed seed and propagules to prevent spread.
PARKING
<p>SHA will prepare an annual operations plan that clearly articulates the management/maintenance of the parking area and submit it to the Dillon Ranger District. The Operations Plan will be developed in coordination with the Town of Breckenridge and Summit County. The Plan will address, but not be limited to, the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking lot maintenance Snow removal Monitoring and Enforcement Signage Overnight parking authorization and limits Summer parking management Design/appearance of parking lot Access to adjacent authorized uses