

Final Environmental Assessment
for the
Snowmass Ski Area Master Plan Amendment
Ski Area Improvements

USDA Forest Service
Aspen Ranger District
White River National Forest
Pitkin County, Colorado



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Additional skiing/snowboarding terrain in a semi-backcountry type of area (Burnt Mountain) provides a product that has become increasingly more popular with the advent of new wider and shorter skis, the growing popularity of snowboarding, and a new propensity for "adventure" skiing/snowboarding.

Providing quality lift served skiing and riding terrain, while at the same time reducing the number of lift facilities reduces operating costs, and at the same time reduces "hard" impacts to public land.

Proposed Action

The original ASC proposal was to implement three main ski area improvement projects to address the specific purpose and need elements described in the Final EA. All of the proposals are contained within the Snowmass Master Plan. Due to supplemental information reports (SIR) made available in the first release of the Final EA, the decision made in the 1994 Snowmass ROD for the Sam's Knob Express Lift and associated Summit Re-grade project was reaffirmed, and was approved for implementation by means of the 2005 Snowmass Summer Construction Plan. As such, this previous decision is not part of the decision to be made in this DN. The remaining proposed actions are as follow:

1) Burnt Mountain Traverse and Ski Trail Development

One element of ASC's proposal was to construct a ski/snowboard traverse that would provide for skier egress from the eastern most portions of the Snowmass Permit Area (Burnt Mountain) back into the Long Shot ski trail, which terminates at the base of the Two Creeks Base Area. In conjunction with the traverse, ASC proposed to fully clear an additional ski trail, as well as perform some "select tree" glading to connect existing openings and provide for more continuous skiing/snowboarding terrain that would terminate at the intersection with the proposed traverse.

The constructed portions of the traverse would require some spot grading to level the prism of the skiing platform, with the combined lengths of all spot grading totaling approximately 500 feet in length. The remaining portions of the ski-way, approximately 2,700 lineal feet, would utilize an existing old roadbed/trail corridor. While these sections would not require any ground disturbance, they would require that additional trees be removed to provide a groomable ski/snowboard width of 30-40 feet. The final 1,200 feet of the egress route would incorporate existing fall-line, gladed skiing terrain, and would require only select tree removal to facilitate a width that would allow for grooming machine access to the traverse. The traverse and fall-line gladed ski terrain would also facilitate emergency evacuation missions.