

5a/5b

dmr 5-5b pdf

Of the seven existing lifts on NFS lands, Purgatory Village Express and Hermosa Park Express would remain unchanged. The remaining five lifts would be replaced/upgraded with higher capacity, more efficient lifts (Chair 2 – Engineer, Chair 4 – Twilight, Chair 8 – Legends), shortened (Chair 6 – Needles), or realigned (Chair 5 – Grizzly). In addition, those lifts would be augmented with nine new lifts (aerial and surface), resulting in a total of 13 lifts on NFS lands under the Selected Alternative. The upgraded Chair 4 and the approved Gelande Lift would improve the out-of-base capacity as a whole, and the Gelande Lift would provide an additional access portal improving morning access onto the ski area. The upgrades in DMR’s entire lift network would collectively provide easier access between the front and backside of DMR as well as promote more efficient skier circulation through improved lift alignments and increases in carrying capacity within DMR’s SUP boundary.

- 2. To enhance snowmaking capabilities in order to provide more durable and consistent skiing conditions during periods of reduced snowfall. Also, to provide snowmaking on integral connector trails, which would enable more of the mountain to be utilized earlier in the season.**

The addition of approximately 107 acres of snowmaking coverage across the SUP area would enable DMR to open the majority of the front-side and critical backside terrain, adding more beginner through intermediate ability level terrain in the month of December when natural snowfall is not typically reliable. Specifically, the addition of snowmaking in the Twilight (Chair 4) pod would help improve the beginner guest experience as snow consistency is crucial for any successful teaching venue. In addition, as depicted on Selected Alternative Figure 1 in this ROD, as well as Figure 4 in Chapter 6 of the FEIS, the approved snowmaking coverage would allow the consistent operation of Hermosa Park Express on the backside in the early season through strategically planned coverage on connector trails and top to bottom trails accessed by Hermosa Park Express. Snowmaking approved on the steep pitch on the bottom of Chair 8 terrain would provide a consistent snow surface into the spring season and would enable Chair 8 to be upgraded without a mid-load station.

- 3. To improve the quantity and distribution of beginner and lower intermediate terrain by developing additional terrain within the existing SUP.**

The Selected Alternative would improve the current deficiency of beginner level terrain through the development of the Twilight beginner area (top of Chair 4). However, the Selected Alternative would not improve the current deficiency of low-intermediate terrain, as the decision to approve Ice Creek pod has been deferred. Moreover, an additional 3 acres of beginner terrain are approved. Through the planning stages of this proposal, it was determined that due to the close proximity of the Twilight and Ice Creek pods, these beginner and low-intermediate areas could be linked to provide an excellent opportunity for a ideal learning progression. Furthermore, once a guest is comfortable with the beginner terrain, they could transition directly into the Ice Creek pod (low-intermediate terrain) without having to ride an additional

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DURANGO MOUNTAIN RESORT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROJECT UPDATE



USDA – FOREST SERVICE

SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST

COLUMBINE RANGER DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT TO BE PREPARED

The Durango Mountain Resort Master Development Plan (DMR MDP) project was originally available for a 30-day public comment period subsequent to the Notice of Intent (NOI) being published in the Federal Register on February 17, 2004. In addition, a public meeting was held on March 3, 2004. Scoping comments from the initial Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping period will be incorporated into the EIS process, but due to the inclusion of additional project components discussed on page 3 of this update, the Forest Service is conducting a supplemental scoping comment period.

Additional scoping comments should be post-marked within 30 calendar days of the NOI being published in the Federal Register, which should occur on approximately October 20, 2005. Comments can be sent to Richard Speegle, San Juan Public Lands Center, 15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301 or (970) 375-2973 (fax), or via email at richard_speegle@blm.gov.

Project Activity

Over the previous two summer and winter field seasons, all of the remaining fieldwork for each resource area has been completed. This includes: Vegetation and Wildlife, Archeology, Geo-technical Engineering, Hydrology and Stream Surveys, and Wetlands. Each resource area included extensive surveys to contribute analysis to the forthcoming EIS and to comply with Federal law such as, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and Historic Preservation Act.

Original Project Purpose and Need

The Forest Service and Durango Mountain Resort (DMR) cooperatively identified a need to enhance the facilities and recreation experience at DMR by balancing facilities and amenities with visitation and utilization. The specific needs were identified from a comparison of desired con-

ANTICIPATED NEPA SCHEDULE

End of Supplemental Scoping Comment Period	November 2005
Draft Environmental Impact Statement	February 2006
Final EIS and ROD	July 2006
Project Implementation	June 2007

ditions with the current situation. The purpose and need for action is detailed as follows:

Purpose

To upgrade and expand DMR within the existing SUP area to achieve a balance of guest service facilities and amenities, thereby enhancing the quality of the recreation experience.

Need #1

To upgrade existing lift network with modern technology and to provide higher capacity lifts in the base area to facilitate skier circulation during morning access periods. Additionally, to reconfigure the lift layout with proposed lifts to better service the available terrain; this would help minimize lift lines and improve skier circulation across the mountain.

Need #2

To enhance snowmaking capabilities in order to provide more durable and consistent skiing conditions during periods of reduced snowfall. Also, to provide snowmaking on integral connector trails; this would enable more of the mountain to be utilized earlier in the season.

Need #3

To provide additional parking to accommodate day skiers and create a functional transportation center for buses and vans servicing the area.

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Need #4

To provide additional terrain to accommodate a range of ability levels (particularly beginner and low intermediate) skier demands.

Need #5

To create a viable alternative route for snowmobile to access adjacent National Forest System (NFS) lands that does not conflict with skiers on developed ski terrain within the SUP area.

Original Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, DMR intends to improve the overall recreational experience and safety on the mountain through increased uphill (i.e., lift) and downhill (i.e., terrain) capacities, upgrading/constructing on-mountain guest facilities, implementing additional snowmaking coverage, and re-routing the existing *Pinkerton Toll Road* (trail #29) snowmobile access trail.

Lifts

Durango Mountain Resort (DMR) proposes to modify three existing lifts and install ten new lifts. Existing lifts 2 and 8 would be replaced with higher capacity lifts along their existing alignments, and Lift 6 would be shortened along its same alignment while utilizing the same lift equipment. The new lift installations would include one six-person lift (Lift 11) and five three or four-person chairlifts (lifts 12, 13, 14, 16 and 17), one surface beginner lift (Lift 15), and three lateral surface lifts (transfer lifts - T1, T2, T2' and T3).

Terrain

DMR proposes improvements to four trails within the existing trail network, the addition of 17 new trails, and the development of two gladed areas. Full implementation of these terrain modifications would increase the formal trail network from approximately 542.5 to 691.4 acres of skiable terrain (an increase of approximately 148.9 acres or 22 percent).

New trails would be constructed in the vicinity of new lifts 8, 11, 14 and 16 to improve the overall terrain distribution by skier ability level and to better meet the skier market demand. One gladed area would be developed to the west of Lift 8 to provide additional advanced intermediate terrain. The other gladed area would be developed as part of a children's play and adventure area near proposed Lift 16.

Snowmobiling

In order to better accommodate existing snowmobile

use within the area, DMR proposes several changes to both the developed and dispersed activities. The existing snowmobile access route, which originates in the base area and follows the Forest Service road to *Hermosa Park*, would be re-routed just before its intersection with the *Pinkerton Toll Road* ski trail. This would reduce potential skier/snowmobile conflicts within the existing ski area and circumvent the proposed *Ice Creek* ski expansion area. To ensure the viability of the snowmobile re-route, DMR proposes to install snowmaking infrastructure and to make snow on the first 400 feet of the proposed re-route. DMR would also periodically groom the re-route to create a smooth rideable surface for snowmobile riders of all ability levels.

DMR also proposes to relocate the existing snowmobile outfitter and guide service to the top of the *Twilight Lift* (Chair 4). Guests would ride the lift to the top, walk across the snow to the maintenance shop, and start their guided tour from this staging area.

Lastly, DMR proposes to develop a snowmobile parking/staging area along *Hermosa Park Road*, north of *Purgatory Village* on the east side of Highway 550, which would accommodate cars, trucks, and trailers.

Snowmaking

Existing snowmaking currently covers approximately 202 acres; previously approved snowmaking coverage would provide an additional 13 acres of coverage. DMR proposes to expand snowmaking coverage on 14 existing trails and two proposed trails by approximately 149 acres for a resort total of 364 acres. The following trails are proposed for additional snowmaking coverage:

Styx, The Bank, Divinity, Dead Spike, Lower Hades Upper Hermosa, Pinkerton Toll Road, Legends, Lower Catharsis, Angel's Tread, Nirvana, Proposed Run, Mercy, Columbine, Peace, Proposed Snowmobile Re-route

The proposed upgrades would require additional water to operate the expanded snowmaking system. Based upon the upgraded snowmaking coverage requirements, the production capacity of the snowmaking system at DMR would have to be doubled to a peak production capacity of approximately 3,000 gallons per minute (gpm). DMR is currently investigating two options for increasing its water supply for snowmaking. The first option is to develop a portion of the extensive water rights currently owned by the resort on the mountain and/or on private land to the east of Highway 550.

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DURANGO

MOUNTAIN RESORT

MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

JULY 2003

PREPARED BY:



Durango Mountain 5

Snowmaking Coverage Discussion

The major emphasis of the snowmaking upgrading program is the expansion of coverage on the front side of the mountain. This expansion would provide coverage to the majority of trails on the front side, enhance ski conditions for the beginner and novice skiers, and maintain satisfactory snow cover on the major egress trails. Snowmaking coverage on these slopes would also mitigate heavier skier traffic from the Purgatory Village, Twilight and Engineer chairs and would lead to high quality snow conditions through the end of the ski season.

Improved snowmaking coverage would also be provided in the area of the Hermosa Park Express chair to provide additional coverage to the ski area's most popular trails and ensure the opening of Hermosa Park Express chair from the beginning of the ski season.

Existing snowmaking coverage is approximately 202 acres of terrain. Previously approved snowmaking system expansion would provide additional coverage of 13 acres. Further coverage of 149 acres is proposed as part of this Master Plan, for total coverage of 364 acres.

Historically, DMR has used approximately 33 million gallons of water (101 acre-feet) per season to cover its snowmaking terrain. Additionally, DMR currently has a 60 acre-foot snowmaking impoundment located on the east side of Highway 550. After the upgrading described above, the total area of snowmaking coverage would increase by approximately 80 percent. This increase in snowmaking coverage would result in a need for a total of 55 million to 65 million gallons of water (165 to 200 acre-feet) for snowmaking per season. DMR is currently investigating two options for increasing its water supply for snowmaking. The first option is to develop a portion of the extensive water rights currently owned by the resort on the mountain and/or on private land to the east of Highway 550. The second option is to continue to purchase water from Xcel Energy (formerly Public Service Company of Colorado) which DMR presently borrows and pays back at a 2 to 1 ratio. This water comes from the Cascade Creek diversion which runs through the base area and is borrowed during the snowmaking period (fall and winter) and repaid during the summer months when the downstream Tacoma Hydroelectric Station is operating on Electra Lake.