

DECISION NOTICE  
and  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Mission Ridge Ski Area  
Master Plan Improvements**

USDA Forest Service  
Okanogan & Wenatchee National Forests  
Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth Ranger Districts  
Chelan County, Washington

**INTRODUCTION**

The USDA Forest Service has analyzed the environmental effects of approving a new Master Plan for Mission Ridge Ski Area to guide development of winter recreational use of facilities within the existing permit area. The Master Plan describes the overall strategy for future upgrading and expansion of the current ski lift system, improvement of the base area and mountain support facilities, improvement and expansion of mountain trail systems, and expansion of water, sewer, power and communications systems.

The environmental analysis considered a range of alternatives for future development of the Mission Ridge Ski Area and analyzed the environmental effects of such plans. Specifically, the analysis disclosed the effects of Master Plan build-out and the subsequent increase in skier capacity on issues identified through the scoping process. The Master Plan will ensure that any future development is coordinated and that increased on-mountain capacity is supported by appropriate infrastructure. This decision will only approve the Master Plan. *Approval of the Master Plan does not imply approval of each element. Actual construction of any element of the Master Plan, such as a chairlift or a lodge, will require additional site-specific environmental analysis and mitigation, in order to disclose the site-specific effects of each element.*

The Mission Ridge Master Plan Improvements project is located in upper Squilchuck Creek, 12 miles southeast of Wenatchee, Washington. The ski area covers 2,080 acres of public land, 960 acres of which are administered by the USDA Forest Service, 1,040 acres by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and 80 acres by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. These lands are administered by the Forest Service, in accordance with a 1986 Cooperative Agreement with the State agencies. The legal description of this project area includes all or parts of: Sections 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35 and 36, Township 21 North, Range 19 East, Willamette Meridian.

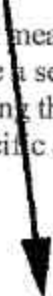
The three overall purposes of the Mission Ridge Master Plan Improvement project are:

1. Develop a long-range master plan for ski area development within the current Mission Ridge Ski Area permit boundary, since the current one is outdated.

# Mission Ridge 1

- Noxious weed mitigation measures include; recycling weed-free topsoil, rip compacted areas to create a seedbed, seed disturbed areas, wash construction equipment before accessing the mountain. Specific weed plans will be developed for each subsequent site-specific analysis.

## Master Plan Summary



New Buildings	16,300 square feet
New Chairlift locations	4
New Ski Terrain	171 acres
New lighting	66 acres
Area disturbed by improvements	123 acres
Access road construction	1.2 miles
New parking spaces needed	540
Total verticle lift capacity	12,900 skiers per hour
Total skier capacity	4,140 skiers

## RATIONALE FOR THIS DECISION

I selected Alternative 2 – Modified because I believe it best meets the purpose and need for action while providing a balanced response to the key issues identified.

### Key Issue #1 – Water Quality

At issue is the concern that degradation of surface and groundwater could occur from sewage treatment and erosion from construction of trails, roads and facilities. Although Alternative 2 – Modified will disturb 123 acres of ground to improve the chairlift and trail systems, 40% of this area consists of rocky areas covered with talus and scree. Where soil is present, minimal disturbance in riparian areas, best management practices, and the high infiltration rates of the soils in this area combine to ensure there will be no detrimental effect on riparian areas or fish habitat (EA page 45).

All sewage will be disposed of by subsurface systems or as treated water used for snowmaking. In either case, the ski area will be required to meet current standards of treatment established by the State of Washington (EA page 47-48). I believe that no degradation of water quality in Squilchuck Creek will occur.

### Key Issue #2 – Colockum Elk Herd and Mule Deer

The Colockum elk herd migration corridor runs south of Naneum Ridge, that is, the corridor's northern boundary is the ridgeline at the top of Chair #2. An elk calving area is located just south of Naneum Ridge and through a saddle above the Allah trail, in the east half of Section 35. No ski terrain or facility improvements would enter the migration corridor or the calving areas. The value of the developed portion of the ski area for elk summer habitat is low. This is due to the large amount of steep, talus slopes (EA page 48). It is also related to the current amount of human use of the ski area. Open road

3. Green tree and snag retention standards are consistent with those prescribed by the Forest Plan (1990). Wenatchee National Forest snag guidelines will be implemented and it is expected they will provide the large snag and downed log levels needed for snag and log dependent species.
4. The project area outside of Riparian Reserves is entirely within the Administratively Withdrawn land allocation. This relates to the underlying Wenatchee Forest Plan Developed Recreation (RE-1) land allocation. It is consistent with the goal of this allocation which is to provide developed recreation activities and development. The Forest Service should encourage recreation development through permits, joint ventures and cooperative agreements. Development of recreation opportunities by private providers should be encouraged. High quality recreation sites and facilities should be developed (EA page 3).
5. There is no potential habitat for Survey and Manage species. Therefore no surveys will be required.

#### IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this decision shall occur no sooner than 50 days after the publication of the legal notice of the decision in the *Wenatchee World* newspaper.

This Decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Any written appeal must be postmarked or received by the Regional Forester, Attn: Appeals 1570, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this Decision appears in the *Wenatchee World* newspaper. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

For further information, contact District Ranger, U.S.D.A. - Forest Service, Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth Ranger Districts, 600 Sherbourne, Leavenworth, Washington 98826, (509) 548-6977. The analysis file for the Environmental Assessment and resulting Decision Notice and FONSI is located at the Leavenworth District Office.



Darrel L. Kenops  
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Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

7/18/2003

Date