

**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



Responsible Official:  
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## DESCRIPTION OF THE DECISION

### *Selected Alternative*

# Snowmass 4d


I have fully reviewed the Final Environmental Assessment prepared for the Snowmass Ski Area Master Plan Amendment/Ski Area Improvements, along with the associated referenced documents that the EA tiers to. After careful consideration of all information, applicable laws, Forest Plan direction, and public comments, *I have selected Alternative C in the Final EA, with some minor modifications.*

While this alternative differs from the proposal originally received from the Aspen Skiing Company, I feel that the individual aspects of Alternative C better meet the purpose and need of the proposed actions, and better address resource issues that were identified during the site specific analysis phase of the EA process.

### *Burnt Mountain Traverse and Ski Trail Development*

With this decision, I am authorizing the Burnt Mountain Traverse and Ski Trail Development as detailed in Alternative C. While the Biological Assessment addressed the potential impacts to lynx for full trail build-out on Burnt Mountain, I believe that a prudent approach to the development of skiing in the Burnt Mountain POD will provide more insight into the desired use patterns of the skiing/snowboarding public, thereby helping to better plan any future developments in the area. Mitigation for the loss of Lynx winter foraging habitat will be required to occur prior to or concurrently with the implementation of the elements approved in this DN.


I believe that the modified location of the initial section of the Burnt Mountain Ski Traverse in Alternative C not only is designed to avoid future impacts to a wetland complex in the area, it will effectively eliminate current skier utilization of a path that transects the wetland complex and any associated impacts that are a result of such use.



Comments received on the release of the Draft Environmental Assessment raised a question on why the proposed Burnt Mountain Traverse's effect on an inventoried roadless area designation was not initially identified as an issue of concern and analyzed. No external comments were received during two separate scoping periods identifying this issue. Because of the limited amount of vegetation removal, the Interdisciplinary Team did not determine that the roadless character of the area would be affected, and therefore did not identify this as an issue of concern in the original analysis process. The potential effects of a Burnt Mountain Traverse were discussed in the Forest Plan Final EIS (3-483). The project record for this EA does contain an inventoried roadless area briefing paper that provides information and associated maps discussing the Burnt Mountain roadless area.

None of the skiing terrain authorized for implementation within this Decision Notice would occur within the designated Inventoried Roadless Area (#76).

# Snowmass 4d



Approximately 1,300 feet of the approved Burnt Mountain Ski traverse route identified in Alternative C would exist within Roadless Area #76. This section of the modified ski traverse would require no ground disturbance, and due to existing tree spacing, would need only minimal tree removal. It remains within the special use permit boundary of the Snowmass Ski Area. Additionally, no roads are being proposed in the inventoried roadless area. In reviewing all available information, I am confident that the effects of the approved egress trail will not result in any substantial changes in the character of Inventoried Roadless Area #76.

## *Big Burn Lift Replacement and Realignment*

With a modified replacement location of the Sheer Bliss lift as discussed in Alternative C, I believe that the purpose and need of the original proposal submitted by ASC will be better served, and result in fewer resource impacts with the construction of a lift in the Alternative C location. Keeping two lift systems to serve the Big Burn area will allow more operational flexibility, result in better overall distribution of skiers, and eliminate the need to construct ski-ways that would have been necessary with the lift scenario analyzed in Alternative B.

## *Required Mitigation and Monitoring*

The Final EA tiers to a comprehensive discussion of specified and recommended mitigation measures in the 1994 Snowmass EIS. With this decision, I will adopt all the mitigation and monitoring practices listed in the 1994 Snowmass EIS "Mitigation and Monitoring Plan" that are relevant to the approved actions, unless they are in direct conflict with any standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan. By following these measures, I believe that all practicable means to avoid or minimize unnecessary environmental impacts will be exercised. I will also require that all mitigation measures recommended in the BA and BE be followed.

To respond to comments received in regards to the seasonal Forest Supervisor's Closure Order for the Burnt Mountain Area and Government Trail, I am requiring that the Aspen Skiing Company either provide adequate seasonal employees, or fund seasonal Forest Service employees, to ensure that area closure restrictions are enforced and effective between the time period of May 15- June 20 annually. This requirement is consistent with mitigation measure #2 listed on page II-73 in the 1994 Snowmass EIS.

To mitigate for the loss of Lynx winter foraging habitat, the Snowmass Ski Area will be required to implement conservation measures on the 43.35 acre spruce/fir stand on the eastern boundary of the permit area, identified by the WRNF RMRIS as Location 110504, Site 0012 (as approved by the USFWS). This lynx habitat improvement project will be required to occur prior to, or concurrent with, any of the approved actions affecting Lynx winter foraging habitat.

Site specific mitigation acreage requirements are as follow:

- \* Burnt Mountain Glading – 1 acre
  - \* East Burnt Mountain Trail – 5.9 acres
  - \* Burnt Mountain Traverse – 2.2 acres
  - \* Sheer Bliss/Burn Lift – 1.1 acres
- Total – 10.2 Acres