



Forest Service  
Pacific  
Northwest  
Region

**MT. HOOD MEADOWS  
SKI AREA MASTER PLAN/ACCESS ROAD**

**Final Supplemental  
Environmental Impact Statement**

**Mt. Hood National Forest  
Hood River Ranger District**

**December, 1996**

# Mount Hood Meadows 3

Activities proposed in Alternative S3 may impact redband trout, bull trout and caddisfly individuals or habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or a loss of viability to the populations or species. Expansion into the Iron Creek drainage warrants inclusion of redband trout in the "may impact" determination and would lead to a greater chance for impacts on caddisfly individuals or habitat due to their known presence in the drainage.

- ◆ Page III-29: In the last paragraph, under Cumulative Impacts for Alternative S4, replace the third sentence with:

**The expanded Main Lodge base would likely conflict with some ACS objectives within the study area; on a watershed level, impacts would be negligible.**

- ◆ Page III-29: After the last paragraph, under Cumulative Impacts for Alternative S4, add:

Actions proposed in Alternative S4 may affect, and would likely adversely affect steelhead individuals or habitat. The rationale for this determination is the same as previously described. There would be no impact to redband trout individuals or habitat. Activities may impact bull trout and/or caddisfly individuals or habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or a loss of viability to the populations or species.

Page III-31: In the first paragraph, under Cumulative Impacts for Alternative S5, after the last sentence add:

**On a watershed level, these impacts would be minimal.**

- ◆ Page III-31: After the last paragraph, under Cumulative Impacts for Alternative S5, add:

Actions proposed in Alternative S5 may affect, and would likely adversely affect steelhead individuals or habitat. The rationale for this determination is the same as previously described. Since this alternative disturbs the most ground and results in the greatest amount of impervious surfaces, potential effects to steelhead individuals or habitat would be greater than in other alternatives.

Activities proposed in Alternative S5 may impact redband trout, bull trout and caddisfly individuals or habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or a loss of viability to the populations or species. Expansion into the Iron Creek drainage warrants inclusion of redband trout in the "may impact" determination and would lead to a greater chance for impacts on caddisfly individuals or habitat due to their known presence in the drainage.

- ◆ Page III-31: After the last paragraph under Alternative R1, add:

**Under Alternative R1, there would be no effect to steelhead habitat. Likewise, there would be no impact to redband trout, bull trout, or caddisfly individuals or habitat.**

- ◆ Page III-31: Under Impacts Common to Alternatives R2-R4, add the following paragraph:

impact will these have, for instance, on the amount of water available to wet meadows and wetlands, and the timing of this water?

The cumulative effects of wells will be a consideration in WRD's decision on MHM's water rights application. A variety of potential cumulative effects of clearings and other land management actions on streamflows are identified in the DSEIS (page III-24); quantifiable effects cannot be determined at this programmatic planning level. Continued monitoring will help in further identifying hydrologic changes. The use of BMP's and provisions to regulate runoff from impervious surfaces should keep changes to a minimum.

## VEGETATION

## Mount Hood Meadows 3

1. According to the DSEIS, clearing for Lifts 22 and 26 and introducing summer uses into the White River expansion area would probably result in the loss of viability of *C. breweri* and cause it to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. These impacts would violate the intent of listing such rare plants. Listing a plant as Sensitive should prompt management actions that conserve the species, thereby avoiding further declines and eliminating the need to list the plant as threatened or endangered.

The DSEIS indicates that certain proposed facilities and uses in Alternatives S3 and S5 would likely result in a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability of *C. breweri*, not that it would cause it to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Forest Service is currently developing a special management guide for *C. breweri* intended to protect against impacts from management actions and help ensure its long-term viability.

2. Until a site-specific analysis of Lifts 22 and 26 is conducted, it cannot be known if the *Calamagrostis breweri* will be impacted. The removal of the Texas double chair occurred without impact to the *C. breweri* located next to the construction area because of prevention measures jointly created by the Forest Service and MHM and monitored by MHM.

The DSEIS conclusion that Lifts 22 and 26 and associated ski runs would have direct, indirect, and/or cumulative impacts that would be impossible to avoid by project design or intensive administration was based upon the siting of these facilities as conceptually described in Alternative S5. With site-specific facility planning and mitigation measures, direct impacts may be avoidable, but indirect and cumulative impacts would still be expected.

3. The expanded summer recreational usage proposed in Alternatives S3-S5 will put enormous pressure on soils and plant communities within the permit area. Every study of alpine and subalpine areas in the Northwest, and indeed around the world, demonstrates the extreme fragility of these vegetation communities. Research at Deer Park in the Olympic National Park in the late 1970's showed that only about twenty passes by an average sized man in a subalpine meadow were sufficient to create a new trail with compacted soils and altered plant composition. Cascade Pass in the North Cascades is an area similar to MHM, where high human usage has resulted in a proliferation of unauthorized trails that greatly reduce the ecological stability and recreational quality of the area. A large number of studies have demonstrated the difficulty of restoring trampled alpine communities.

Limitations on summer uses in Alternatives S1, S2 and S4 reflect the agency's concerns regarding summer use impacts. Proposed mitigation would require analysis of a Summer Use Plan through

species and weeds such as *Lotus corniculatus*. Recommended mitigation (DSEIS page II-71) would require preparation of a vegetation management plan for each phase of development.

8. **Lift 26 and other development proposed in Alternative S5 would permanently clear and fragment some of the best interior timber in the LSR. This impact would violate the purposes and objectives of the LSR. Furthermore, the return landing of Lift 26 would affect a wetland along the Timberline Trail, which contains slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*).**

See the responses to comments #5-8 under Significant Issues. The return landing of Lift 26 should not affect any wetlands, as it would be located several hundred feet from the nearest wetland.

## Mount Hood Meadows 3

### WILDLIFE

1. **The absence of species in a suitable habitat area is used as a rationale for determining that destruction of the habitat will not adversely impact the species. This is illogical. All species depend on suitable habitat. Endangered species in particular require as much suitable habitat as possible to remain viable. Although the DSEIS recognizes MHM as suitable habitat for the Northern spotted owl, the Northern bald eagle, and the American peregrine falcon, the low incidence of their presence is interpreted as indicating the area is not suitable as habitat.**

Absence of species in suitable habitat was not used as a rationale for determining that loss or degradation of habitat would not adversely impact the species. In all instances, if suitable habitat is present, species presence is assumed. Suitable Northern spotted owl habitat is only present at the lower elevations of the permit area and proposed expansion areas. No proposed ski area Master Plan elements would impact any spotted owl habitat. Proposed road improvements in Alternatives R3 and R4 would negatively affect spotted owls and their habitat, and result in an "incidental take" of a pair of owls within the LSR. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, most likely migratory, have been observed within the study area, but suitable habitat, for all life requisites of these species, is not present. This is primarily due to the high elevation of the permit area (has a bearing on nesting chronology), lack of larger prey base (for bald eagles), and current level of human disturbance/occupation (most impacts peregrine falcons). No impacts would be expected to these species, since they are not likely to be present within the study area, given the current unsuitability of habitat.

2. **Development of Lift 15 and expansion of the Westside base will further fragment remaining forested habitat in the permit area boundary. Opening the forest in this area will compromise use of Stringer Meadows SIA by deer and elk. Currently, with the main access road running between Stringer Meadows and the White River drainage, habitat effectiveness of the area is reduced. It is estimated that 10 to 15% of the White River drainage elk herd uses this area for summer forage and elk calving. Loss of connecting corridor cover coupled with summer human disturbance will reduce existing elk and deer herds.**

These impacts were acknowledged and addressed in the DSEIS (pages III-53 and III-56 to III-57). Westside base development was identified as adversely impacting deer and elk and their ability to use Stringer Meadows.