

PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST

Ranger Districts: Council Ranger District, Payette National Forest

Date: October 29, 2007

Project Name: Nordic Ski Trail Outfitter and Guide Permit Issuance

Project Description: This project proposes to issue a Special Use Permit for the period of one year to the Tamarack Resort for Nordic Skiing on West Mountain. This permit would authorize Tamarack Resort LLC to use National Forest property (see attachment #1 map for specific locations) to provide a groomed Nordic Ski Trail for resort users on the summit ridge of West Mountain, starting in November 2007, or as soon as the application processing is completed. The groomed route would cover approximately 3.1 miles on National Forest System Lands and 1 Mile on State of Idaho leased land.

Project Specifications: Tamarack Resort as an existing Outfitter and Guide special use permit to offer Nordic Skiing on a groomed ski trail along the main north-south ridge of the West Mountains. Participants would access the trail from the Tamarack Alpine Skiing Chair lift on State of Idaho leased property, from which the proposed route would run north and south onto Payette National Forest lands. The route would be groomed on top of the snow with no ground disturbing activities. No cutting of trees would be required. The actual operating season would be snow dependent. The permit would allow for grooming from November, 2007 through May, 2008. The length of trail on forest system lands is approximately 3.1 miles long by 16 feet wide.

User safety was a primary concern with this permit. Tamarack has provided attachment #2 which includes a snow safety plan with map to address this concern. Permit monitoring would be required to insure adequate safety precautions are being followed.

Location: Legal description: Sections in T. 16 N, R.2 E sections 1,2 and 25 as displayed on the Payette National Forest Travel Map. The location falls in the Payette National Forest Plan, Management Area 03.

General Project Information:

- The term of Authorization would be for one year starting in November 2007 or as soon as the application process is completed.
- All guides would be licensed through the State of Idaho Outfitters and Guide Licensing Board.

Scoping: Scoping letters were sent out to interested external parties last year in October of 2006. No comments were received from this scoping.

Applicable Category: FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, section 31.1b #8. Approval, modification, or continuation of minor, short-term special uses of National Forest System Lands.

**Tamarack Resort – Nordic Ski Trail Outfitter and Guide Permit Issuance
Categorical Exclusion**

**Wildlife Resources Biological Assessment
USDA Forest Service
Payette National Forest, Council Ranger District**

This document is a Biological Assessment of Wildlife Resources for the issuance of a Special Use Authorization to Tamarack Resort LLC for commercial Nordic Skiing on West Mountain, on the Council Ranger District of the Payette National Forest, for a period of one year, during the resort's 2007-2008 ski season. The Nordic Ski Trail runs north-south on the summit ridge of West Mountain, on National forest property, allowing access from the Tamarack Alpine Skiing Chair Lift on Idaho Department of Lands property. The ski route measures 3.1 mi long and 16 ft wide, and would be groomed on top of the snow, with no ground-disturbing activity. No cutting of trees would be required. The actual operating season would be snow-dependent. The permit would allow for grooming from November 2007 through May 2008.

Table 1. Determination of Effects for federally-listed wildlife species in the Tamarack Resort – Nordic Ski Trail Outfitter and Guide project area.

Federally-listed Species	Effect*	Rationale
Canada lynx	NLAA	Lynx habitat does occur in the project area. The addition of this 1 mi of groomed snowmobile trail is within the allowed total mileage, as described in the Draft Travel Management Plan for the Payette National Forest. This activity must be considered cumulatively with other skiing and snowmobile activities on West Mountain, other Special Use Permits for such activities, and long-term effects of such activities. A separate analysis of Nordic skiing snowmobile activity on West Mountain, and associated Special Use Permits, will be conducted for the Final Travel Management Plan.
Gray wolf	NLJ	The Blue Bunch pack territory includes the project area. Other wolf activity has been documented by Forest Service and IDFG on West Mountain and in the upper portions of the Middle Fork of the Weiser River, the Little Weiser River, and private lands surrounding Cascade Reservoir. Grooming and snowmobile use of the connector trail would not prevent wolf foraging or impede movements.
Northern Idaho ground squirrel	NLAA	Preferred habitat exists, but no confirmed observations of NIDGS occur for the project area. Because the activity involves grooming and snowmobile traffic on top of the snow, NIDGS that may occur in the project area would be in winter dens during the activity.

*NLAA = The proposed project may affect, but will Not Likely Adversely Affect the federally-listed wildlife species.

NLJ = The proposed project will Not Likely Jeopardize the continued existence of the federally-listed Experimental/Non-essential wildlife population.

Following a review of the proposed activity and a discussion with Ana Egnew, Wildlife Program Manager, Payette National Forest, I have determined that this federal action will cause no adverse effects to any federally-listed wildlife species in the project area.

Jon Almack

Date 30 NOV 2007

Jon Almack, West Zone Wildlife Biologist