

**WEST BOWL LIFT AND RUNS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**PLACERVILLE RANGER DISTRICT
ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST
4260 EIGHT MILE ROAD
CAMINO, CA 95709**

JANUARY 2001

Sierra-at-Tahoe 4a

Environmental Consequences of Action:

Construction of the new lift and associated ski trails would require the removal of approximately 9.0 acres of moderately disturbed 2nd growth red fir forest. Within the project area, habitat conditions are generally somewhat disturbed by past logging activities. Following logging, some grading will occur for enhanced skier safety and these areas will be mulched and reseeded to control erosion. This also meets LRMP direction for improving the productivity of forage and cover plants for wildlife when revegetating ski runs and maintaining stable watershed conditions by establishing permanent ground cover on all disturbed areas within three years. The installation of a culvert over the unnamed tributary to Bryant Creek would result in the loss of 120 feet of riparian habitat. These effects are limited in extent and consistent with approved plans.

The proposed action is in keeping with the general direction of the LRMP, which allows for timber harvest when needed to expand facilities, maintain or regulate forest cover, and minimize hazards to the public.

Cumulative Effects: There are no other projects planned in the area that would affect vegetation, so the cumulative effects would be the same as the action alternative.

D. Wildlife

The habitat conditions for wildlife in the project area are comprised mainly of red fir wildlife habitat type, interspersed with small openings created by clear-cuts that have since re-vegetated with grasses and forbs. Several special-status species have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the proposed project: California spotted owl, northern goshawk, Pacific fisher, California wolverine, American marten, Sierra Nevada red fox and mountain yellow-legged frog. Each of these species is listed as sensitive on the ENF but none of the species is listed, or proposed for listing, under the federal ESA. The existing habitat for each of these species is discussed below.

California spotted owl. The California spotted owl occurs primarily in large, contiguous tracts of dense, multi-layered, late-successional montane forest. The range of the owl includes mainly the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, especially where large, contiguous stands of late-successional forest occur. California spotted owls nest in forested stands, generally with greater than 70 percent canopy closure, with the reproductive season occurring from March to August. Foraging habitat has similar structure but can have canopy closures down to 30 percent. This species is usually found between 3,000 feet and 7,000 feet in elevation, with all of the known nests on the ENF occurring below 6,500 feet.

The most recent previous surveys for spotted owl near the project area were conducted in 1998 by the ENF. These surveys were conducted to monitor reproductive status of known owl activity centers. The closest spotted owl PAC, ED-201, is located approximately 0.5 mile northwest of the West Bowl base area. A nest site has not been discovered for this PAC and the best recorded sighting was a female owl located in 1992. The eastern boundary of Spotted Owl Habitat Area (SOHA) ED-26 is located one mile west of the West Bowl base area. There was a reported sighting of an adult spotted owl in 1976 within 0.25 mile of the project area (FS 1999).

Spotted owl surveys were conducted specifically for this proposed project, as follows. Six nighttime surveys for spotted owl were conducted during the months of July and August 1999. Four calling points (using existing roads) were established and owl surveying methods followed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife