Hellroaring Basin Improvements Project: Public Scoping Opportunity

The Tally Lake Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest welcomes public comments on the proposed Hellroaring Basin Improvements Project. The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance the skiing experience in the Hellroaring Basin area within the Whitefish Mountain Resort permit boundary. This would be accomplished with the following proposed activities (please refer to the attached map for more information on the locations):

- Move the existing Hellroaring Chair Lift (Chair 8). The new lower terminal location would be in the Grand Junction area and the new top terminal location would be near the entrance to the 1,000 Turns Run. The anticipated clearance width for the proposed lift line would be 50 feet. The anticipated footprint of the terminals would be approximately 30 by 50 feet. The area of disturbance during construction would be approximately 50 by 70 feet.

- Install a chair lift (proposed chair 12) between the Grand Junction area and Hellroaring Peak. The anticipated clearance width for the proposed lift line would be 50 feet. The anticipated footprint of the terminals would be approximately 30 by 50 feet. The area of disturbance during construction would be approximately 50 by 70 feet.

Whether the chair lift would be top-drive or bottom-drive is still to be determined. If it would be a top-drive chair lift, a service road would need to be constructed to the top terminal from National Forest Service Road 9790 for summer maintenance needs. The possible service road would be built to Forest Service road specifications, have a finished width of 12 to 14 feet, and have a construction disturbance width of 30 feet.

- Clear eight ski runs and gladed areas adjacent to the ski runs. Where terrain would allow, proposed runs 1, 5, and 8 would be 120 feet wide and proposed run 4 would be 100 feet wide. Proposed runs 2, 3, 6, and 7 would be 80 feet wide. Portions of the existing Glory Hole Run would become the proposed run 1.

Gladed areas would retain between 75 and 125 trees per acre (an average of 100 trees per acre or an average of 20-foot spacing). Retention would focus on the largest trees available.

Some portions of the proposed gladed areas would overlap with proposed hazardous fuels reduction treatment areas from the Taylor Hellroaring Project, which is currently in analysis. In these overlap areas, either hazardous fuels reduction treatment of glading would occur, but not both, depending on project timelines.

- Construct a service road from the top of the Swift Creek Express Chair Lift (Chair 2) to the Grand Junction area. This would be needed to provide maintenance access in the summer. The possible service road would be built to Forest Service road specifications, have a finished width of 12 to 14 feet, and have a construction disturbance width of 30 feet. After completion of the Chair Lift 8 relocation, the service road would be used in the winter for emergency egress and in the summer for maintenance needs, as needed.

- Build a bridge for the proposed service road and proposed run 4 to access the Grand Junction area. The bridge would be built to Forest Service specifications. The exact
design and location of the bridge is to be determined and would be approved by the Forest engineer and hydrologist.

- Clear a “cat track” between the saddle below Hellroaring Peak to the existing Gray Wolf Run in order to provide winter access between these two areas for both groomers and skiers. Some portions of the cat track would require cut and fill due to steep hillslope. The cat track would have a finished width of 12 to 14 feet and a construction disturbance width of 30 feet.

- Re-slope three areas (approximately four acres total) in the existing Hell Fire Run where the run currently slopes uphill.

- Remove trees in an approximately quarter acre area immediately adjacent to the Swift Creek Run in order to widen a sharp turn and improve skier safety.

- Rehabilitate the existing Purgatory Run under the existing Hellroaring Chair Lift and rehabilitate the portion of Hell Fire Run below Grand Junction, including five stream crossings. Any revegetation that would be necessary would be completed using certified weed-free seed mix, as approved by the Forest botanist.

  The existing Hellroaring Chair Lift 8 terminals would be rehabilitated. However, the lift line’s concrete footers would remain in place because their removal would create more soil disturbance than to leave them in place.

Project design features in addition to those listed above would be included in the future environmental analysis document.

The proposed modifications would be completed between June and November over a three year possibly non-consecutive time period. Construction would require the use of helicopters and heavy equipment. Tree felling would be accomplished with machines where feasible and hand-felling would occur where machine felling would not be practical. Trees and slash material would not be removed from the project area. Tree and slash material disposal methods would vary depending on specific location and the amount of material to be disposed. Possible methods of disposal would include lop and scatter, pile and burn, or limb and leave in place on the ground to provide wildlife habitat.

Specific, written comments on the proposal received by November 20, 2018 would be most helpful in project development. Comments may be submitted to also be sent to comments-northern-flathead-tally-lake@fs.fed.us or to Tally Lake Ranger District, Attn: Hellroaring Basin Improvements Project; 650 Wolfpack Way; Kalispell, MT 59901.

The District also welcomes requests to be added to the project’s mailing list in order to be notified of additional public comment opportunities. To do so, please provide your contact information (preferably email address) to comments-northern-flathead-tally-lake@fs.fed.us.

Project information and documents are available online at https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55012.