

MS 2000 Proposal:

The MS 2000 conceptual ski area expansion proposal received by the Commission in January 2011 is smaller in scale than the 400 acre proposal made to the agency in 2006. The current proposal from MS 2000 proposes the development of 279 acres within the boundary of the PASEA. The proposal would add one new ski lift and seven new ski trails in an 82 acre area.

→ The new lift would require up to 20 lift towers. The land area required for the towers is not expected to exceed .1 acre. A lower loading terminal would be located at approximately 4,420 feet in elevation and would require approximately 0.75 acres of excavation and grading. A new terminal near the summit of Mount Spokane would be located approximately 250 feet in distance from the upper terminal of Chair 1 at an elevation of approximately 5,850 feet and would require approximately 0.5 acres of excavation and grading. State Parks prepared a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist for this conceptual proposal and issued a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) as lead SEPA agency on February 16, 2011, which included among its conditions a requirement that MS 2000 prepare an EIS for the action when it submits a more detailed plan.

Recreation Purpose:

In their proposal, MS 2000 outlined its goals for the ski area expansion:

- 1) Increasing available low, intermediate and expert skill-level terrain, which will provide a terrain distribution that better matches industry standards;
- 2) Increasing the amount of north-facing terrain (such slopes have better snow-accumulation and retention capability) available within the ski area, which provides better assurance of continued operations during periods of low snowfall and gives the resort the ability to better match competition in the market and to address the potential effects of climate change; and
- 3) Decreasing skiing related injuries and resulting search and rescue operations within the PASEA.

Land Classification And Conditional Use Options:

A range of recreational activities and facilities could be considered in the PASEA dependent upon the land classification and conditional uses selected as part of the Commission decision.

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 352-16-020 Land Classification System addresses “State park areas are of state-wide natural, cultural, and/or recreational significance and/or outstanding scenic beauty. They provide varied facilities serving low-intensity, medium intensity, and high intensity outdoor recreation activities, areas reserved for preservation, scientific research, education, public assembly, and/or environmental interpretation, and support facilities.” (Appendix 4)

The Commission may select specific land classifications for the PASEA that include “Recreation,” “Resource Recreation,” “Heritage,” “Natural,” “Natural Forest Area,” and “Natural Area Preserve.” In addition to other trail based and dispersed uses, both the “Recreation” and “Resource Recreation” classifications allow for alpine skiing and alpine skiing facilities as a “Conditional Use.”

The Commission is directed by statute to “Designate and preserve certain forest areas throughout the state as natural forests or natural areas for interpretation, study and preservation purposes.”