

VAIL MOUNTAIN 2007
PROPOSED PROJECTS ON FOREST SERVICE LANDS
2601.02 Lifts

Lifts

Requireme

Projects and Descriptions

VL 07-001 Chair 10 Replacement

This project was approved through the 2005 Environmental Assessment Chairs 10 and 14 Upgrade Proposal. Chair 10 will be replaced in its current alignment. The existing lift equipment will be removed; tower and terminal foundation will be buried on site. Due to a wider gage, the lift line will need minor widening.

- Clyde Wiessner

VL 07-002 Chair 14 Replacement

This project was approved through the 2005 Environmental Assessment Chairs 10 and 14 Upgrade Proposal. Chair 14 will be replaced in a slightly modified alignment, as outlined in the 2005 EA. The existing lift equipment will be relocated to the proposed Chair 15 Replacement. Tower and terminal foundation will be buried on site. The modified alignment will require a minor amount of timber clearing near the top.

- Clyde Wiessner

VL 07-003 Chair 15 Replacement

With the removal of existing Chair 14, see VL 07-002, there is an opportunity of reusing the Chair 14 equipment in a upgrade of Chair 15. As proposed the top terminal would shift slightly to the east while the bottom terminal would move east 140 feet and down hill 150 feet. Minor clearing of Lodgepole Pine and terminal grading would be required. The existing lift equipment will be removed; tower and terminal foundation will be buried on site.

Clyde Wiessner

VL 07-004 Lift 23 Removal

The existing lift equipment will be removed; tower and terminal foundation will be buried on site.

- Clyde Wiessner

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

VAIL SKI RESORT
WEST LIONSHEAD LIFT

USDA FOREST SERVICE
WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST
HOLY CROSS RANGER DISTRICT

MAY 2006

BACKGROUND

In June 2005 the Holy Cross Ranger District received a proposal from Vail Associates (VA) to provide additional skier access to public lands within Vail's special use permit via a new high-speed lift out of the West Lionshead area. This proposal was accepted, and an Environmental Assessment (EA) disclosing the potential environmental effects of the proposal was distributed for public review and comment in March 2006. The requisite 30-day comment period ended on April 10, 2006, yielding one comment letter.

The complete EA is available for public review at the Holy Cross Ranger District in Minturn, CO and the White River National Forest Supervisor's Office in Glenwood Springs, CO.

Vail 3

Table 7. Determination summary of effects on R2 sensitive animal species resulting from the West Lionshead Lift project at VSA.

Common name, <i>Scientific name</i>	Proposed Action Determination
INSECTS	
Great Basin silverspot, <i>Speyeria nokomis nokomis</i>	NI
Hudsonian emerald, <i>Somatochlora hudsonica</i>	NI
FISH	
Roundtail chub, <i>Gila robusta</i>	NI
Mountain sucker, <i>Catostomus platyrhynchus</i>	NI
Bluehead sucker, <i>Catostomus discobolus</i>	NI
Flannelmouth sucker, <i>Catostomus latipinnis</i>	NI
Colorado River cutthroat trout, <i>Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus</i>	NI
AMPHIBIANS	
Boreal western toad, <i>Bufo boreas boreas</i>	NI
Northern leopard frog, <i>Rana pipiens</i>	NI
BIRDS	
Northern goshawk, <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	MAII ←
Northern harrier, <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	NI
Ferruginous hawk, <i>Buteo regalis</i>	NI
American peregrine falcon, <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	NI
White-tailed ptarmigan, <i>Lagopus leucurus</i>	NI
Greater sage grouse, <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	NI
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, <i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>	NI
Flammulated owl, <i>Otus flammeolus</i>	NI
Boreal owl, <i>Asioius funereus</i>	NI
Black swift, <i>Cypseloides niger</i>	NI
Three-toed woodpecker, <i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	MAII ←
Olive-sided flycatcher, <i>Contopus cooperi</i>	MAII ←
Loggerhead shrike, <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	NI
Purple martin, <i>Progne subis</i>	NI
Brewer's sparrow, <i>Spizella breweri</i>	NI
Sage sparrow, <i>Amphispiza belli</i>	NI
MAMMALS	
Pygmy shrew, <i>Microsorex hoyi montanus</i>	MAII ←
Fringed myotis, <i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	NI
Spotted bat, <i>Eudermia maculatum</i>	NI
Townsend's big-eared bat, <i>Corynorhinus townsendii townsendii</i>	MAII ←
American marten, <i>Martes americana</i>	MAII ←
North American wolverine, <i>Gulo gulo luscus</i>	NI
River otter, <i>Lutra canadensis</i>	NI

Other R2 sensitive animals are not listed because they have not been found on the WRNF, they have no affinities to habitats on the project area, the project area is outside of the species' range or elevational distribution, and the Proposed Action would have no impact on those species. Species in bold are potentially present and/or are discussed in the text. Wildlife are listed phylogenetically.

NI = No impact.

MAII = may impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability on the planning area, nor cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of species viability rangewide.

Determinations in this table only consider NFS lands that may be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by the Proposed Action, which R2 species determinations are based on. Where potential or occupied habitat is present on adjacent private lands that are part of the project area, additional discussion is provided in the text.

BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR
CHAIRS 10 AND 14 UPGRADING AT
VAIL SKI AREA,
HOLY CROSS RANGER DISTRICT,
WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST,
COLORADO

Prepared for:

U.S. Forest Service

*White River National Forest
Holy Cross Ranger District
P.O. Box 190
Minturn, Colorado 81645*

Vail Associates, Inc.

*P.O. Box 7
Vail, Colorado 81658*

OCTOBER, 2004

Western Ecosystems, Inc.

*Ecological Consultants
905 West Coach Road, Boulder, Colorado 80302 (303) 442-6144*

snow tracking and monitoring baited hair snags. The effort totaled 211 miles of snow tracking. No evidence of wolverine was detected. Other unverified reports include a 1992 sighting at Fairview Lake in the adjacent Holy Cross Wilderness and a 1994 report from the Sylvan Lake area of Eagle County (USFS 1996b, 1997). No evidence of wolverine was detected during winter tracking surveys around Vail (Thompson and Halfpenny 1989), Breckenridge (Thompson 1998, 2002), Ski Cooper (Thompson 1999), Copper Mountain (Thompson 2003), and Keystone Ski Areas (Thompson unpubl. data), totaling nearly 800 miles of effective tracking.

At best, wolverines were apparently uncommon in Colorado's mountains even before the arrival of white man and, if present, they are undoubtedly less common today. If wolverines exist in the general area and if they follow migratory ungulate herds, they may seasonally occur in the vicinity of the exchange parcels, although they would rarely be present. Big game winter ranges nearby the non-federal parcels could possibly represent a concentrated carrion or forage source. In summer, areas on and near the non-federal parcels support elk nursery groups that might attract wolverines.

There is no evidence wolverine are now present in Eagle or adjacent Counties. NDIS data consider wolverine to have been extirpated in Eagle County. Wolverines would have no particular affinity to the project area, other than as travel or opportunistic foraging habitat. Wolverine presence on the project area is extremely unlikely. The likelihood of wolverine reintroduction into Colorado (Seidel et al. 1998), that would establish or increase statewide numbers, is not reasonably foreseeable. Nevertheless, reestablishment of a viable wolverine population would not be compromised or adversely affected by the proposed action. The habitat conversion and treatment proposed under Alternatives 1 and 2 should have no measurable or discernible effect on any potential wolverine habitat values. Therefore, the proposed action should have **no impact** on this species.



5.3 DIRECT EFFECTS SUMMARY

For the reasons presented above regarding the northern goshawk, boreal owl, three-toed woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, pygmy shrew, and American marten, Alternatives 1 and 2 **may adversely impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability on the planning area, nor cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of species viability range-wide.** Alternatives 1 and 2 would have **no impact** on any other R2 species.

5.4 INDIRECT EFFECTS

CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA define indirect effects as those:

“which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.” (40 CFR, § 1508.8, [b]).

Indirect effects in the analysis area that would occur under the proposed action would be those associated with the effects of any secondary or subsequent development connected to the analysis area that would be initiated by, or result from, implementation of the proposed action. As such, there would be no indirect