

SENSITIVE WILDLIFE SPECIES BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION OF EFFECTS

Big Mountain Chairs 1 and 2 Projects
Tally Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest

Winter Sports, Inc., operators of the Big Mountain Ski and Summer Resort, is proposing to install new upper and lower terminals for Chair 1. The old terminals would be moved to Chair 2, which would be slightly redelineated so that its lower end is closer to that of Chair 1. The upper terminal for Chair 1 would be dismantled starting in May. The new upper terminal would be transported via about 4 trips up the Taylor Creek Road during the summer. Replacing the upper terminal for Chair 1 would cover about a 5-month period, but would require no new ground disturbance. The old Chair 1 upper terminal would be transported via existing roads to very close to the top of Chair 2. The new delineation for Chair 2 would require the felling of less than 3 acres of trees from three small inter-trail islands. Some of these acres were included solely to reduce the visual effects of the old Chair 2. The proposal was modified in April 2007 so that there would no longer be any felling of about 70 trees (1/8 acre) from a much larger area of dense mesic forest. New tower pads would be dug and poured for Chair 2 only. No new roads would be needed for this project.

The legal location for this project is the SE ¼ of Sec. 35, T32N, R22W. The lower terminals for both Chairs 1 and 2 are on private property.

Species	"No-Action" Determination	Proposal Determination	Background Information Summary
Black-backed woodpecker	NI	NI	No effects due to lack of vegetative manipulation in potential habitat. Not in recently burned area.
Boreal (Western) toad	NI	MIIH	Small opportunity for squashing adult toads via motorized vehicles and equipment. No downstream effects on small wetlands.
Common loon	NI	NI	No effects due to distance and lack of downstream effects on lake habitats.
Fisher	NI	MIIH	Small amount of possible habitat loss. Possible displacement effects during operations. No facilitation of access for trapping.
Flammulated owl	NI	NI	No effects due to lack of potential habitat—too mesic and high elevation.
Harlequin duck	NI	NI	No effects due to distance and lack of downstream effects on lake habitats.
Northern bog lemming	NI	NI	No vegetation manipulation in potential habitat. No downstream effects on small wetlands.
Northern goshawk	NI	MIIH	Small amount of possible habitat loss. Possible displacement effects during operations.

Species	"No-Action" Determination	Proposal Determination	Background Information Summary
Northern leopard frog	NI	NI	No potential habitat. No downstream effects on small wetlands.
Peregrine falcon	NI	NI	No vegetation manipulation in potential habitat. No expected downstream effects. No cliff habitat.
Townsend's big-eared bat	NI	MIIH	Small amount of possible habitat loss. No caves, mine shafts or abandoned buildings in vicinity.
Wolverine	NI	MIIH	Possible displacement effects during operations. No facilitation of access for trapping.

NI = No Impact

MIIH = May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Result in a Trend Toward Federal Listing or Reduced Viability for the Population or Species.

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**Northern Region
Fish Sensitive Species Biological Evaluation**

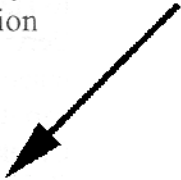
Summary of Conclusion of Effects

Project Name: *Big Mountain Ski Resort Chair 2 Realignment Project*

Possible Determinations:

- No Impact.
- May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but will not likely result in a trend towards federal listing or reduced viability for the population or species.
- Likely to Impact Individuals or Habitat with a consequence that the action may contribute towards federal listing or result in reduced viability for the population or species.
- Beneficial Impact

<u>Species</u>	<u>Determination</u>
Westslope Cutthroat Trout (<i>Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi</i>)	May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but will not likely result in a trend towards federal listing or reduced viability for the population or species



This biological evaluation is prepared to evaluate the effects of allowing Big Mountain Ski Resort to realign Chair 2. The purpose is to improve skier access to chair lifts in the base area and to replace the aging and antiquated chair lift system. The proponent seeks to install new upper and lower terminals for Chair 1 (not part of this decision). The old terminals would be moved via existing roads to become terminals for Chair 2. New tower pads would be dug and poured for the terminals. The lower terminal, which is on private land, will be moved so that its lower end is closer to that of Chair 1. The upper terminal, which is on National Forest system lands, remains at about the same location. Because of the new delineation for Chair 2, several hundred merchantable sized trees (greater than 7" dbh) would be removed. These trees are located in forested islands between ski runs and the chair alignment would require them to be removed for proper clearance. A few additional trees would be removed to meet visual standards along the old Chair 2 route. The entire acreage of the timber to be removed is approximately 2 acres. Work would be completed by existing roads or helicopters and no new roads are needed. The project would take place either in late winter on snow or during summer. The legal location for this project is the SE ¼ of Sec. 35, T32N, R22W.

The project is located in the headwaters of Haskill Creek. In the project area, Haskill Creek has several unnamed, intermittent tributaries that gradually increase in size and become perennial near the National Forest system lands property line. There is no fish habitat on National Forest system lands. About one mile downstream of the property line, Haskill Creek supports an isolated population of westslope cutthroat trout of unknown genetic purity. Further downstream, Haskill Creek is reported to contain non-