

Environmental Assessment of Proposed Improvements at Crested Butte Mountain Resort



U. S. Dept. of Agriculture-Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and
Gunnison National Forests

Taylor River and Cebolla Ranger Districts

December 1997

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bat foraging habitats (often over open water such as streams or ponds) would not be affected by the proposed activities. Therefore, there would be no impact to Townsend's big-eared bats as a result of this proposal.

As previously stated, both ferruginous hawk and merlin are known to be rare migrants through the vicinity of the project area. However, because they are not residents and could easily avoid any areas of new disturbance, there would also be no impact to these two raptors. Similarly, because black swift only migrate through the area, and because they utilize foraging areas which are not proposed for any development, there would also be no impact to this species.

Impacts to Sensitive species common to all action alternatives could occur as a result of several proposed activities. Generally, species requiring forested habitats could be displaced or experience mortality as a result of permanent removal or alteration of forested habitats such as those occupied by three-toed woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, golden-crowned kinglet, marten, and dwarf and pygmy shrews. Note that removal or alteration of these habitats could also affect the future nesting potential of these species in areas disturbed by these proposed activities. Alteration or removal of willow riparian habitats by flush cutting these zones may occur in areas proposed to be crossed by the access road, CB-5 trails, or the surface lifts in the Gold Link area. These activities would displace any adult fox sparrows utilizing these areas for breeding and could cause mortality of nestlings if construction activities occurred during the nesting season.

Impacts to MIS as a result of implementation of all action alternatives could also occur as a result of several proposed activities. Both hairy woodpecker and red crossbill could be displaced as a result of lift or trail construction in forested areas. However, due to their mobility, neither is likely to suffer direct mortality as long as any construction is implemented after the nesting season. However, selective removal of snags within the project area could affect the future nesting potential of these species in areas disturbed by the proposed activities.

3.5.4.1.1.2 Species of High Public Interest

Elk, mule deer, and black bear tend to avoid areas of constant human activity. Thus, these species would likely avoid or move away from areas under construction or occupied by large numbers of people. These species are capable of moving considerable distances, and they should not incur direct mortality from construction-related activities. However, these animals may be subject to increased mortality rates if they are displaced into marginal or unsuitable habitats. After construction is complete, these species should slowly begin to reoccupy available habitat within the analysis area. At Vail Ski Area, studies have documented elk avoidance of an open bowl in which a chairlift was being constructed (Morrison and Alldredge 1992). However, elk observations in this area increased from 4 percent of predevelopment levels immediately following development, to 44 percent of predevelopment levels 3 years after construction was completed (Alldredge 1993; Morrison et al. 1995). The increase in postdevelopment use of the area was probably due to the lack of constant human activity in the area, which was likely more disruptive than the short-term physical disturbances associated with construction (Morrison et al. 1995).

Consequently, in terms of elk, bear, and probably mule deer, the placement of new facilities within the existing ski area should have little long-term detrimental impact on these species, based on the fact that individuals of all three species currently inhabit the SUP. However, the impacts to these species resulting from development of additional skiing terrain in areas which are currently forested (e.g., Overlook Lift pod or Teocalli Trails area) may result in more prominent changes in wildlife use of an area because hiding or foraging cover may be removed for the life of the ski area.