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Forest
Service

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Final Environmental Assessment

GONDOLA PROPOSAL BEAVER CREEK RESORT

Holy Cross Ranger District, White River National Forest
Eagle County, Colorado

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Beaver Creek 4a

Noxious Weeds: The Colorado Weed Management Act (CWMA) in 1990 requires the control of "undesirable plants", as designated by the state of Colorado and local governing bodies, that constitute a threat to the continued economic and environmental value of the lands of the state (State of Colorado 1990, 35-5.5-102). The act requires the control of noxious weeds on both public and private lands.

A Noxious Weed Risk Assessment was completed to determine the extent of noxious weeds within the Beaver Creek Resort Area (FSM 2080). Most of Beaver Creek Resort is currently free of most introduced weed species of concern. It is currently estimated that there are 100 acres of land within the Beaver Creek Permit Area which require some treatment for noxious weeds. Beaver Creek Ski Area is currently planning on treating this area during the summer of 2002.

Wetlands: Waters of the U.S., including wetlands, receive federal protection under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (1977, as amended), and fall under the regulatory authority of the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE). Wetlands are a special case of waters of the U.S. and are defined as "Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal conditions do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil conditions".

A wetlands survey has been completed on all stages of the proposed gondola. There are two wetland impacts on private lands. Tower 2 on the north side of the Eagle River would have a 108 sq. ft. construction impact and tower 20 located near Bachelor Gulch, would have a permanent impact of 20 sq. ft. and a construction impact of 420 sq. ft. Wetlands will be avoided on NFSL. This impact is permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers (Johnson, 2002).

Effects on Prime Farm Land, Rangeland and Forest Land: All alternatives are in keeping with the intent of Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum 1827 for prime land. The project area does not contain any prime farm lands or rangelands. "Prime" forest land does not apply to lands within the National Forest system. In the action alternative, Forest Service lands would be managed with a sensitivity to the effects on adjacent lands.

Plant Species of Viability Concern: The Beaver Creek Permit area includes habitats that could potentially support federally listed candidate and Region Two forest Sensitive plant species. Disturbance of the habitat of threatened or endangered species is prohibited by the ESA (1973, as amended), although it may be permitted if a series of steps requiring avoidance, mitigation, and/or compensation is followed.

Federal Table 2.11 and Forest Sensitive species are not protected by the ESA, but are managed under Forest Service policy. Once identified, sites that support sensitive, threatened, or endangered plants are given special consideration.

The Biological Evaluation and Specialist Report for the Beaver Creek Gondola proposal (Thompson, 2002a) indicated that only three of the 15 sensitive plant species known or expected to occur on the WRNF have been documented in Eagle County. The three species are Clustered lady slipper (*Cypripedium fasciculatum*), Altai cotton-grass (*Eriophorum altaicum*) and Harrington Beardtongue (*Penstemon harringtonii*). It is also possible that reflected (*B. echo*),