


United States
Department
of Agriculture
Forest Service
Northern Region
Flathead National
Forest



1995



BIG MOUNTAIN Ski & Summer Resort



FINAL
Environmental
Impact
Statement



1995

Alternatives D-Modified, E, and F-Modified -- Boreal Owl

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects: Vulnerability of nest and feeding trees to firewood cutting would decrease under these alternatives due to proposed gates and berms. See Chapter 2, Roads.

Alternatives A (No Action), B, C, D-Modified, E and F-Modified -- Boreal Owl

Cumulative Effects: The cumulative effects area has been historically active with timber cutting, road construction, firewood cutting, and fire suppression efforts. These activities will continue to affect available nesting and feeding habitat. The impact on species viability is difficult to assess, yet the current and foreseeable distribution of habitat should allow dispersal of breeding pairs to continue across the area. No additional cumulative impacts are anticipated that would reduce the population viability of boreal owls across the cumulative effects area.

Consistency With Forest Plan and Other Regulatory Framework -- Black-Backed Woodpecker

There are currently no standards or guidelines in the Forest Plan for any of the species listed as sensitive. FS Region 1 Interim Direction on sensitive wildlife species were used to determine possible effects, as directed by FS Manual 2672.4. Determination statements for all sensitive species analyzed for the proposed Big Mountain expansion are given at the end of the Sensitive Species section of this chapter.

FISHER AND LYNX

Fisher and lynx require mature or old growth forests for denning, but will feed in sapling, pole and immature forest stands. In a managed forest, the most likely factors that affect their populations are the amount of mature and old growth forests that provide optimal resting or denning areas (Jones, 1991), accessibility into their habitats by trappers, and state trapping quotas and regulations.

Alternatives A (No Action), B, C, D-Modified, E and F-Modified -- Fisher and Lynx

Direct and Indirect Effects: In the two analysis areas that encompass the *maximum proposed ski area* boundary, there are approximately 11,000 acres of mature and old growth habitat. Openings created by proposed ski runs would reduce the acres of mature and old growth by less than 3%. Ski runs would increase the fragmentation of mature/old growth stands and increase the amount of "edge" between forest and grass or shrubs. This factor might benefit lynx or fisher prey species (Jones, 1991), although cleared areas would not be allowed to return to the dense sapling stage heavily used in winter by snowshoe hares. Big game winter range (important for winter scavenging) would not be affected. Potential denning habitat patches would still be linked by forested travel corridors. Trapping is not allowed within the *maximum proposed ski area*.

Alternatives A (No Action), B, and C -- Fisher and Lynx

Big Mountain 4b

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects: Trapper accessibility would unchanged under these alternatives. Within the analysis area, there will continue to be 39 miles of Forest Service roads open year-round, 15 miles open seasonally, and 53 miles travelable by non-motorized means.