

March 31, 2003  
 Proposed Activities 2003  
 Lost Trail Clearing Evaluation  
 M. Wildey, Hydrologic Technician

Clearing Discussion:

Each year, ski area expansion requires that I review that the clearing proposed for the coming construction season and determine that it is within what was analyzed in the FEIS. Each year, I review the notes from previous years and attempt to develop a table that will make the review straight-forward and easy to understand. Each year, I think that the previous years process could be improved. Hopefully the table below is more easy to understand than that from 2002!

In 2003, clearing related to Chair 5 and Run G are proposed for ski area expansion activities in 2003. This is a total of approximately 24 acres (In the FEIS, 22 acres were identified for Run G and in Chair 5 EA 1.6 acres for Chair 5 actions).

Harvest History To Date

Year	Acres Proposed in FEIS (total 241 ac.), FEIS p. 2-36	Actual Acres Cleared (cut info from McCormack-'98 and Ritter-2000+)	Cumulative Total of Actual Cut
1998	48	96 (some cc, some ITM)	96
1999	0	0	96
2000	0	19	115
2001	106	8	123
2002	57	6*	129
2003	8 (Total proposed 219)	24 (Run G and Chair 5)	153
2004	15		
Up to 2008	7		

- In 2002, notes say that 6 acres will be cut in fall of 2002, this included about 1/2 of Chair 5 related clearing. I am not sure if this occurred so it is included in 2003 as well.

Based upon information in the above table, the 24 acres proposed to be cut in 2003 are within the amount analyzed.

I reviewed IDT notes (4/6/98) in my files and found the following information concerning the method of harvest for Run G:

- Portions of Run G may be harvested using ground-based feller buncher, log processor or by hand. Ground-based skidding with a rubber tired skidder of whole trees maybe utilized. All ground-based equipment will be restricted to slopes less than 35% and operate only when the upper 10 inches of soil is dry, as per FEIS mitigations.
- Run G below about 6670 feet can be ground-based yarded. Helicopter is required above this. There are IDT notes and information in the FEIS that refers to wetlands in this run. - field ven
- The upper haul road and the skid trail of Run G will be ripped, waterbarred, seeded and closed when activity is complete.
- Refer to the mitigation table (attached) in the FEIS regarding mitigation and concerns related to the upper portion of Run G.



# United States Department of the Interior

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File: M.19 - FS R1  
(MT Ski Areas / Lynx)

February 9, 2001

Cathy Barbouletos, Supervisor  
Flathead National Forest  
1935 Third Avenue East  
Kalispell, Montana 59901

Dear Ms. Barbouletos:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the May 16, 2000, biological assessment (BA) submitted by the U.S. Forest Service (Forests) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Montana, related to effects on lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) of ongoing and proposed activities associated with the privately operated ski resorts on Forest and BLM land in Montana. All actions considered were ongoing or proposed and approved through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This biological opinion primarily addresses the effects of the permanent or long-term habitat modification or loss and the cumulative effects associated with ski resorts in Montana. The Service received your request for formal consultation on May 18, 2000.

This biological opinion is based on information provided in the BA, and various conversations and meetings with Forest Service and BLM biologists, and other sources of information in our files. The ongoing and proposed actions related to ski resorts were discussed at Level 1 meetings between the Service, the Forest Service, and BLM on January 11, February 16-17, and March 5, 2000. A complete administrative record of this consultation is on file at this office.

Section 7(b)(d)(A) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), requires that the Secretary of Interior issue biological opinions on agency actions that may affect listed species or critical habitat. Biological opinions determine if the action proposed by the action agency is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. Section 7(b)(3)(A) of the Act also requires the Secretary to suggest reasonable and prudent alternatives to any action that is found likely to result in jeopardy or adverse modification of critical habitat, if any has been designated. In this case on the effects of ongoing activities on a recently listed species, the biological opinion determines whether or not the ongoing and proposed activities of the agency jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat.

This document transmits the Fish and Wildlife Service's biological opinion based on our review of the actions conducted on privately operated down-hill ski resorts located on federal lands in the state of Montana and their effects on lynx in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act)(16 USC 1531 et seq.).

# Lost Trail 1

The Blacktail Mountain proposal adds 37 acres of gladed skiing. The percentage of lynx habitat in unsuitable condition in the LAU would remain at 27%.

The Bridger Bowl proposal includes approximately 850 feet of ski lift which replaced an existing ski patrol rope tow. This is primarily being done for safety reasons. About 6-10 trees would be removed. Approximately 0.5 miles of low standard road were proposed. There would be no change in acreage affected as proposed activities occur where acres have already been impacted.

The Lost Trail proposal adds one ski lift for 1.2 miles of ski runs and 100 acres of additional skiing. It adds an additional warming facility, another base facility and 0.1 miles of road. The proposal changes the amount of lynx habitat in unsuitable condition in the LAU from 1600 acres to 2000 acres and from 15% to 18% of the LAU.

The Red Lodge Mountain proposal adds 6 new lifts for about 3 miles of ski runs to the already existing 8 lifts and 4.26 miles of runs. It adds another 55 acres of cleared runs to the existing 262 acres. About 28 miles of cross country ski trails are proposed, 26 miles of hiking and horseback trails, 24 miles of biking, and another 7 acres of base facilities to the 4.6 existing acres. Five more warming facilities to the existing facilities are proposed to be added. No new roads are proposed. The additions will remove another 172 acres of cover. On federal land an additional 129 acres of cover would be removed, 47 acres of cover on private land would be removed. There would be no change in the percentage of unsuitable lynx habitat in the LAU. Twelve percent of the lynx habitat in the LAU is in unsuitable condition.

The Snowbowl proposal adds 29 acres of ski runs on federal land and 2 acres of private land. It adds 35 acres of gladed skiing on federal land and 5 acres on private for a total of 64 acres change on federal and 7 acres on private. Less than 2% of the LAU is lynx habitat in unsuitable condition and this will not change due to the ski resort.

The Showdown resort has no proposed actions, however, contributes to an area of intensified winter activity along the Montana Highway 89 corridor which cumulatively reduces habitat effectiveness in this section of the Little Belt Mountains.

The following proposed actions received "not likely to adversely affect lynx" determinations, according to the BA:

Discovery Basin has no proposed activities on either federal or private land.

The Teton Pass ski resort proposal adds 0.4 miles of cross-country ski trails to the existing 0.9 miles of trails.

The Turner Mountain resort proposal adds 1 ski lift for 1 mile. This would replace the existing tow rope. No other activities are proposed. There would be no change in unsuitable acres of lynx habitat due to the addition of the proposed ski lift. Expansion work would be done outside of denning season.

The Great Divide ski resort proposal adds 1 new ski lift to the existing lift. Another 80 acres of federal land would have ski runs and another 100 acres of private would have cleared ski runs. This brings the total to 130 and 135 cleared acres for federal and private land, respectively. Another 30 acres of federal land would be gladed skiing and another 42 acres of private land would be gladed for a total of 70 and