

**Biological Assessment
of
Sensitive Plant and Animal Species
for the**

**Brian Head Resort Master Development Plan
Amendment**

**Cedar City Ranger District
Dixie National Forest**

#03-031

FOIA LOG

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spotted owls. Loss of forest structure could also reduce the habitat for small and arboreal mammal species preyed upon by spotted owls. The maintenance of ski runs as early seral open meadow habitat would change the natural succession and resulting seral stages of the area by preventing future forest developments in these clearings. This would reduce future dispersal habitat for Mexican spotted owls in the project area.

The primary cumulative effects of the proposed action and the associated winter recreation are associated with the habitat modification and removal from the development and maintenance of ski runs, new lifts and facilities, as discussed above (recreational development). The anticipated increase in winter recreational use resulting from the proposed action would not add cumulatively to effects on spotted owls because this species does not winter in the project area, and if owls did, some spatial and temporal separation between the owl's wintering activities and skiing would naturally occur. Although there could be some disruption to spotted owl foraging behavior by snowgrooming operations, if the owls were to winter in the project area, this impact would be temporary and would not add cumulatively to the impact to this species.

Summer recreation, notably mountain biking, has increased in recent years in the Brian Head area. Increases in summer recreation would not impact Mexican spotted owls because there is no nesting habitat in the CEA, there would be temporal separation between owl foraging and human recreational activities, and because there are no recorded incidents of this species utilizing this area in the summer. In addition, the proposed action would not add cumulatively to the increase in mountain biking disturbances, as the proposed expansion of the Brian Head resort is not designed to increase summer recreation opportunities.

The Ashdown Gorge Wilderness lies adjacent to Brian Head Resort and the CEA and offers a relatively undisturbed area for wildlife. Timber harvest is prohibited in the wilderness, so it provides forest cover and large trees, where present, and not infested, and abundant snags and down logs. Therefore the affects of harvest and salvage, residential and recreational development, and associated losses in habitat features important to Mexican spotted owl dispersal and foraging habitat in portions of the CEA are somewhat ameliorated by the availability of this habitat. In addition, the change in management designation of 191 acres of forested habitat in the Paradise Spring area in the CEA from 1-General Forest to 4B-Wildlife Habitat Management (for goshawk mitigation) will protect and could potentially provide spotted owl dispersal and foraging habitat. Because of this mitigation, and because of the proximity of the proposed expansion area to the Ashdown Gorge Wilderness, the loss of habitat associated with the proposed expansion is not projected to cause the habitat in the CEA to move away from desired landscape conditions. In addition, the expansions at Brian Head are occurring in an area already experiencing regular human use, and there are numerous remote areas in the CEA that receive minimal recreational use. Furthermore, the only detections of spotted owls in the vicinity of the CEA have been in the Ashdown Gorge wilderness, an area that receives minimal recreational use. For these reasons, the expansion of Brian Head and the associated increase in recreationists and disturbance to wildlife would have a very low projected risk of cumulative effects to potentially dispersing or foraging Mexican spotted owls.

VII. Determination

As a result of this analysis, it is our professional determination that implementation of the proposed Brian Head Resort Master Plan Amendment will **not affect** the bald eagle and **may affect but is not likely to adversely affect** the Mexican spotted owl or its habitat.

NATIONAL FOREST

#03-031

PLAN LOG

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DIXIE NATIONAL FOREST

117-031

LOG

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activities and skiing would naturally occur. Although there could be some disruption of resident three-toed woodpecker wintering behavior during the ski season, this impact would be temporary and would not add cumulatively to the impact to this species. Because some temporal separation between the majority of the falcon, goshawk, and three-toed woodpecker breeding periods and the end of the ski season exists, no cumulative impacts to breeding birds from winter recreation are anticipated.

Summer recreation, notably mountain biking, has increased in recent years in the Brian Head area. Increases in summer recreation could impact falcons, goshawks, and/or three-toed woodpeckers by disrupting foraging behavior and/or nesting behavior. The proposed action however, would not add cumulatively to this impact, as the proposed expansion of the Brian Head resort is not designed to increase summer recreation opportunities.

The Ashdown Gorge Wilderness lies adjacent to Brian Head Resort and the CEA and offers a relatively undisturbed area for wildlife. Timber harvest is prohibited in the wilderness, so it provides forest cover and large trees, where present and not infested, and abundant snags and down logs. Therefore the effects of harvest and salvage, residential and recreational development, and associated losses in habitat features important to northern goshawks and peregrine falcons in portions of the CEA are somewhat ameliorated by the availability of this habitat. In addition, the change in management designation of 191 acres of forested habitat in the Paradise Spring area in the CEA from 1-General Forest to 4B-Wildlife Habitat Management (for goshawk mitigation) will protect and provide goshawk and three-toed woodpecker nesting habitat. Because of this mitigation, and because of the proximity of the proposed expansion area to the Ashdown Gorge Wilderness, the loss of habitat associated with the proposed expansion is not projected to cause the habitat in the CEA to move away from desired landscape conditions. In addition, the expansions at Brian Head are occurring in an area already experiencing regular human use and there are numerous remote areas in the CEA that receive minimal recreational use. For these reasons, the expansion of Brian Head and the associated increase in recreationists and disturbance to wildlife would have a low projected risk of cumulative effects to foraging goshawks, three-toed woodpeckers, and peregrine falcons, and potentially nesting goshawks and woodpeckers. Therefore, the proposed project is not projected to impact northern goshawks, peregrine falcons, and three-toed woodpeckers to the degree that it would contribute toward population declines and a trend toward Federal listing.

VI. Determination

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As a result of this evaluation, it is our professional determination that implementation of the Proposed Amendment to Brian Head Resort's Master Development would have no impacts to spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, paradox moonwort, and Arizona willow. The proposed project may impact peregrine falcon, three-toed woodpecker, and goshawk habitat or individuals, but would not likely lead toward a loss of viability or a trend toward Federal listing.

VII. Mitigation Measures

The proposed action would result in potential impacts to peregrine falcon, northern goshawk, and three-toed woodpecker. Eight specific mitigation measures have been developed to reduce the intensity or duration of these impacts. These measures have been incorporated into the proposed action through the NEPA process.

TOWN & FOREST

03-031