

# ISSUES TO BE ANALYZED IN THE SNOW KING EIS

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This document includes the issue statements, including indicators, to be considered in the Snow King Mountain Resort On-mountain Improvements Project EIS. It was prepared to assist the Forest Service and cooperating agencies in finalizing the issues to be carried into in-depth analysis in the EIS. Combined with the alternatives to be addressed, this will establish the scope of the EIS. The document concludes with a listing of issues identified through scoping that were considered but not carried into in-depth analysis in the EIS, including the rationale for not analyzing them in depth.

These draft issue statements, like the draft alternatives, reflect the Forest Service's mandate to reduce the time and cost of NEPA analysis and decision making in order to allow more work on the land and more creativity in designing new ways to care for the land (EADM effort). Accordingly, these draft issue statements indicate a very tight focus for this analysis, addressing what needs to be addressed and nothing more, explaining that distinction clearly, and setting the stage for a high-quality analysis of the issues on which a sound and defensible agency decision will turn.

## PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

### Climate Change and Snow Quantity

- *How would climate change affect snow quantity and the viability of the proposed infrastructure and uses?*

While no material effect is anticipated, it would be impossible to make a valid quantitative assessment of the proposed action's effect on climate change and snow quantity given the current state of climate-change science. However, it is Forest Service policy to address the impacts of climate change on a proposed action. In this case, a significant reduction in snowfall over time could preclude the need for any additional winter recreation infrastructure or recreational opportunities. The analysis will address that issue.

Indicator: Conclusions drawn from pertinent studies of climate change and its potential effects on snowfall, including the Forest Service, Region 4 report *Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation in the Intermountain Region* (Halofsky et al. 2018).

### Air Quality

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect protected airsheds around the project area?*

There are several areas with airsheds protected under the Clean Air Act, as amended, and associated programs. These include Grand Teton National Park and the Gros Ventre Wilderness. Slash burning, off-road equipment operation, and soil disturbance could generate smoke and dust, adversely affecting air quality in these protected airsheds.

**Indicator:** Qualitative assessment of the extent of these practices and the efficacy of mitigation measures available to minimize any adverse effects on Class 1 airsheds.

- *How would the proposed increase in snowmaking system coverage affect the “snowmaking cloud” that impacts the neighborhood around the base area?*

On cold winter days, snowmaking can generate a cloud of ice crystals that remains suspended in the air, spreading to surrounding areas and blocking the sun. Increased snowmaking could make this effect more extensive.

**Indicator:** Review of literature on this phenomenon to provide a basis for assessing the effect of the proposed system expansion on its the frequency and extent.

## **Water, Soils, and Watershed**

### ***Hydrology***

- *How would the proposed increase in snowmaking and clearing of ski runs affect surface runoff, and groundwater recharge?*

The proposed action would add 147 acres of snowmaking coverage to the existing 90 acres, for a total of 237 acres. Most of the proposed coverage is within the current SUP boundary (on the north and south sides of Snow King Mountain) with minor amounts in the proposed east and west expansion areas. No stream channels exist within the current or potentially expanded permit boundary, but the expanded snowmaking coverage would include previously undeveloped drainages. Beyond that, clearing of proposed ski runs would affect the existing pattern of tree cover and could influence snow accumulation and runoff patterns. The combined influence of additional snowmaking and changes in tree cover could impact surface runoff and groundwater hydrology.

**Indicator:** Primarily qualitative assessment of current conditions, the amount and location of water potentially added to the system, the location and extent of vegetation clearing, the timing of runoff, and the resulting impacts on channel stability and groundwater recharge.

### ***Erosion and Surface Stability***

- *How would the ground disturbance associated with construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect soil erosion and surface stability?*

The project area is characterized by steep slopes and erosive soils, and there is evidence of erosion and historic mass soil movement. Construction-related disturbance and subsequent use could potentially create instability, increased soil erosion, and sediment transport to downslope areas. Construction-related clearing, grading, and excavation could potentially increase soil erosion and sedimentation and decrease surface stability.

**Indicator:** Use of the connected disturbed area (CDA; Forest Service 2006) approach to assess the risk of erosion, sedimentation, and instability for each proposed project that entails ground disturbance, both prior to and following implementation of best management practices (BMPs).

### ***Water Quality***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect impaired water bodies in the area?*

Short-term surface disturbance during construction of the proposed infrastructure and long-term use of the proposed ski runs and expanded snowmaking system has potential to mobilize sediment. While there are no streams to be affected inside the current SUP boundary, the proposed east expansion area includes part of the Cache Creek watershed. Cache Creek is a tributary of Flat Creek, which is included on Wyoming’s

2018 303(d) list of impaired water bodies. Any pollutants entering Cache Creek could contribute to Flat Creek's existing impairment.

Indicator: Primarily the results of the hydrology and CDA analyses discussed above, specifically their conclusions regarding surface runoff, erosion, sedimentation, and effectiveness of BMPs in avoiding these issues. Assessment of these conclusions in light of the current impairments in Flat Creek and intervening conditions between Snow King and Flat Creek.

## **Vegetation**

### ***Noxious Weeds***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect the introduction and spread of noxious weeds?*

The project area may support plant species that are included on [\*NAME APPROPRIATE LIST], and vehicles used for construction and maintenance could introduce more noxious weed species. Beyond that, ground disturbance associated with construction, maintenance, and use of proposed infrastructure could spread existing or new infestations.

Indicator: Survey of areas that would be disturbed by construction and subsequent use, then assessment of impacts on the introduction and spread of noxious weeds based on occurrence, level of disturbance, and effectiveness of design criteria and mitigation in avoiding adverse effects.

## **Wildlife**

### ***Special-status Species***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect special-status wildlife species?*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) database indicates that several wildlife species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may occur in the project area, and the Forest Service's list of sensitive species in the Intermountain Region also includes several species potentially found in the area. The Migratory Bird Species Act provides protections to some bird species that may frequent the project area. Construction and use of the proposed infrastructure could affect these special-status species through disturbance, displacement, or habitat impacts.

Indicators: Survey of areas that would be disturbed by construction and subsequent use for appropriate species and habitat-based assessments for more reclusive species, then assessment of impacts on special-status species based on occurrence and type, extent, and timing of disturbance of individuals or habitat. Conclusions determined and expressed as called for in the protocols for federally listed, Forest Service sensitive, migratory bird species.

### ***Specialized Habitats***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure in the southern expansion area affect elk or mule deer winter use?*

Parts of the Leeks Canyon and Game Creek watersheds include winter range for elk and mule deer, and there are wildlife migration corridors in the area. To protect these specialized habitats, winter wildlife closure areas have been established around Snow King. Construction and use of the proposed infrastructure could affect these habitats through disturbance, displacement, or fragmentation.

Indicators: Review of existing data on these specialized habitats, then assessment of potential effects based on the type, extent, and timing of disturbance of individual animals or habitat.

## **HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **Cultural**

#### ***Historic Landscape***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect Snow King's historic landscape?*

Established in 1939, Snow King is one of the oldest ski areas in the U.S. While most historic infrastructure has been demolished or upgraded, some evidence of the ski area's history remains. In 2014, part of the ski area was recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic landscape. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with that recommendation, but the site has not been formally nominated for listing. Construction of the proposed infrastructure could affect the historic resources on which this recommendation was based.

**Indicator:** Assessment of potential impacts on the resources supporting the eligibility recommendation, followed by consultation with the SHPO, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), to determine if the area's eligibility for listing would be affected.

#### ***Native American Concerns***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect Traditional Cultural Places or other Native American tribal resources?*

The Jackson Hole area has been used for various purposes by Native Americans for millennia. Tribes who frequented the area include the Crow, Gros Ventre, Blackfeet, Nez Perce, Bannock, Eastern Shoshone and Sheep Eaters. Construction and use of new facilities at Snow King could impact resources or uses important to area tribal groups.

**Indicator:** Government-to-government consultation with tribal groups with interest in area resources, as required under Section 106 of the NHPA, followed by any analysis required as a result of that consultation.

### **Land Use**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect grazing?*

The southern expansion area, which is within Snow King's current ski area special use permit boundary, is overlapped by an active grazing allotment, which is also permitted by the BTNF. Construction and use of the proposed summer infrastructure could affect forage availability, disturb or displace livestock, or otherwise impact the grazing permittee's operation.

**Indicator:** Review of records to determine actual season, numbers, and patterns of livestock use to assess how proposed activities would impact forage availability and grazing operations.

### **Noise**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect noise levels around the ski area?*

Snowmaking, explosive avalanche control, and summer activities such as the mountain coaster generate noise that is audible to visitors and residents in areas adjacent to the resort. While some may accept increased noise levels as a consequence of being close to a mountain resort, the noise associated with the proposed snowmaking expansion, zip line, and increased avalanche control activities may be an annoyance to some.

Indicators: Review of noise levels associated with these activities, then a largely qualitative assessment of impacts on area visitors and residents base on the projected noise levels, timing, duration, and frequency.

## **Recreation**

### ***Terrain Mix***

- *How would the proposed terrain development affect the Snow King's terrain mix?*

Most ski terrain at Snow King is steep, which limits use to advanced or expert skiers. Accordingly, a central element of the purpose and need for action is to develop terrain accessible to lower ability level skiers. This would be conducive to integrating beginning skiers into the sport and to accommodating families and groups with varying ability levels.

Indicator: Comparison of the terrain mix resulting from proposed development to industry standards.

### ***Visitor Services***

- *How would the proposed buildings affect the services available to winter and summer visitors?*

Development of the proposed summit learning area and summer recreational infrastructure would create the need for additional skier service facilities on the summit and elsewhere on the mountain. These would include restrooms, food and beverage service, ski and mountain bike instruction, equipment rental, retail sales of essential items, and ski/bike patrol facilities.

Indicator: Review of proposed service facilities in relation to industry standards for service provision at mountain resorts.

### ***Existing Ski Runs***

- *How would the proposed summit access road/skiway affect existing ski runs?*

The proposed access road/skiway crosses the major front-side ski runs high on the steeper portions of the slope where substantial cut and fill would be required. Existing access roads/skiways including Fast Trail, Slow Trail, and Elkhorn Trail also cross these ski runs, so the added access road/skiway would potentially constitute an additional impediment to smooth skier flow on these runs.

Indicator: Review of preliminary design of the access road/skiway, then largely qualitative assessment of its potential impact on skier flow, in conjunction with other features crossing these runs.

### ***Existing Trail System***

- *How would the proposed mountain bike trails and park affect access to, and users of the existing public trail system?*

The Jackson area provides a well-developed, maintained, and used system of multi-use trails, several of which cross or pass near Snow King's permit area. The proposed lift-served mountain biking could adversely affect trail users by increasing bike traffic on the existing trail system or limiting access to trails within the permit boundary.

Indicators:

### ***Phil Baux Park***

- *How would the proposed summit gondola and zip line affect users of Phil Baux Park?*

Phil Baux Park is an old, well established and well used town park adjacent to Snow King's private-land base area. Under the proposed action, the bottom terminals of the proposed summit gondola and zip line would be located in the park, eliminating the ball field.

Indicator: Primarily qualitative assessment of the impact of citing these facilities in the park on the recreational uses and users of the park.

## **Safety**

### ***Safety of Summer Visitors***

- *How would the proposed mountain bike trails and park affect the safety of other summer visitors?*

Snow King's permit area supports summer recreational use of various types, including resort infrastructure such as the mountain coaster, alpine slide, and ropes course accessed from the Rafferty lift midway station, as well as numerous formal and user-created hiking and biking trails throughout the permit area. The proposed mountain bike park and trail network overlaying these other recreational uses could create collision risks and other safety issues.

**Indicator:** Professional review of the integration of existing and proposed summer recreation infrastructure with proposed mountain bike park and trails network to qualitatively assess safety risks.

### ***Skier Safety***

- *How would the proposed summit access road/skiway affect skier safety?*

This issue has two aspects, the safety of skiers using the skiway, and the safety of skiers crossing the skiway on the front-side runs. In the first case, the steepness of the slope could make it dangerous for beginners or others who skied off the skiway. They could slide down the groomed runs or be trapped in deep snow in the forested patches. For skiers crossing the skiway, the cut and fill slopes necessary to construct it could block smooth skier flow and pose a hazard to skiers attempting to cross it at speed.

**Indicator:** Generally qualitative assessment of the design of the skiway and the efficacy of measures to mitigate these risks, based on experience at Snow King and elsewhere.

### ***Avalanche***

- *How would the proposed ski run clearing and summit access road/skiway affect avalanche hazard?*

Snow King's steep slopes lie directly above the base area and adjacent commercial and residential development, making avalanche an important concern. The proposed expansion and associated ski run clearing could increase this hazard and the level of effort required to manage it. The steep cut and fill slopes along the proposed summit access road/skiway could create new starting zones and add to the problem.

**Indicator:** Qualitative assessment of the current avalanche situation and snow safety program, followed by analysis of the impact of proposed infrastructure on the hazard level and the effectiveness of the snow safety program to manage it.

## **Scenery**

- *How would the proposed infrastructure affect the scenic quality of Snow King Mountain?*

The front side of Snow King lies in the immediate background of the town, where scenic quality is naturally a widely held value. While the resort is already part of that backdrop, additional infrastructure, individually and collectively, on the front side and the summit could result in an even less natural appearing view from the town.

**Indicator:** Assessment of the impact of the proposed infrastructure using the methodology established in the Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS; Forest Service 1995).

- *How would the proposed lighting for night skiing and operation of summit facilities affect the night time view and dark sky?*

While lighting for night skiing, grooming, and other on-mountain activities has been part of the night time setting on the mountain for some time, the proposed expansion of night lighting and addition of summit lighting would constitute a greater departure from the natural setting.

Indicator: Review of the current setting and applicable local regulations regarding lighting, then assessment of the extent, intensity, and duration of the proposed change, in the context of those local regulations.

## **ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED INTO IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS**

This section identifies issues that were raised during scoping or internal, interdisciplinary review that were considered not to be relevant to this particular decision or not to require in-depth analysis in order to determine that no significant impact was likely. The rationale for this decision follows each issue. This is consistent with NEPA and CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1501.7[3] and 1909.15 [12.41]).

### **Water, Soils, and Watershed**

- *How would expanded snowmaking affect municipal water availability?*

Rationale: The Town of Jackson supplies Snow King's snowmaking water, and the town has identified no impending water shortage. Should municipal water supplies become limited, the town would be under no obligation to meet increase demands for snowmaking. It is also important to note that expanding snowmaking system coverage does not correlate directly with increased water use. Rather, it provides the ski area with the flexibility to use available water for snowmaking where it is needed most. Based on these considerations, in-depth analysis of this issue is not required to determine that there would be no significant impact.

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect wetlands and other jurisdictional Waters of the U.S.?*

Rationale: Scoping and internal, interdisciplinary review raised the issue of potential impacts on any wetlands or other jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. that may occur in the project area. As a first step, we consulted the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and National Hydrography Dataset (NHD). The NWI does not show any wetlands within the ski area boundary or the proposed expansion areas, and the NHD shows only three intermittent stream channel segments. In 2018, the potential wetlands and NHD-mapped stream segments were surveyed in the field for features used by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) to define jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. such as riparian and wetland vegetation, hydrology and hydric soils, stream channel bed and bank features, and ordinary high-water mark. The survey did not identify any areas meeting the USACE requirements for wetlands or relatively permanent waterways. Based on these findings, no Waters of the U.S. exist in the project area, so in-depth analysis of this issue is not required to determine that there would be no significant impact.

### **Vegetation**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect general vegetation and plant communities?*

Rationale: Impacts on general vegetation and plant communities are addressed in the EIS in terms of their effects on other resources values including watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, and scenic values. With these specific effects addressed, this issue does not require further in-depth analysis to determine that there would be no significant impact.

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect special-status plant species?*

**Rationale:** The FWS IPaC database indicates that no plant species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA occur in the project area. The IPaC database does show that the project area is potential habitat for whitebark pine, a candidate species for listing under the ESA. All areas potentially subject to ground disturbance during construction or use of the proposed infrastructure were surveyed in 2018, and no whitebark pine were observed.

The Forest Service's list of sensitive species in the Intermountain Region includes several species potentially occurring at Snow King. The Wyoming Natural Diversity Database and Rocky Mountain Herbarium records were searched for known occurrences of Forest Service sensitive species in the project area, and no occurrences have been reported. The project area does have suitable potential habitat for three sensitive species (crenulate moonwort, puzzling moonwort, and Payson's bladderpod), and those areas were searched thoroughly during on two occasions during the 2018 surveys. No Forest Service sensitive plant species were observed, and the unoccupied habitat was found to be of poor to marginal quality.

Based on these considerations, in-depth analysis of this issue is not required to determine that there would be no significant impact. See the BA/BE prepared for this project for additional discussion.

- *How would the proposed clearing and glading of forest affect the project area?*

**Rationale:** Forest clearing and glading are addressed in the EIS in terms of their impact on other resources including watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, and scenic values. These analyses will indicate the acreage of forest clearing and grading. With these effects addressed, this issue does not require further in-depth analysis to determine that there would be no significant impact.

- *How would the proposed snowmaking expansion affect vegetation?*

**Rationale:** While clearing and grading of ski runs obviously affects vegetation, snowmaking has not shown that potential. This is primarily because snowmaking typically involves much less water than natural precipitation and, by definition, is used primarily to offset shortfalls in natural snowfall. Note the EIS does address the impacts of snowmaking on hydrology as well as the effects of snowmaking system construction on vegetation. Based on these considerations, in-depth analysis of this issue is not required to determine that there would be no significant impact.

## **Wildlife**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect general wildlife and wildlife habitat?*

**Rationale:** Consistent with the NEPA, CEQ and Forest Service direction cited in the introduction to this section, assessment of wildlife impacts in this EIS focuses on issues that are relevant to this decision, require in-depth analysis to determine whether significant impacts are likely, or which we are required by law, regulation, or policy to address. Accordingly, as discussed above under Issues Carried into In-depth Analysis, the EIS addresses potential impacts on special-status wildlife species, mule deer winter range, and migration corridors. Beyond that, in-depth analysis of impacts on other wildlife species or habitats is not required to determine that there would be no significant impact.

- *How would construction and use the proposed infrastructure affect wildlife closure areas in the vicinity of Snow King?*

**Rationale:** Most winter activities are prohibited in areas around Jackson that have been previously identified as key winter-use or migration areas. The proposed action would not authorize any development or use in these areas, and use of them by ski area visitors would be a violation of the closure regulations, as it is now. Based on these considerations, this issue does not require in-depth analysis to determine that there would be no significant impact.

- *How would the proposed snowmaking and skiing affect subnivean species?*

**Rationale:** As discussed above under Issues Carried into In-depth Analysis, this EIS focuses on special-status wildlife species. Any subnivean species that are federally listed under the ESA or identified as Forest Service sensitive species are addressed in the EIS. Beyond that, this issue does not require in-depth analysis to determine that there would be no significant impact.

### **Cultural Resources**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect archaeological resources?*

**Rationale:** In 2018, the areas subject to disturbance by proposed construction and use (i.e., the area of potential effect) was subject to a SHPO records search and to a pedestrian survey for archaeological resources. None were located, and a “no effect” was reported to the SHPIO. As a result, pending SHPO concurrence with this finding, no in-depth analysis of this issue is required to determine that there would be no significant impact.

### **Land Use**

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect the snow course on the summit of Snow King Mountain?*

**Rationale:** Under permit with the BTNF, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has operated a snow monitoring course on the summit since 1959. The permit was issued in accordance with a nationwide memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two federal agencies that directs how such facilities are established and managed, and how conflicts are resolved. Development of the proposed summit learning area would eliminate the snow course, requiring the two agencies to work together, as directed in the MOU, to identify and establish a replacement. This is an administrative matter rather than an environmental one, and it does not require analysis in this EIS.

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure in the southern expansion area affect private land owners and highway users around the mouth of Leek’s Canyon?*

**Rationale:** The specific issues raised included the potential for trespass onto private land near the canyon mouth, the need for access to the expansion area via Leek’s Canyon Road, and the potential for mule deer displaced from the expansion area to create a collision hazard on U.S. Highway 191. In regard to trespass, the Forest Service has no authority to keep the public from traveling down Leek’s Canyon, but that potential currently exists, and the proposed development would not create any additional incentive for people to do so. It is roughly 1.4 miles to the fenced and posted private property line, and anyone trespassing would be in violation of state law, as they would be now. As to access via the Leek’s Canyon Road, the proposed summit access road would preclude that need. Regarding displaced deer becoming a hazard on U.S. 191, the highway is roughly 1.6 miles from the expansion area, with a wildlife closure area for wintering wildlife in between. While deer on the highway are a serious, ongoing concern, this action would not notably alter current conditions. In short, in-depth analysis of these issues is not required to determine there would be no significant impacts.

### **Recreation**

- *How would the proposed infrastructure affect Snow King’s pass prices?*

**Rationale:** Concern was expressed during scoping that completion of the proposed improvements would be expensive, so Snow King might be required to raise pass prices. The concern was that this could potentially price some visitors out and reduce affordable access to lift-served skiing in the Jackson area. However, ticket pricing is determined by the permittee’s business model and is not subject to Forest Service authority. As a result, this issue is outside the scope of the EIS and does not require analysis.

- *How would the proposed mountain bike trail system affect public access to the existing trail system?*

**Rationale:** As noted above, the Jackson area provides a well-developed, maintained, and used system of multi-use trails, several of which cross or pass near Snow King's permit area. Concern was expressed during scoping that development of new mountain bike trails would result in closure of public trails at the resort, or in fees charged for public use. The proposed action does not include plans for either of these actions. The existing trail system would remain unchanged, as would Snow King's ability to charge for public access to the permit area only when that public use involves facilities that the resort pays to build or maintain. No such fees have been proposed. Based on these considerations, this issue does not require in-depth analysis to determine that there would be no significant impact.

## **Safety**

- *How would the proposed infrastructure in general affect skier safety:*

**Rationale:** Scoping commenters pointed out several potential safety benefits of the proposed infrastructure, particularly for children. These included a safer summit lift that would also transport emergency personnel, expanded and improved night lighting, and expanded and improved beginner terrain. These effects are inherent in the stated purpose and need for action and do not require in-depth analysis to document their effect.

- *How would the proposed summit access road/skiway affect the safety ski area personnel operating groomers or other vehicles on it?*

**Rationale:** One objective of the proposed access road/skiway is to provide safer summit access for mountain operations personnel. The existing route is steeper and narrower, with more switchbacks to negotiate. In-depth analysis is not required to determine that this would improve this aspect of the safety situation.

- *How would the southern expansion affect skier safety?*

**Rationale:** A commenter raised concerns about the more remote nature of the back-side expansion and the ability of Snow King to respond effectively to accidents and injuries. However, the area would be subject to the same level of ski patrol surveillance as the existing ski runs, and the proposed Lift A would provide ready summit access for injured skiers and accompanying ski patrollers. From there, the gondola would provide fast transport to the base area. In-depth analysis is not required to determine that this issue does not constitute a significant safety risk.

- *Would the proposed zip line constitute a risk to riders?*

**Rationale:** The proposed zip line would carry riders from the summit to the base area in a single span, at speeds up to 70 miles per hour. Above-ground height could be up to 50 feet. Commenters expressed concern that collisions or falls could result in serious injury or death.

In accepting Snow King's MDP, the BTNF considered the appropriateness and safety of the proposed summer recreational infrastructure. Zip lines are increasingly common and popular features at permitted resorts and, while there have been injuries and even deaths, they have been extremely infrequent and far fewer than those resulting from skiing. Beyond that, Forest Service engineering review would be required before construction was authorized. In-depth analysis is not necessary to determine that this issue does not constitute a significant safety risk.

- *Would the proposed mountain bike trails and park pose a risk to users?*

**Rationale:** While downhill mountain biking, like skiing, has inherent risks, the designers of such facilities have extensive experience in how to build and manage them in ways that reduce those risks. Bike parks are an increasingly common and popular feature at permitted resorts and, while there have been injuries

and even deaths, they have been infrequent and fewer than those resulting from skiing. In-depth analysis is not necessary to determine that this issue does not constitute a significant safety risk.

- *Would increased visitation and vegetation change increase the risk of wild fire?*

Rationale: Some commenters expressed concern that more visitors at the ski area could increase the chance of fire starts, and that infestations of weedy plant species, particularly cheatgrass, following soil disturbance could result in increased rates of fire spread. While more people could result in more dropped cigarettes or other careless behavior with fire, this has not proved to be an issue at Snow King or other mountain resorts. Fire prevention campaigns have highlighted the problem, and high levels use increase detection of irresponsible behavior as well as early detection of fire. Beyond that, existing and proposed ski runs constitute fire breaks, and the snowmaking system provides water supplies throughout the permit area. Based on these considerations, in-depth analysis is not necessary to determine that this issue does not constitute a significant safety risk.

- *How would mountain bike use affect the safety of dogs on the trails?*

Rationale: Dog safety can be considered a correlate of human safety, and hikers will not be allowed to use the proposed mountain bike trails. In-depth analysis is not necessary to preclude any significant impact.

- *Would the high-frequency radio waves from the towers on the summit pose a risk to visitors and staff?*

Rationale: Snow King visitors and staff have long frequented the summit with no reported ill effects from radio waves. In-depth analysis is not necessary to preclude any significant impact.

## **Socioeconomic**

### ***Town Character***

- *How would construction and use of the proposed infrastructure affect the character of the Town of Jackson?*

Rationale: The EIS addresses a number of more concrete effects on the town (e.g., recreation, visual impacts, and noise), but the desired character of the town is a topic of ongoing debate in the community. As a result, people have divergent individual opinions about the impact of the proposed action, as indicated by scoping results. In this context, objectively assessing town character is not possible, and it would not contribute to a better understanding of environmental effects or a more reasoned decision.

### ***Employee Housing and Utilities***

- *How would the proposed action affect employee housing and utility demand?*

Rationale: Increased infrastructure and visitation would increase the number of Snow King employees as well as demands on utilities from local providers. Employee housing is already a major concern in Jackson, and provision of sufficient water, power, sanitation, and other services is a pressing demand on local government.

Addressing these concerns is an ongoing effort on the part of the Town of Jackson and Teton County. The Snow King base area and lower portion of the mountain are on private land within the Town of Jackson, and the town has developed the *Snow King Resort District Master Plan* specifically to address these socioeconomic and related concerns. The master plan is a dynamic document, and the town, the resort, and other stakeholders are involved in the ongoing process of keeping it up to date as conditions change. The plan establishes employee housing requirements and addressing growing utility demands, and it is based on projected growth at Snow King and in the community at large. Snow King is bound by the master plans stipulations. In short, these issues are in the jurisdiction of the town and county, and those entities are managing them effectively. As a result, they are outside the scope of this EIS.

### ***Resort Viability***

- *What would happen if the proposed action did not result in a viable resort?*

Rationale: The economic performance of Snow King is not a Forest Service matter and will not be addressed in the EIS. However, a viable master development plan is a requirement of ski area special use permits, in accordance with the Ski Area Permit Act of 1986. We reviewed Snow King's MDP and determined that it met this requirement prior to accepting it and initiating this NEPA review of elements involving National Forest System resources. Our intent in issuing this special use permit is to provide the public with diverse recreational opportunities on the BTNF and supporting our local community, and our permit administration will be directed toward meeting that objective. Beyond that, when special use permits are terminated, the permittee is responsible for removal of facilities from the permit area (FSM 2700 – Special Uses Administration, 2716.2[3]). Based on these considerations, this issue is beyond the scope of this EIS and will not be analyzed in this EIS.

### ***Project-specific Economics***

- *What is the projected use level cost:benefit projection for each element of the proposed action?*

Rationale: It is not clear how analysis of this issue would contribute to understanding the potential environmental effects or to a more reasoned decision. It will not be analyzed in this EIS.

### **Traffic and Parking**

- *How would the proposed action affect traffic and parking availability around the base area?*

Rationale: Increased infrastructure and visitation would increase the number of Snow King employees and visitors, with associated increases in traffic and demand for parking in and around the base area. As discussed above, the base area and surroundings are with the Town of Jackson and subject to stipulations of the *Snow King Resort District Master Plan*. In addition to addressing various socioeconomic considerations, that plan assesses the traffic and parking situation, identifies any issues warranting attention, stipulates then takes into consideration studies as needed, and lays out responsive plans. Snow King, like other stakeholders, is subject to those plans. In short, these issues are within the jurisdiction of the town and county, and those entities are managing them effectively. As a result, they are outside the scope of this EIS.