

**File Code:** 2720  
**Date:** February 17, 2021

Dear Interested Party,

The Dillon Ranger District of the White River National Forest is soliciting comments on a proposal at Arapahoe Basin Ski Area (A-Basin) to replace the existing Lenawee Lift, construct a warming hut in the vicinity of the existing Lenawee Parks ski trail, and construct a food service building adjacent to the Black Mountain Lodge. All projects would occur within A-Basin's existing Special Use Permit (SUP) area and operational boundary. The proposed projects are consistent with goals and objectives identified in A-Basin's Master Development Plan (MDP). For more information visit the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59357>.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the proposed projects is to improve on-mountain skier circulation and to enhance the quality of the guest experience at A-Basin. The Lenawee Lift replacement would be designed to increase uphill lift capacity to the summit of A-Basin as well as improve the lift loading and unloading experience for guests with a wide range of skiing abilities. Currently, guests riding the Lenawee Lift can experience lift lines longer than 15 minutes while lower ability level guests can have difficulty loading due to the speed of the fixed grip lift, which cannot slow down to allow easier loading and unloading.

The two additional buildings would improve the on-mountain experience by providing additional food service and guest warming space. There is currently insufficient food service space within the Black Mountain Lodge as the barbeque lacks a permanent location and currently occurs outside. The proposed Midway Barbeque building would house the barbeque and add mid-mountain food service space. In addition, the proposed Steilhang Hut would provide additional food service and guest warming space closer to the top of the mountain.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The Proposed Action includes the replacement of the Lenawee Lift and the construction of two additional guest service buildings (the Steilhang Hut and Midway Barbeque) on the front side of A-Basin (refer to Figure 1).

#### **Lenawee Lift Replacement**

The existing Lenawee Lift is a fixed grip three-person chair that was installed in 2001. The lift is the only way for guests to repeat ski most of the frontside upper mountain and provides the primary access to Montezuma Bowl and East Wall terrain.

The lift is proposed to be upgraded to a detachable four- or six-person lift. Final design of the lift would be determined based on skier circulation and uphill capacity needs identified by A-Basin. To accommodate the bottom terminal and improve access to the lift, the approach along the existing Lenawee Traverse ski trail would be widened and realigned and the area of the bottom terminal would be lowered. The project would be designed to avoid directly impacting wetlands located downhill of the bottom



terminal. The top terminal area would also be graded, the new top lift terminal would be moved approximately 25 feet downhill and the egress towards Snow Plume Refuge would be widened. Existing lift towers would be retained where feasible and replaced if necessary.

Overall, the Lenawee Lift replacement would result in approximately 1.5 acres of disturbance; no tree removal is proposed. Estimated disturbance is assumed to be the maximum amount that would possibly be needed to complete the project (i.e. a six-person lift with all lift towers being replaced).

### **Steilhang Hut**

The Steilhang Hut is a proposed warming hut located adjacent to the Avalauncher tower on the existing Lenawee Parks ski trail. It would be approximately 1,000 square-feet in size (25 feet by 40 feet) and would provide year-round food service, indoor seating, composting toilets (including leech field for composted fluids), and an outdoor deck. Water would be hauled to the hut as needed and electricity would be supplied by an existing underground power line adjacent to the site. In the summer, the hut would support via ferrata activities which are located nearby on the East Wall. Grading would be required to construct the hut and it would match A-Basin's existing exterior design themes. Less than 0.1 acre of disturbance would be required for the project, including staging of materials and construction vehicles.

### **Midway Barbeque**

The Midway Barbeque building is proposed to be an approximately 2,100 square-foot building (70 feet by 30 feet) with space for food service, guest seating and storage. The building would provide permanent housing for the barbeque that typically occurs at Black Mountain Lodge. Utilities for the building would come from the adjacent Black Mountain Lodge and the design would match the existing building. Less than 0.1 acre of disturbance would be required for this building, including staging of materials and construction vehicles.

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

Based on resource information gathered to date, I believe these projects fall within a Forest Service category of actions under 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 220.6 that may be excluded from documentation in either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, and that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude its use. Scoping comments along with a complete resource analysis will determine whether these projects can be categorically excluded. The proposed projects are consistent with category 36 CFR 220.6(e)(22): *“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. Recreation sites include but are not limited to campgrounds and camping areas, picnic areas, day use areas, fishing sites, interpretive sites, visitor centers, trailheads, ski areas, and observation sites. Activities within this category are intended to apply to facilities located at recreation sites managed by the Forest Service and those managed by concessioners under a special use authorization.”*

## **HOW TO COMMENT AND TIMEFRAME**

Please submit comments concerning this action by March 7, 2021 and reference Arapahoe Basin Food Service and Lenawee CE. Electronic comments are encouraged and can be submitted to:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=59357>. Written comments must

be submitted to: Lisa Stoeffler, Acting Forest Supervisor, c/o Sam Massman, Dillon Ranger District, PO Box 620, Silverthorne, CO 80498-0620. Persons commenting should include: 1) name, address, telephone number, organization represented, if any; 2) name of the proposal on which the comment is being submitted; and 3) specific facts and supporting reasons for me to consider.

For more information about these projects, contact Forest Service project manager Sam Massman at (970) 309-3268 or [samuel.massman@usda.gov](mailto:samuel.massman@usda.gov).

Sincerely,

LISA M. STOEFFLER  
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Bobbi Filbert, Sam Massman, Roger Poirier, Marcus Dreux, Cary Green