



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

February 2003



Environmental Assessment

Snow Summit Ski Resort Beginner Area Expansion

Mountaintop Ranger District, San Bernardino National Forest
San Bernardino County, California

Legal Description: NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 28, T2N, R1E, San Bernardino Meridian

For Information Contact: Paul Bennett, Recreation Officer
Mountaintop Ranger District
P.O. Box 290
Fawnskin, CA 92333
909.866.3437 ext. 3218
pwbennett@fs.fed.us

cover and available water sources. These two areas are likely used frequently by local resident wildlife and potentially by migratory birds. Yellow-rumped warblers were observed during surveys. No amphibians or fish were observed in the settlement pond – this pond probably does not support any aquatic animals on a regular basis due to its size and location. The small riparian area sometimes contains standing water, but in most years, probably not enough to support occurrences of aquatic animals on a regular basis. No waterfowl occur within the project area.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Snow Summit 4a

Under the No Action Alternative, current conditions would prevail.

Alternative 2A – Proposed Action

Because of already high levels of human activity within the project area and due to low habitat quality, impacts to general wildlife species from the proposed action are not expected to be significant. Several permanent changes over existing condition would occur as a result of the proposed action:

- A portion of riparian habitat would be lost. The riparian zone on the northwest end of the project area would be culverted and filled. The riparian area is approximately 10' X 600' (about 0.14 acres). The proposed action would result in the loss of about 200' of riparian area because of new culvert placement at the lower end of the project area (about 0.05 acres or 35% of the riparian zone in the project area). As a result, water for wildlife would no longer be available, some breeding sites for amphibians would be lost, and some nesting/foraging cover would be lost in the riparian zone. Because riparian habitat throughout the ski resort (and throughout the Big Bear area) has been lost or altered, this habitat is currently limited and considered important. However, due to the small acreage and already fragmented/degraded nature of this habitat within the project area, this is considered insignificant.
- Approximately three acres of partially forested habitat would be lost. This habitat is currently of low quality due to edge effects and existing roads/ski trails.
- Nighttime maintenance activities (snow grooming and associated night-lighting) would extend the disturbance zone to the north. This extension would be within existing disturbance zones (Bristlecone Road on the north, Chairlift 4 and the beginner's ski area on the west, Chairlift 10 and Jo's ski run on the southeast, and the runout between Chairlift 10 and Chairlift 4 through the project area).
- A combination of quiet airless guns and low compressed air volume snowmaking guns would be used on the new run. Even though the guns would be low-sound types, these guns would result in higher levels of noise