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To Whom It May Concern::

The Smokey Bear Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest (LNF) has received a proposal from the Mescalero Apache Tribe to replace and install a new automated snowmaking system on a portion of the Ski Apache Ski Resort located in Sections 33 and 34 of T10S and R11E (See Map). The Mescalero Apache Tribe operates the Ski Apache Ski Resort on a portion of National Forest System lands under a Special Use Permit.

Purpose and Need for Action

The snowmaking system will replace existing snowmaking lines located from the bottom of the Ski Area through the Lower Spruce ski run to the Lower Moonshine ski run. The system will also increase snowmaking from the Lower Moonshine ski run through the Moonshine Gulch ski run up through the East Meadows ski run to the top of the Ski Area. Specifically, the new system will consist of burying a total of 10,020 feet of snow making pipe in open areas of existing ski runs and building a new booster pump station and installing 38 snowmaking hydrants and associated infrastructure. This snowmaking expansion will cover approximately 3.3 acres and is necessary to augment snow availability in variable climatic patterns and increase water efficiency on the Ski Area (See Map and Diagram 1).

Proposed Action

The system will involve replacing and burying approximately 4,500 feet of snow making pipe to the top of the Lower Moonshine ski run and the new installation of approximately 5,480 feet of additional snowmaking pipe. The trench for the pipelines will be approximately 2.5 to 3 feet wide and the overall ground disturbance will be approximately 10 feet wide with no tree removal. Upon completion of the installation, the affected area will be rehabilitated and reseeded with an approved seed mixture. The booster pump station will be built as an extension to the Hamburger Stand food service building located adjacent to the Moonshine Gulch ski run. Archeological and biological clearance will be completed for the project.

The new snowmaking system will reallocate water resources to supply the new system and will not increase the amount of water use. This snowmaking system uses technological advancements that focus on efficient water-to-snow conversion, which minimizes evaporative and runoff losses. The system proposed at Ski Apache will utilize a computerized control system that monitors environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity, and will adjust snow gun air-water ratios to optimize water efficiency for snowmaking. By installing a more efficient

