

United States
Department of
Agriculture



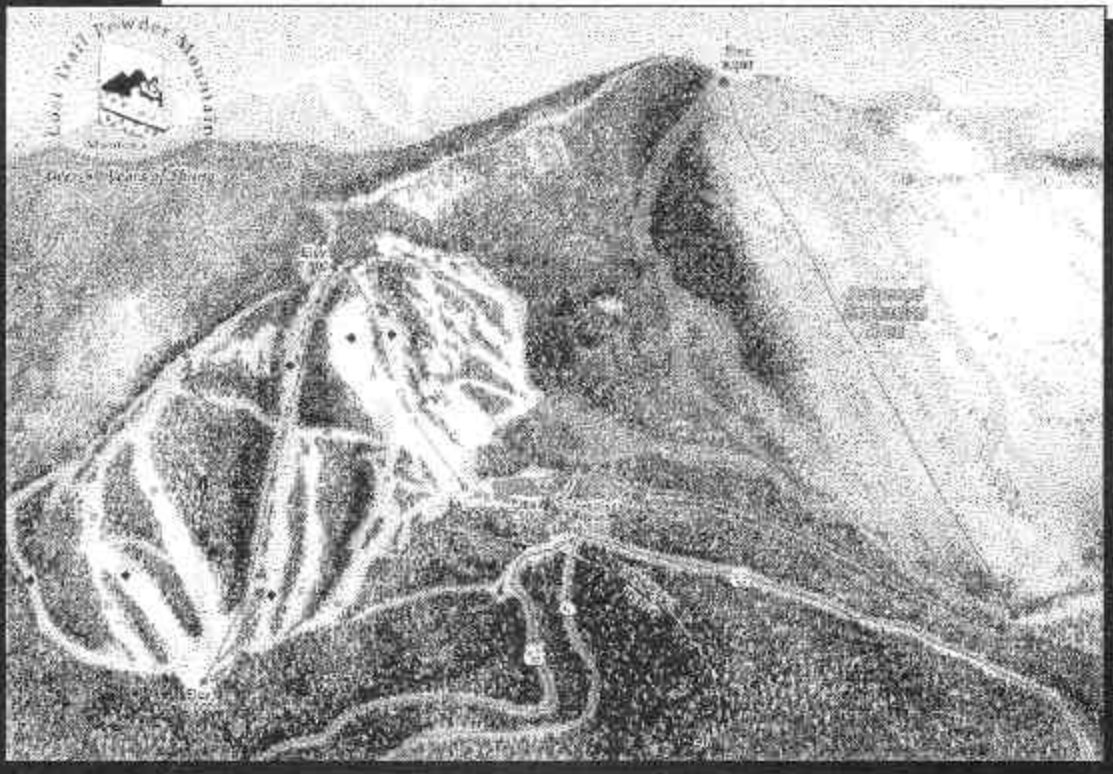
Forest
Service

Bitterroot
National
Forest

Sula
Ranger
District

Lost Trail Ski Area Expansion

FINAL Environmental Impact Statement



Lost Trail 2c

WETLANDS

Introduction

The effects of the LTSA project on wetlands and riparian areas is evaluated with respect to the manner and degree the project may alter their character, composition, and function. Potential effects are related to direct physical disturbance of soils and vegetation and alteration of hydrologic regimes which may indirectly affect other wetland characteristics such as community composition and nutrient fluxes. The effects are based on the premise that wetland and riparian area mitigation measures specified in Table 2-3 are fully implemented. These mitigation measures are integrated into the Clean Water Act, 404 permit process for this project administered by the Corps of Engineers (COE) and the Environmental Protection Agency and likewise presume that all stipulations of the permit are implemented. In addition to the COE 404 permit, the Forest Service (FS) operates under a presidential directive to ensure that management activities on public lands administered by the FS do not result in a net loss of wetlands. Further oversight regarding protection of wetland and riparian area soil resources is contained in Regional Soil Quality Standards and the Forest Plan as discussed in the soils section in this chapter.

Consistency With Forest Plan

Forest wide standards for riparian areas are related to road construction in these areas and are located on pages II-32,33. These standards mainly are designed to minimize erosion and sedimentation. This project proposes to construct about 350 feet of new road much of which would cross riparian and wetland areas. All pertinent Forest Plan standards would be applied and in addition, special design criteria as specified in the mitigation measures in Table 2-3 would further protect the function of these areas.

Forest Plan standards for Management Area 3b apply to proposed timber harvest in the project area and are located on page III-26. The proposed mitigation measures for timber harvest will be in compliance with these standards and are designed to protect wetland and riparian area resources.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects Common to All Action Alternatives

Both action alternatives would construct an access road to the new Huckleberry lodge (Drop-off Road) across wetland and riparian areas. This road would involve placing fill on approximately 175 feet of jurisdictional wetland plus an additional 70 feet on non-wetland riparian area. These areas contain a few intermittent surface flow channels. Mitigation measures are designed to minimize effects on these areas and to maintain wetland hydrologic function (see Table 2-3). Current design specifications require placement of filter fabric and/or a layer of cobble sized rock to be placed on top of the native soil as the first layer of road subgrade (see Figure 4-1). This layer would assist in maintaining normal water flow through and under the road bed. In addition future engineering design analysis may show a need for one or more culverts to be placed in this road to ensure wetland hydrologic function is not negatively affected. About 8750 square feet (**0.20 acre**) of wetland area would be buried by the road fill and wetland vegetation character and composition under this fill would be lost. No known occurrences of sensitive plants or of plant species of special concern are known to occur in the proposed road location.