



File Code: 2720

Date: February 19, 2026

Dear Interested Party:

The White River National Forest (WRNF) is soliciting public comments on a proposal from the Town of Frisco (TOF) and Summit Huts Association (Summit Huts) to implement the following projects at the Frisco Nordic Center (FNC):

- development of a new winter Nordic ski trail,
- new summer multi-use trail,
- new overnight hut,
- and adjustments to the existing FNC special use permit (SUP) area to accommodate these proposed improvements.

The proposed projects are consistent with the goals identified in FNC's accepted 2019 Master Development Plan (MDP), and the proposed overnight hut is also consistent with the goals identified in Summit Hut's 1990 MDP. The proposed projects would occur on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the existing and proposed SUP areas and private lands owned by Colorado Open Lands, as well as within the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) right-of-way (ROW). Specifically, the proposed trails would overlap the Iron Springs Open Space Deed of Conservation Easement Property, a private parcel owned by Colorado Open Lands. Additionally, approximately 64 feet of the proposed Nordic ski trail would overlap the CDOT ROW for Highway 9. The projects would expand upon two previously approved projects, the 2019 Phase 1 Trails Categorical Exclusion (CE) and the 2021 Phase 2 Trails CE. The proposed projects would increase recreation opportunities through improved trail connectivity and access to the FNC. Refer to the attached figures for a depiction of the proposed projects. This information is also available on the WRNF Pinyon public site: <https://usfs.app.box.com/folder/365430426107?s=fnm11z6prcrycz5dk2ba1dsad5czwiwe>.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed projects is to enhance year-round recreational opportunities at the FNC by improving trail connectivity and access to recreational opportunities, serving a diverse range of users. More specifically, the purposes of the proposed projects are to:

- Improve the soft-surface trail connection between Summit High School and the existing FNC trail network to provide seamless connectivity to the Nordic and summer trails within the existing SUP area; and
- Provide an overnight hut that enhances accessibility to backcountry huts for residents, families, and visitors that may lack the specialized skills necessary to access other huts on the WRNF.

There is a need to improve connectivity between the trail network within the existing SUP area and Summit High School. The Dillon Recreation Pathway currently serves as the only connection between these two areas. The hard-surface trail often experiences heavy use and congestion at parking access points. The proposed trails would provide for more user capacity by adding an additional, soft-surface trail connection between the FNC trail network, the high school, and greater Summit County. The proposed trails would also provide easy access to the soft-surface NFS trails located just south of Highway 9 on NFS land that locals call the "Backyard." There is also a need to provide high school Nordic skiers with a convenient loop option near the school. To meet this need, the proposed summer multi-use trail would be used in the winter alongside the proposed Nordic trail to create a nearby loop for students and residents alike. There is also a need to adjust the SUP boundary to incorporate these two proposed trails. The proposed SUP adjustment area would only encompass NFS lands



between Highway 9 and the Dillon Recreation Pathway that resulted from the realignment of Highway 9 in 2017. Given its proximity to existing FNC operations, FNC considers it practical to manage the land by including it in the adjusted SUP boundary. Although the proposed SUP adjustment area would only encompass NFS lands, FNC would be granted a lease for the two proposed trail segments located on Colorado Open Space lands and would submit for a trail license and SUP for the proposed Nordic ski trail located within the CDOT ROW.

There is also a need to construct an overnight hut accessible to a wider range of users. Access to existing huts in Summit County typically requires backcountry skills, experience, and specialized equipment, creating barriers for less-experienced users. The proposed hut would provide an option for residents, families, and visitors seeking an accessible overnight experience on the National Forest. The hut would provide a unique experience focused on introducing novice users to the backcountry environment. By catering to a different demographic in Summit County, the hut would provide these users with a new opportunity for outdoor recreation on the National Forest and promote use of trails within the FNC.

Proposed Action

Winter Trail

The proposed winter Nordic trail would be approximately 1.4 miles long, spanning NFS lands (0.9 miles) within the proposed SUP adjustment area, Colorado Open Lands (0.5 mile), and CDOT ROW (64 feet) (refer to **Figure 1**). The trail would be 18 feet wide to allow for a single skating lane and a single classic track. The trail would be machine-groomed in the winter for Nordic skiing, and motorized vehicle use would be limited to required trail maintenance. The trail would be closed in the summer, with buck-and-rail fencing installed along areas overlapping the proposed summer trail to restrict access. Fencing would remain in place for 8-10 years or until the trail is fully established. Buck-and-rail fencing would not inhibit wildlife movement and is currently used throughout the existing SUP area.

The trail would be designed to require limited grading, tree and vegetation removal, and drainage infrastructure. Construction would be completed by hand and with an excavator as necessary to remove rocks, clear vegetation (where not avoidable), and correct camber. Additionally, a 2- to 3-foot clearance corridor on either side of the trail would be maintained for construction and safety. Construction of the proposed winter Nordic trail would require a total of approximately 4.2 acres of disturbance. Following construction, the trail surface would be reseeded to promote revegetation of native grasses and prevent erosion.

The proposed winter Nordic trail would cross into the CDOT 150-foot ROW buffer in one location, with approximately 64 feet of the trail overlapping the CDOT ROW. Additional coordination has occurred with CDOT on the alignment of the trail. It has been determined that following a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision a separate trail license and SUP would be approved for the 64 feet of trail that pass through the ROW. Securing this trail license and SUP would occur prior to construction of the trail.

Summer Trail

The proposed summer trail would be a multi-use trail approximately 1.3 miles long, spanning both NFS lands (0.9 mile) within the proposed SUP adjustment area, and Colorado Open Lands (0.4 mile) (refer to **Figure 1**). The trail would be 2 feet wide and designed to minimize potential impacts to sensitive resources similar to the proposed Nordic trail. Additionally, it would be drag groomed in the winter and remain open to provide winter multi-sport loop options for walking, snowshoeing, Nordic skiing and snow biking. Motorized vehicle use for grooming would be limited to required trail maintenance.

Construction would be completed by hand and small machinery where necessary. The trail surface would consist of natural earthen material, initially cut to 3 feet wide but narrowed and maintained at 2 feet following construction. Additionally, a 2- to 3-foot clearance corridor on either side of the trail would be maintained for construction and safety. The trail would follow the natural contours of the terrain and would be designed



similarly to the winter trail to minimize overall disturbance. Construction of the proposed summer trail would require a total of approximately 1.4 acres of disturbance, including approximately 1.2 acres of permanent disturbance and 0.2 acre of temporary disturbance.

Overnight Hut

The proposed overnight hut would introduce local residents and visitors to a new and easily-accessible recreation opportunity on the Forest, without requiring specialized backcountry skills or equipment. The hut would be located within the existing FNC SUP area and would be located within a separate Summit Huts SUP area of approximately 2 acres (see below for more information). Construction of the proposed hut is anticipated to require up to 2 acres of disturbance within the identified proposed hut SUP area (refer to **Figure 1**). However, the exact disturbance acreage is subject to refinement as planning progresses and more detailed engineering and architectural designs are developed. The final size and boundaries of the SUP area for the hut would be determined following engineering and architectural review in coordination with the WRNF and Summit Huts. The hut would be a one to two story structure with a capacity to sleep 8-10 people (refer to **Images 1-4** below for an idea of what the hut could look like). Design of the hut would follow built environment image guidelines for the WRNF in coordination with the WRNF landscape architect and engineering specialists. The hut would be used nearly year-round, but closed as needed for maintenance. The hut would include amenities such as a kitchen, heating, lighting, propane, and an indoor vault toilet. Water would be supplied via a cistern on the first floor, supplemented by hauled water in the summer and fall. Heating would be provided by a wood stove, lighting provided via solar power, and propane provided via an approximately 1000-gallon buried tank. The proposed hut would incorporate design features to avoid impacts to dark skies, including windows with anti-glare coating and shielded light fixtures that directs light downward. Given these design features and developed nature of the area, the proposed hut would blend with the surrounding viewshed. A site map and schematic of the hut would be produced and reviewed by WRNF engineering and architecture specialists prior to construction.

Image 1: Example Hut



Image 2: Example Hut



Image 3: Example Hut*Image 4: Example Hut*

Construction and maintenance access would utilize existing roads and trails within the FNC SUP area, primarily via the Buzzsaw Trail. Overnight parking for hut users would be provided by designated parking spaces located near the entrance to the TOF snow storage lot adjacent to the FNC. Specifically, users would access the hut via the Buzzsaw and Crown Point Trails in the winter and the Crown Point Road in the summer (refer to **Figures 2 and 3**). It is estimated that users would travel approximately 1.05 miles along existing trails and roads from the parking areas to access the proposed hut. Signage would be installed around the hut to inform nearby users of its purpose and to specify that access in and around the hut is restricted to registered guests only.

The hut would be owned and managed by Summit Huts in a manner consistent with their current SUP and their other facilities elsewhere on the WRNF. The TOF would be responsible for providing year-round parking and access, including winter plowing and grooming from the designated hut parking spaces on TOF land to the actual hut location. Once guests leave the FNC SUP area and enter the Summit Huts SUP area, Summit Huts would be responsible for the guests. Summit Huts and TOF would divide revenues from hut fees as agreed upon in a Management Agreement. Prior to implementing any aspect of the hut, TOF and Summit Huts would provide the Management Agreement to the WRNF for approval.

SUP Adjustment

The existing FNC SUP area is proposed to be adjusted to provide a seamless connection between the existing and proposed Nordic and summer trail segments on NFS lands. The SUP would be expanded by approximately 39 acres, bringing the total area to approximately 624 acres. This expansion would only include NFS lands between Highway 9 and the Dillon Recreation Pathway. This parcel was created by the 2017 CDOT Iron Springs Project which realigned Highway 9 and provided a safer travel route for recreation path users. Given its proximity to existing FNC operations, FNC believes it would be appropriate to incorporate the land into the new SUP area for management by the FNC. Although the SUP area would only encompass NFS lands, FNC would be granted a lease for the operation and management of the two proposed trail segments located on Colorado Open Spaces lands. In January 2025, Colorado Open Lands determined that the proposed trail construction was consistent with the terms of the Conservation Easement and approved the request in a formal letter. FNC received final approval from the TOF Town Council for use of the Colorado Open Lands parcel for proposed trail development on January 28, 2026.

Disturbed areas would be restored following project completion to maintain a low-impact appearance. Site-specific surveys for potential impacts to resources have been completed during the Summer of 2025.

Project Disturbance

Refer to **Table 1** for a summary of the disturbance associated with the proposed projects.

Table 1. Estimated Project Disturbance

Project Component	Disturbance (Acres)		
	Permanent Disturbance	Temporary Disturbance	Total
Winter Trail	4.2		4.2
Summer Multi-Use Trail	1.2	0.2	1.4
Overnight Hut	2.1*		2.1
Total			7.7

*Exact disturbance acreage is subject to refinement as planning progresses and more detailed designs are developed.

Categorical Exclusion

Given our initial review of the proposed projects, it is anticipated the projects may be categorically excluded from an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Specifically, we anticipate reviewing the proposed trails and overnight hut as a categorical exclusion (CE) under category 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1b.4(d)(44), which includes: “*Construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, or disposal of buildings, infrastructure, or improvements at an existing recreation site, including infrastructure or improvements that are adjacent or connected to an existing recreation site and provide access or utilities for that site,*” and the proposed SUP boundary adjustment as a CE under category 7 CFR § 1b.4(c)(19), which includes: “*Issuance of a new permit for up to the maximum tenure allowable under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b) for an existing ski area when such issuance is a purely ministerial action to account for administrative changes, such as a change in ownership of ski area improvements, expiration of the current permit, or a change in the statutory authority applicable to the current permit.*” Since these projects are inherently related, the proposed projects will be analyzed under a single Findings of Applicability and No Extraordinary Circumstances (FANEC) document.

How to Comment and Timeframe

We are informing you of a 30-day comment period, beginning February 23, 2026, for the proposed projects. Comments will be accepted any time but will be most helpful if submitted March 25, 2026. Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act. Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

Electronic comments are encouraged and can be submitted online at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=178875>. Written comments may be submitted via mail to: Sarah Strehle, Mountain Sports Administrator, c/o Dillon Ranger District Office, 680 Blue River Parkway, Silverthorne, CO 80498. Persons commenting should include: (1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any; (2) title of the project: Frisco Nordic Center Iron Springs Trails, Hut, and SUP Adjustment; and (3) specific facts, concerns, or issues, and supporting reasons why the Responsible Official should consider them during the project planning process.

If you have questions about the proposed project, please contact Sarah Strehle, Mountain Sports Administrator for the Dillon Ranger District of the WRNF, at sarah.strehle@usda.gov or 970-401-0863.

Sincerely,

BRIAN GLASPELL
Forest Supervisor

