

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

White Pass Ski Area – 2017 Projects

USDA Forest Service, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Naches Ranger District

Township 13 North, Range 11 East, Sections 1 – 3, 11 - 12, 14 - 15, and Township 14 North, Range 11 East, Sections 35 - 36 Willamette Meridian, Yakima and Lewis Counties, WA

This Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is made available with the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the White Pass Ski Area – 2017 Projects pursuant to 36 CFR 218.7(b). The EA is incorporated by reference to this DN/FONSI and it can be found on the Forest’s website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=43718>). The EA contains an analysis of the purpose and need for action, the proposed action designed to achieve the purpose and need, project design criteria, and an analysis of the effects and benefits of the proposed action as compared to taking no action. White Pass Company (WPC) operates the ski area under the guidance of the White Pass Master Development Plan and the terms of the Special Use Permit (SUP) issued to them by the Forest Service. The permitted facilities include developed ski facilities inside the SUP area, as well as Nordic skiing and snowshoeing trails that are located both within, and outside of the SUP area (EA Figure 2).

All EA section number and figure references in this DN/FONSI are in reference to the EA unless specified otherwise. The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is referred to as “OWNF” and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest is called the “GPNF” in this document. The Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement and Standards and Guidelines, as amended, are referred to as “the WNF Forest Plan” and the Gifford Pinchot Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement) and Standards and Guidelines, as amended, are referred to as “the GPNF Forest Plan” in this document. The Forest Plans were amended by the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, hereafter referred to as the “Northwest Forest Plan”. Furthermore, the Forest Plans were amended by the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines and the Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Program Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants Record of Decision. These documents were considered in making the decision presented in this document.

This DN documents my decision and rationale for my selection of the proposed action, associated project design criteria (PDC), and implementation monitoring requirements for the White Pass Ski Area – 2017 Projects as described in the EA. The following sections provide the context and rationale for my decision.

Decision Rationale

I have decided to approve the proposed action in the EA (s. 2.0), including the Nordic ski area improvements, the re-circulating gravel filter, the PDC (s.2.1), and the WNF Forest Plan Amendment (s.2.3). In reaching my decision to select the proposed action, I relied on several information sources

including the aforementioned documents, the EA, public comments as they related to the analysis process, input from the interdisciplinary team of resource specialists on the OOWNF and GPNF, the White Pass MDP, and my experience with ski area operations and similar projects. Based on the information, I have decided to approve the proposed action as it is described in the EA. This project, as proposed, meets the goals of, and works towards meeting the desired future conditions of a winter recreation management area as described in the WNF and GPNF Forest Plans. These projects will improve visitor experience by increasing and diversifying the cross-country/snowshoeing terrain offered at White Pass, improving the cross-country skiing experience for lower-level skiers, improving the base area cross-country center, and providing restrooms and a warming facility within the cross-country trail network. In addition, the addition of the proposed re-circulating gravel filter to the wastewater treatment facilities within the alpine ski area will improve the water quality of wastewater delivered to the existing drainfield.

I have also considered the environmental impacts associated with this project. The planning and design for this project has taken into careful consideration the soil and watershed resources, botanical resources, wildlife and wildlife habitat, as well as aquatic species and their habitat. The project has been designed to avoid and minimize impacts to terrestrial and watershed resources, and the PDC (s.2.1) have a well-balanced approach to meet both visitor needs while also providing for resource protection. In addition, I have considered the effects to wildlife resources and late-successional habitat that would result from the Forest Plan amendment re-allocating existing developed lands out of the White Pass Late Successional Reserve (LSR), and re-allocating undeveloped lands into the same LSR (s.2.3, 3.2.1, 3.4.2, 3.6.2). The effects to Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) were also considered in my decision (s.3.6.2).

In addition to the environmental effects, I also relied on an analysis of the recreational effects of the proposed cross-country trails and facilities on the intended users, as well as users of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) (3.7.2).

The Proposed Action was listed on the Forest Service Schedule of Proposed Actions for the OOWNF (SOPA) in April 2014. Government-to-government scoping notices were provided to the Yakama Nation, Cowlitz Indian Nation, Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Squaxin Island Tribe on February 21, 2014. The public was provided with a notice of opportunity to comment through the placement of legal advertisements in the Wenatchee World, Yakima Herald, and The Chronicle (Centralia, WA) on March 11, 2014. As defined in 36 CFR 218.2, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. Scoping comment letters/e-mails were received from 16 public commenters. Within these, one specific comment was captured to help frame the environmental analysis in the Draft EA (s.1.6).

On August 9, 2020, the OOWNF initiated a 30-day comment period for this project's draft EA. The Forest received a total of 15 comment letters/emails that provided six specific comments. In response to these comments, several additions were made to the final EA, including the addition of three PDC. These comments and responses are included as Appendix A in the final EA.

The project archaeologist found that there would be **no effect** to heritage resources from the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, no additional consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) is required (s.3.9).

On June 24, 2019, the NRD District Ranger requested informal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in a letter and attached the project biological assessment (BA). The USFWS provided a Letter of Concurrence for the effects determinations described in the BA, based on the Federally Listed Species section of the wildlife specialist report cited in the EA (s 1.7, 3.4.2 – Table 11.3.9).

There were no other alternatives to the proposed action analyzed in the EA (s.2.2). Taking no action alternative was considered, and is discussed in the EA (s. 3.0). If the addition were not constructed, terrestrial and aquatic The no action alternative was considered, but not taken, because doing so would not provide the benefits described in the Need for the Proposal (s. 1.3).

On November 13, 2018, the OOWNF requested Regional Interagency Executive Committee (RIEC) review of a proposed WNF Forest Plan amendment to address the discrepancy between the existing and proposed land use (Nordic terrain) and the LSR Standards and Guidelines. The OOWNF proposed to re-allocate 105 acres of LSR to AW/RE-1 and to re-allocate 172 acres of undeveloped land from Matrix to LSR in a different location with higher habitat value (s. 2.3, 3.6). The RIEC approved the re-allocations for the LSR Adjustment on August 9, 2019 (s. 2.3, 3.6). Therefore, my decision also includes an amendment to the Forest Plan to implement the re-allocations.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (40 CFR 1508.27)

Context

The OOWNF covers over 4 million acres and the GPNF almost 1.4 million acres. This project would add approximately 30.08 acres of tree-cutting over a length of 9.99 kilometers, resulting in a total cross-country trail network of 23.58 kilometers and 71.01 acres of established ski trails. These trails would be distributed among a project area of 974 acres, with 750 acres in the GPNF and 224 acres in the OOWNF (s.3.0). The new trail network would occupy approximately 3% of the project area. The total trail network, including existing trails, would occupy about 7% of the project area, or 0.001% of the two Forests.

I have also reviewed the cumulative effects of past management activities and reasonably foreseeable future actions as they are analyzed in the EA .White Pass Company has proposed no other projects in the cross-country or RGF project areas and no known other projects are proposed to take place in the same location or timeframe as either the proposed Nordic improvements or the RGF project. Therefore, I agree with the EA analysis that there would be no overlap of effects in time or space with the effects of the Proposed Action on Soils, Watershed Resources, Aquatics, Botanical Resources, Wilderness, Potential Wilderness, IRA, and/or Recreation Resources (s3.9).

However, some project impacts may affect wildlife resources outside of the 974 acre project area. Therefore the analysis area for wildlife resources is larger than the project area for various, wide-ranging wildlife species. Given the scale of this project to the wildlife analysis area (s. 3.4), the project's location within and immediately adjacent to previously-developed cross-country trails, the narrow distribution of tree removal over almost ten miles (s.2.0), and the PDC specific to wildlife (s. 2.1), I feel that the implementation of this project would have a negligible, immeasurable effect at the scale of wide-ranging wildlife species.

Intensity

Based on the analysis documented in the EA and the comments received from the public, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the physical, biological, or human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. The interdisciplinary team (ID Team) considered the effects of this project appropriately and thoroughly with an analysis that is responsive to public scoping comments, and public comments on the Draft EA. They took a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions. My finding of no significant impact is based on the following ten intensity factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), the analysis of effects, and the design of the proposed action, including PDC to be incorporated during project implementation (s. 2.1).

1. **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial:** My finding of no significant environmental effect is not biased by the beneficial recreational effects (Nordic improvements), water quality (RGF) effects, or effects to the White Pass LSR resulting from the proposed action. The EA demonstrates that, due to careful project design incorporating protective measures, the possible negative impacts are minor and are not directly, indirectly or cumulatively significant. These protective measures are documented in the EA (s.2.1).
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety:** There is no reason, based on the EA, to find that there will be negative impacts to public health or safety through the implementation of the proposed action. On the contrary, and as stated in the EA (s. 1.0, 3.7.2), this project will improve terrain to beginner cross country skiers by allowing them to avoid “The Hill”, improve and diversify the cross-country terrain for all skiers, offer restrooms and warming facilities within the trail network, and improve the water quality of the wastewater delivered to the drainfield within the alpine ski area.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area. Although one small portion of a Nordic trail will cross over a wetland meadow during the winter and only with 3 feet or more of snow on the ground (s. 2.1, 3.1) the project requires no ground disturbance in wetlands and only hand-cutting of hazard trees is authorized – no construction equipment is authorized to operate in the wetland. The Nordic trail over this wetland creates a unique recreational opportunity, where skiers will experience an open meadow in an otherwise forested skiing experience. The project area includes no prime farmland, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (s. 2.0, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5. and 3.9). Historic and cultural resources have been evaluated (s.1.7, 3.9) and will be protected, if any are uncovered during construction (s. 2.1). While the proposed action takes place inside two Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA), I agree with the EA analysis that the cutting of trees for the Nordic trails in the William O. Douglas Adjacent IRA will be incidental to the construction of trails and cut trees will be maintained onsite (i.e., not a timber harvest). The Region 6 office has also evaluated the proposed Nordic facilities and agreed with this finding (s.3.6). I also agree with the EA analysis that the construction of the RGF would take place over previously-disturbed ground within the alpine ski area inside the Goat Rocks Adjacent IRA. No trees will be cut for this portion of the proposed action, so it will have no effect on roadless

characteristics (s.3.6). The proposed action would have no direct, and only minor indirect effects on congressionally designated areas or potential wilderness areas – primarily Pacific Crest Trail hikers who may experience construction, maintenance and operation of the Nordic trails as they pass through the area and into the William O. Douglas Wilderness (s. 3.6, 3.7).

With regard to ecologically critical areas, the EA analysis of effects to LSR evaluates the condition of 105 acres adjacent to a privately held gravel/rock mine, in the existing Nordic trail network, and in which one new connector trail is proposed (Figure 4). The proposed OWNF Forest Plan amendment to “trade” these developed 105 acres out of the LSR allocation and to add 172 acres of higher value habitat into the LSR has been evaluated by the Regional Inter-agency Executive Committee (RIEC) and approved on August 19, 2019 (s.3.6). I believe that this amendment and re-allocation of lands will improve habitat conditions for the Northern Spotted Owl (s.3.4) and late-successional habitat over the long term, in the White Pass LSR.

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. The 30-day public comment period for the Draft EA resulted in 15 public comments that were generally supportive of the project and the environmental analysis in the EA (s. 1.6).
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:** The effects analyses discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA (s. 3.0) are based on sound scientific research and previous experience implementing past ski area projects at White Pass Ski Area. After reviewing the EA, I find no indication that the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or would involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:** The proposed action is not unusual, nor does it lead to any further actions that are unique. The action is also consistent with the Master Development Plan (MDP) that describes potential future projects for the Nordic area at White Pass Ski Area. The actions analyzed in the EA represent the fulfillment of all Nordic projects in the current MDP. Likewise, the RGF project is the only wastewater-related project in the current MDP. Any new project proposals in the Nordic or RGF project areas would require acceptance into the MDP, followed by a formal proposal, and analysis under NEPA. Therefore, I find that this is not a precedent setting decision. This DN/FONSI is for the identified project only; it does not set precedence for any future actions.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:** Cumulative effects were assessed in the EA (s. 3.8). The analysis considered not only the direct and indirect effects of the project, but also their contribution to cumulative effects. Past, present and foreseeable future projects have been included in the analysis (s. 3.8). I agree with the EA analysis finding that WPC has proposed no other projects in the Project Area and no known other projects are proposed to take place in the same location or timeframe as either the proposed Nordic improvements or the RGF project. Therefore, there would be no overlap of effects in time or space with the effects of the proposed action on Soils, Watershed Resources, Aquatics, Botanical Resources, Wilderness, Potential Wilderness, IRA, and/or Recreation Resources.

The analysis found negligible cumulative effects to wildlife species with a large home range (s.3.8). However, since those species would select other areas within their home range and away from the developed winter recreation area (i.e., developed Nordic ski trails, winter grooming operations, maintenance operations) for the duration of construction activities and operation of the Nordic facilities, it was determined that there would be no significant cumulative effects to wildlife.

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:** The proposed action was investigated twice to assess the project for cultural resources: none were found. The EA disclosed that there will be **no effect** to heritage resources (s 1.7, 3.9). The EA includes Project Design Criterion CR-1 in the event cultural resources are discovered (s. 2.1).
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973:** My decision is consistent with the Endangered Species Act. The proposed action will have **No Effect** to ESA-listed aquatic species or critical habitat (s 3.5)

ESA-listed Gray Wolf presence in the project area is suspected during the snow-free season and project direct impacts to habitat would be small and localized to the project footprints. The proposed action **May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect** Gray Wolf (s. 3.4.2 – Table 11).

The project area contains habitat that is not suitable for the ESA-listed Northern Spotted Owl, as well as dispersal habitat. No Nesting, Roosting, or Foraging (NRF) habitat is present in the study area. The project area is not within 0.7 mile of any known spotted owl activity center or within 0.25 mile of NRF habitat. The proposed Forest Plan amendment will result in a long-term benefit by increasing the area of spotted owl habitat in the White Pass LSR (s. 3.4.2 – Table 11). The EA discloses that there will be minor alterations to spotted owl dispersal habitat within a Critical Habitat Unit (CHU). The proposed action **May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect** Northern Spotted Owl and its critical habitat (s. 3.4.2 – Table 11).

ESA Proposed Threatened Wolverines have been documented foraging adjacent to the project area. No denning habitat exists in the project area (s.3.4.1- Table 8). The analysis found that there is the potential for incidental displacement of individuals that are traveling or foraging due to construction related disturbance. Therefore, the proposed action is **not likely to jeopardize the continued existence** of the wolverine (s. 3.4.2 – Table 11)).

The proposed action would have **No Effect** on ESA-listed plant species because none are present in the project area (s. 3.3).

10. **My decision will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.** Applicable laws and regulations were followed in the analysis of the project and development of the EA (s. 3.0). The action is consistent with the Forest Plan goals and desired future condition for the OOWNF's AA/RE-1 (Developed Recreation) and GPNF's AA/2L (Developed Recreation) allocations (s. 1.4). While trees will be cut as part of the proposed action, those trees will not be sold. The trees will be left in the trail corridors to enhance terrestrial and riparian habitat

(downed woody debris), and there will be no regulated timber harvest on lands classified as unsuitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.14). Tree removal and vegetation manipulation are in compliance with 36 CFR 219.27(b). The project complies with Executive Order 12898 regarding environmental justice; no disproportionately high adverse human or environmental effects on minorities and/or low-income populations were identified during the analysis or public scoping process (s.3.9).

Other Findings Required by Law or Regulation

National Forest Management Act: The proposed action was developed to be in full compliance with the National Forest Management Act via compliance with the Forest Plans, as amended. The project is within the OWNF RE-1 and GPNF 2L management areas, which are suitable for developed recreation (s. 1.4), and the proposed action is consistent with the White Pass Ski Area MDP (s. 1.1). Other requirements are addressed here:

- **Aquatic Conservation Strategy** – Based on the analysis in the EA, I find that the proposed action is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (s. 3.1.2). The Nordic projects have been designed not to require any ground disturbances in streams or wetlands. One bridge is proposed over Clear Creek. The PDC include WR-3 and WR-6 to protect the stream (s. 2.1- Table 2)). The Nordic project also includes a trail that will traverse a wetland meadow over the snow, with no ground disturbance. Protective measures include PDC WR-11 and WR-12 to protect the wetland (s. 2.1- Table 2). I find that other PDC (s. 2.1), such as retention of cut trees within the trail corridor, erosion control BMPs, and maintenance of groundcover will avoid impacts to, and maintain the function of key watershed indicators that make up elements of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. I also realize that the purpose of the RGF project is to improve water quality. I find that the 9 objectives for water quality, habitat, flow, channel condition, and watershed condition, would be maintained.
- **Management Indicator Species** – I have considered the impacts to Forest Management Indicator Species (MIS). MIS for this portion of the Forest which include mule deer and elk, mountain goat, American marten, and primary cavity nesters such as the three-toed woodpecker and northern flicker (s. 3.4.1- Table 10). I find that the selected alternative is consistent with the standards and guidelines pertaining to MIS, and that based on the limited effects to the MIS present within the project area, the proposed action will not contribute towards a negative trend in viability of these species on the Forest s.3.4.2 – Table 13).
- **Invasive Plants** – I find that the selected alternative is consistent with 2017 Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forest-wide Site-Specific Invasive Plant Management Environmental Impact Statement, Okanogan, Chelan, Yakima, and Kittitas Counties in Washington. PDC BR-1 is included to minimize the spread and establishment of invasive plants (s. 2.1 and 3.3).
- **Survey and Manage** – I find that my decision complies with the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (USDA, USDI 2001) (s. 3.3 and 3.4).

National Environmental Policy Act: The EA was prepared in response to White Pass Company's proposal for the new Nordic terrain and facilities and the RGF. The EA is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires public participation, consideration, disclosure of potential environmental effects, analysis of alternatives, and preparation of a decision document that provides specific direction for project implementation.

Clean Air Act: My decision is consistent with the Clean Air Act. No air quality issues were raised during

scoping or during the comment period for the preliminary EA. The proposed action does not include burning. Ground disturbance will be dispersed throughout 20 different areas and PDC Soil 7 – 10 (s.2.1) will be required to protect bare soils, which will limit the potential for fugitive dust from these areas.

Clean Water Act: My decision is consistent with the Clean Water Act (s. 3.1.2). The project is designed so that there is no disturbance to streams or wetlands (s. 3.1.2). The PDC for soils and watershed resources will help to ensure that erosion and sedimentation protections are in place, fuel and hazardous materials are handled properly and away from water resources, and that sufficient ground cover is established and maintained on disturbed sites (s.2.1- Table 2). The proposed action includes the construction of the RGF, whose purpose is to improve water quality (s. 2.0, 3.1.2).

Endangered Species Act (ESA): Consultation was not required for ESA- listed fish (s.3.5) or plants (s. 3.3) because none are present within the project area. The EA documents the wildlife consultation process, including a Letter of Concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (s. 1.7).

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act: The project would not adversely affect essential fish habitat since none is present in the project area (s. 3.2).

National Historic Preservation Act: The EA documents that Cultural Resource Specialists signed two different National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Compliance Documentation forms for the proposed action, indicating **No Effect** to heritage resources from the proposed action.

Executive Orders 11990 (Wetlands) and 119988 (Floodplains): The project is designed so that there is no ground disturbance in any streams or wetlands (s. 2.0, 3.1). .

Forest Plan Consistency

I find that the selected alternative is consistent with direction found in the Forest Plans for the AA/RE-1 and AA/2L (Developed Recreation) allocations. It is consistent with standards and guidelines specific to these land use allocations as well as the applicable Forest-wide standards and guidelines (s. 1.4).

Compliance with 2012 Planning Rule’s Procedural Provisions

My decision includes an amendment to the WNF Forest Plan regarding the White Pass LSR. Therefore, under the 2012 Planning Rule, I am required to document compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule’s procedural provisions. The following Table 1 identifies provisions that are relevant to the amendment in my decision, along with my rationale for compliance.

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
219.7(a)	Plan revisions. A plan revision creates a new plan for the entire plan area, whether the plan revision differs from the prior plan to a small or large extent. A plan must be revised at least every 15 years. But the responsible official has the discretion to determine at any time that conditions on a plan area have changed significantly such that a plan must be revised (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)).	I believe that the WNF Forest Plan amendment in this decision is small, with 105 acres being re-allocated out of the White Pass LSR due to the developed condition of this land, and 172 acres being re-allocated into the LSR because of their high quality

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		habitat value (s.3.6.2). This amendment is not considered a “plan revision” because it does not affect the entire plan area (the OWNF). Therefore, the provisions of 219.7 do not apply to this amendment. As the responsible official, I find that due to the proposed action by White Pass Company and the analysis in the EA, now is the appropriate time for this amendment.
219.8 (a)(1)(i)	(1) Ecosystem Integrity (i) Interdependence of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area.	I find that the scale of the re-allocations is too small to consider the integrity of ecosystem-level terrestrial and aquatic resources in this amendment. The primary driver of my decision to approve this amendment is the quality of the habitat in the 105 acres containing Nordic trail development, the minor impact to habitat in this area resulting from the proposed action (s. 3.4.2) and the degree of existing development in the two land areas (s. 3.6.2).
219.8 (a)(1)(ii) 219.8 (a)(1)(iii)	(ii) Contributions of the plan area to ecological conditions within the broader landscape influenced by the plan area. (iii) Conditions in the broader landscape that may influence the sustainability of resources and ecosystems within the plan area.	The amendment re-allocates 105 acres of developed (Nordic trails, adjacent to offsite, privately owned gravel quarry) land with no NRF habitat for Northern Spotted Owl to AW/RE-1, removing this area from the White Pass LSR. The amendment also re-allocates 172 acres of undeveloped land, containing late successional habitat and NRF habitat from Matrix to LSR, adding this area to the White Pass LSR. The 172 acre site was selected based on the increase in late successional and NRF habitat that would be included in the broader White Pass LSR.
219.8(a)(2)(i – iv)	(2) Air, Soil, and Water. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore: (i) Air quality. (ii) Soils and soil productivity, including guidance to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation. (iii) Water quality. (iv) Water resources in the plan area, including lakes, streams, and wetlands; ground water; public water supplies; sole source aquifers; source water protection areas; and other sources of drinking water (including guidance to prevent or mitigate detrimental changes in quantity, quality, and availability).	My decision to implement the amendment will maintain the existing WNF Forest Plan standards and guidelines for air, soil, and water. These standards and guidelines will remain in place for both parcels after the re-allocation.
219.8(a)(3)(i– ii)	(3) Riparian areas. (i) The plan must include plan components, including	My decision to re-allocate the two areas will not result in any revisions to the applicable standards and guidelines

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CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
	<p>standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of riparian areas in the plan area, including plan components to maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Water temperature and chemical composition; (B) Blockages (uncharacteristic and characteristic) of water courses; (C) Deposits of sediment; (D) Aquatic and terrestrial habitats; (E) Ecological connectivity; (F) Restoration needs; and (G) Floodplain values and risk of flood loss. <p>(ii) Plans must establish width(s) for riparian management zones around all lakes, perennial and intermittent streams, and open water wetlands, within which the plan components required by paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section will apply, giving special attention to land and vegetation for approximately 100 feet from the edges of all perennial streams and lakes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Riparian management zone width(s) may vary based on ecological or geomorphic factors or type of water body; and will apply unless replaced by a site-specific delineation of the riparian area. (B) Plan components must ensure that no management practices causing detrimental changes in water temperature or chemical composition, blockages of water courses, or deposits of sediment that seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat shall be permitted within the riparian management zones or the site-specific delineated riparian areas. 	<p>regarding the physical and ecological integrity of riparian areas in both parcels. These standards and guidelines will remain in place for both parcels after the re-allocation.</p>
219.8(a)(4)	<p>(4) Best management practices for water quality. The Chief shall establish requirements for national best management practices for water quality in the Forest Service Directive System. Plan components must ensure implementation of these practices.</p>	<p>My decision to amend the WNF Forest Plan for these two areas will not affect the applicability of the national best management practices for water quality, as they pertain to these sites. My decision includes the PDC in the EA, many of which directly address water quality (s. 2.1).</p>
219.8 (b)(1-6)	<p>(b) Social and economic sustainability. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions relevant to the area influenced by the plan; (2) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character; (3) Multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner; 	<p>The re-allocation of the 105 acre area to AW/RE-1 remedies an inconsistency between the current use of the land as Nordic trails and its allocation as LSR, as well as its location immediately adjacent to a private in-holding that operates as a rock/gravel mine. The existing and proposed Nordic trails are associated with the greater White Pass Ski Area, which is a substantial social, cultural, and economic driver for the local area (s, 3.7). The re-allocated</p>

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CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
	<p>(4) Ecosystem services;</p> <p>(5) Cultural and historic resources and uses; and</p> <p>(6) Opportunities to connect people with nature.</p>	<p>Nordic trail area will continue to provide opportunities for Nordic skiers and other recreationists (e.g., snowshoers, snow bikers, hikers) to connect with nature. I also believe that the incorporation of the 172 acre area into the White Pass LSR will help to improve the late successional forest services offered by the area added to the LSR (habitat value) because the area will no longer be subject to potential timber harvest.</p>
219.9(a)(2)(i– iii)	<p>(2) Ecosystem diversity. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types throughout the plan area. In doing so, the plan must include plan components to maintain or restore:</p> <p>(i) Key characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem types;</p> <p>(ii) Rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities; and</p> <p>(iii) The diversity of native tree species similar to that existing in the plan area.</p>	<p>The re-allocation of the 172 acre area to LSR will ensure preservation of late successional habitat by including the area into LSR. This area was selected for re-allocation due to its abundant NRF habitat for the northern spotted owl as it relates to the broader LSR (s. s.3.4.2, 3.6). In light of these benefits, I believe that the 172 acre LSR addition itself will not be large enough to provide “ecosystem”, “plant and animal community”, or “plan area” benefits. Rather, I believe that this addition will be a benefit to the White Pass LSR, which does contain these characteristics at those larger scales.</p>
219.9(b)(1)	<p>(b) Additional, species-specific plan components.</p> <p>(1) The responsible official shall determine whether or not the plan components required by paragraph (a) of this section provide the ecological conditions necessary to: contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern within the plan area. If the responsible official determines that the plan components required in paragraph (a) are insufficient to provide such ecological conditions, then additional, species-specific plan components, including standards or guidelines, must be included in the plan to provide such ecological conditions in the plan area.</p>	<p>As the responsible official, I agree with the EA analysis that the re-allocation of 172 acres to LSR will help provide NRF habitat for the northern spotted owl (s. 3.4.2, 3.6.2), and the addition of this high-quality habitat will benefit the LSR as an area whose main purpose is to protect late successional habitat and related proposed candidate species and species of conservation concern.</p>
219.10(a)(1)	<p>219.10 Multiple use.</p> <p>While meeting the requirements of §§ 219.8 and 219.9, a plan developed or revised under this part must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area as follows:</p> <p>(a) Integrated resource management for multiple use. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area. When developing plan components for integrated resource management, to the extent relevant to the plan area and the public participation process and the requirements of §§ 219.7, 219.8, 219.9, and 219.11, the responsible official</p>	<p>In making my decision, I considered these factors in the re-allocation of the 172 acre area into LSR. I believe that the addition of this area to the White Pass LSR will help ensure the long-term protection of ecosystem services and habitat connectivity in this portion of the LSR. The Re-allocation of the 105 acre area into AW/RE-1 recognizes the current recreation setting of the Nordic trail system, while protecting habitat and habitat connectivity, riparian areas, soil, water quality and vegetation in this area, as well as the values listed in (1)(s.3.0 – 3.9).</p>

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
	<p>shall consider:</p> <p>(1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses.</p>	
219.10(a)(2 - 10)	<p>(2) Renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources.</p> <p>(3) Appropriate placement and sustainable management of infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors.</p> <p>(4) Opportunities to coordinate with neighboring landowners to link open spaces and take into account joint management objectives where feasible and appropriate.</p> <p>(5) Habitat conditions, subject to the requirements of § 219.9, for wildlife, fish, and plants commonly enjoyed and used by the public; for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, observing, subsistence, and other activities (in collaboration with federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments).</p> <p>(6) Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns relevant to the plan area.</p> <p>(7) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability.</p> <p>(8) System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors, such as natural succession, wildland fire, invasive species, and climate change; and the ability of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on the plan area to adapt to change (§ 219.8);</p> <p>(9) Public water supplies and associated water quality.</p> <p>(10) Opportunities to connect people with nature.</p>	<p>I have limited my scope of decision space to the environmental issues and recreational purpose of the proposed action. Therefore, energy and mineral resources (2) were not considered. I believe the amendment is necessary to allow the recreational use of the 105 acre area (3) and the 172 acre parcel will now be a part of the LSR. All of the lands affected in the re-allocations are National Forest System Lands. Therefore, coordination with other landowners is not possible (4). As described for 219.9, above, I believe that this plan amendment will help maintain/improve habitat conditions, including NRF habitat for northern spotted owl, as well as late-successional habitat in the White Pass LSR (5). I considered that the current use of the 105 acre area includes existing Nordic trails and the proposed connector trail 2c (Figures 4 and 7). I also considered that this developed area is adjacent to a private in-holding that contains a gravel mine. In addition, I considered that the 172 acre area is adjacent to the White Pass LSR and would be a positive addition to the LSR due to the protection of late successional habitat in the parcel (6). I considered the economic stability and the recreational offering of the White Pass Ski Area Nordic Center in re-allocating the 105 acres to AA/RE-1. I also considered climate change in the re-allocation of the 172 acres to LSR, in that the 172 acres are higher in elevation than the 105 acres, and therefore more likely to retain snow during warmer periods (7,8). Public water supplies are not located on either parcel, so I did not consider this in my decision (9). I did consider the opportunity to connect people with nature in the decision. The proposed action, and White Pass Ski Area itself, are intended to provide outdoor recreation to the public (10) (s. 1.3, 3.7). The addition of Trail 2c in the 105 acre area will improve cross-</p>

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
		country skiing conditions for lower level skiers who currently have to navigate “The Hill” (s. 3.7).
219.10(b)(1-2)	<p>(b) Requirements for plan components for a new plan or plan revision.</p> <p>(1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character. Recreation opportunities may include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air. (ii) Protection of cultural and historic resources. (iii) Management of areas of tribal importance. (iv) Protection of congressionally designated wilderness areas as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness designation to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for their suitability for wilderness designation. (v) Protection of designated wild and scenic rivers as well as management of rivers found eligible or determined suitable for the National Wild and Scenic River system to protect the values that provide the basis for their suitability for inclusion in the system. (vi) Appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area, including research natural areas. <p>(2) Other plan components for integrated resource management to provide for multiple use as necessary.</p>	<p>As I described under 219.7(a), this amendment is not considered a “plan revision” because it does not affect the entire plan area (the OWNF). Therefore, these provisions do not apply to this plan amendment. The existing WNF Forest Plan standards and guidelines for these listed resources will be maintained, as appropriate, on each of the parcels involved in the re-allocation. The resources I considered include: sustainable recreation (i); protection of cultural resources (ii)(s. 2.1, 3.9); appropriate management of the White Pass LSR and White Pass Ski Area (vi)(s. 3.6); and multiple use of the 105 acre area being re-allocated to AA/RE-1 (2) (s. 2.3, 3.7).</p>

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
219.11(a)	<p>219.11 Timber requirements based on the NFMA.</p> <p>While meeting the requirements of §§ 219.8 through 219.10, a plan developed or revised under this part must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, and other plan content regarding timber management within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area, as follows:</p> <p>(a) Lands not suited for timber production.</p>	<p>I considered several factors related to timber harvest in making my decision. First, the 105 acre area was allocated to LSR, and will now be allocated to AA/RE-1. Under the LSR allocation, timber harvest is not authorized. Although timber harvest may be allowed in AA/RE-1 lands (e.g., trees harvested from ski trails), the 105 acre area is included in the William O. Douglas IRA, which precludes timber harvest. I agree with the EA analysis that the proposed tree cutting for the Nordic trail 2c will be incidental to the construction of the trail, and the timber will be left onsite. I also considered the approval of this tree cutting in IRA by the Region 6 office (s.3.6.2, footnote 9). I am convinced that this tree cutting is not a “harvest”. As for the re-allocation of the 172 acre area into LSR, I am satisfied that this decision will preclude the area from timber harvest in the future.</p>
219.12	<p>Monitoring.</p> <p>(1) The responsible official shall develop a monitoring program for the plan area and include it in the plan. Monitoring information should enable the responsible official to determine if a change in plan components or other plan content that guide management of resources on the plan area may be needed. The development of the plan monitoring program must be coordinated with the regional forester and Forest Service State and Private Forestry and Research and Development. Responsible officials for two or more administrative units may jointly develop their plan monitoring programs.</p>	<p>I considered monitoring in my decision to amend the WNF Forest Plan. Specifically, the re-allocation of the two areas of forest will have no effect on the monitoring that is required in the Forest Plan for each of the two re-allocated areas. The EA documents site-specific monitoring that is required as part of the PDC (s. 2.1). These PDC are included in the proposed action and my decision.</p>
219.13(a)	<p>Plan amendment and administrative changes.</p> <p>(a) Plan amendment. A plan may be amended at any time. Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the need for change, and should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions. The responsible official has the discretion to determine whether and how to amend the plan and to determine the scope and scale of any amendment. Except as provided by paragraph (c) of this section, a plan amendment is required to add, modify, or remove one or more plan components, or to change how or where one or more plan components apply to all or part of the plan area (including management areas or geographic areas).</p>	<p>I find that this plan amendment is narrow in scope, pertaining to the allocation of two small areas of land: 105 acres in the existing White Pass LSR and 172 acres that will be re-allocated to LSR as part of my decision. The re-allocation of 105 acres from LSR to AA/RE-1 is based on information gathered during the environmental analysis for the projects. In conjunction, the re-allocation of 172 acres of Matrix lands to LSR is based on best available science and the objective of maintaining or improving NRF habitat for northern spotted owl, as well as habitat other late-successional dependent species, within the LSR s. (2.3, 3.1.2 – ACS, 3.4.2).</p>
219.13(b)(1)	<p>(b) Amendment requirements. For every plan amendment, the responsible official shall:</p>	<p>As the responsible official, I have based my approval of the plan amendment on</p>

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
	(1) Base an amendment on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment; a monitoring report; or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. When a plan amendment is made together with, and only applies to, a project or activity decision, the analysis prepared for the project or activity may serve as the documentation for the preliminary identification of the need to change the plan.	the new assessment in the EA (s.2.3). The NEPA analysis for the amendment was included in the EA, including the need for the amendment (s. 1.3), the rationale for the amendment (s. 2.3), and the environmental effects of the land re-allocation in the amendment (s. 3.4.2, 3.6.2).
219.13(b)(2)	(2) Provide opportunities for public participation as required in § 219.4 and public notification as required in § 219.16. The responsible official may combine processes and associated public notifications where appropriate, considering the scope and scale of the need to change the plan. The responsible official must include information in the initial notice for the amendment (§ 219.16(a)(1)) about which substantive requirements of §§ 219.8 through 219.11 are likely to be directly related to the amendment (§ 219.13(b)(5)).	The plan amendment is discussed in much detail in the EA (s.1.2, s.2.3, s. 3.1.2, s.3.4.2, s. 3.6.2, Figures 4 and 7). The amendment has been combined with the proposed action in the EA to meet this requirement. The EA includes discussion about substantive 2012 Planning Rule provisions (s. 1.4, s. 3.6.2 – Table 14), which are also discussed in this decision notice.
219.13(b)(3)	(3) Amend the plan consistent with Forest Service NEPA procedures. The appropriate NEPA documentation for an amendment may be an environmental impact statement, an environmental assessment, or a categorical exclusion, depending upon the scope and scale of the amendment and its likely effects. Except for an amendment that applies only to one project or activity, a proposed amendment that may create a significant environmental effect and thus requires preparation of an environmental impact statement is considered a significant change in the plan for the purposes of the NFMA and therefore requires a 90-day comment period for the proposed plan and draft environmental impact statement (§ 219.16(a)(2)), in addition to meeting the requirements of this section.	With the approval of the RIEC (s.3.6.2), I find that the EA is the appropriate NEPA documentation for this amendment. I also find that the amendment applies only to the proposed action in the EA, and therefore does not require a 90-day comment period or an environmental impact statement.
219.13(b)(4)	(4) Follow the applicable format for plan components set out at § 219.7(e) for the plan direction added or modified by the amendment, except that where an amendment to a plan developed or revised under a prior planning regulation would simply modify the area to which existing direction applies, the responsible official may retain the existing formatting for that direction.	I find that by approving this amendment, I am simply modifying the area to which existing direction in the WNF Forest Plan applies. Specifically, the direction for the 105 acre parcel will change from LSR direction to the Forest Plan direction for AA/RE-1. The direction for the 172 acre parcel will change from Matrix to LSR. I am therefore retaining the format for that applicable direction.
219.13(b)(5)	(5) Determine which specific substantive requirement(s) within §§ 219.8 through 219.11 are directly related to the plan direction being added, modified, or removed by the amendment and apply such requirement(s) within the scope and scale of the amendment. The responsible official is not required to apply any substantive requirements within §§ 219.8 through 219.11 that are not directly related to the amendment.	As the responsible official, I have selected the specific, substantive requirements that are directly related to the amendment. This table documents my compliance with these requirements.
219.13(b)(5)(i-ii)	(i) The responsible official's determination must be based on the purpose for the amendment and the effects (beneficial or adverse) of the amendment, and informed by the best available scientific information, scoping,	As described above in this table, my determination that this plan amendment complies with the 2012 Planning Rule is based on the information regarding

Table 1: 2012 Planning Rule Provisions Relevant to the WNF Forest Plan Amendment

CFR Citation	2012 Planning Rule Provision	Rationale for Compliance
	<p>effects analysis, monitoring data or other rationale.</p> <p>(ii) When basing the determination on adverse effects:</p> <p>(A) The responsible official must determine that a specific substantive requirement is directly related to the amendment when scoping or NEPA effects analysis for the proposed amendment reveals substantial adverse effects associated with that requirement, or when the proposed amendment would substantially lessen protections for a specific resource or use.</p> <p>(B) If the appropriate NEPA documentation for an amendment is a categorical exclusion or an environmental assessment accompanied by a finding of no significant impact (§ 219.13(b)(3)), there is a rebuttable presumption that the amendment will not have substantial adverse effects.</p>	<p>habitat conditions on the two parcels being re-allocated (s.2.3, 3.1.2, 3.4.2), on the level of recreational use on the parcels (s. 2.3), on the recreational/economic value provided by the 105 acre parcel as a portion of the White Pass Nordic area (2.7), acceptance of the “LSR Adjustment” by the RIEC, and the Letter of Concurrence by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (s. 3.6.2). I find that this amendment will not result in any significant adverse effects or lessen any protection measures for resources in either parcel. By preparing this DN/FONSI, I am documenting this finding.</p>

Pre-decisional Administrative Review Summary

This environmental analysis was subject to pre-decisional administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 218, also called the “objection process.” General information on the pre-decisional administrative review process can be found at the [USDA website](#). A draft of this decision was made available for a 45-day period objection filing period prior to making this final decision. The legal notice of the 45-day opportunity to file an objection was published in The Wenatchee World, Yakima Herald, and Centralia Chronicle newspapers on November 13, 2020. No objections were received during the objection filing period.

For further information regarding this project, and/or information regarding the objection process contact Jamey Basye, Environmental Coordinator at (509) 852-1042 or jamey.basye@usda.gov. Implementation of this project may occur as proposed following the decision signature date below. The EA, DN, FONSI, and maps can be downloaded from the [Forest’s website](#) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=43718>).

Kristin Bail
 Forest Supervisor
 Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Date

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