

**Decision Memo
for
Mission Ridge Ski and Board Resort
USDA Forest Service
Wenatchee River Ranger District
Chelan County, Washington**



Decision

I have decided to issue a special use authorization for Mission Ridge Ski and Board Resort (MRSBR) authorizing them to construct a service road and dig test pits for the purposes of geotechnical soil sampling on National Forest land. The project will determine the feasibility of construction of a permanent road accessing private property the ski area has purchased and plans to expand onto. The service road and pit locations are in T21N, R20E, Section 24.

Rationale for the Decision

Mission Ridge Resort purchased approximately 800 acres of private land adjacent to the current Mission Ridge Special Use Permit Site in 2014. They have plans to expand operations onto the purchased property but in order to access it they must construct a road across NFL. The proposed access road would provide access from the existing Mission Ridge Base area to the proposed expansion site. The proposed access to the new resort expansion area would require a new roadway from the existing Mission Ridge resort base facilities extending through the SE ¼ of Section 24, T21N, R19E. An initial geological assessment indicated the proposed access route from the existing Mission Ridge base area to the expansion site needs to be assessed. Portions of the proposed expansion project site, including the

proposed access roadway alignment, are located within areas designated by Chelan County as potentially geologically hazardous because of their possible susceptibility to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, and would therefore require a geologic site assessment in accordance with Chapter 11.86 of the Chelan County Code.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would provide Mission Ridge Inc. with a 1 year special use permit to allow for construction of a temporary road that would originate from the existing Mission Ridge Base area and follow the proposed access road alignment to access the private parcel in Section 19 (Appendix Maps A.1 thru A.3).

The Proposed Action is the action proposed by the Forest Service to meet the purpose and need and is comprised of the following within the project area:

- 1) new special use permit
- 2) construction of temporary road
 - a. approximate length 0.61 miles
 - b. approximate width: 16 feet (maximum)
 - c. approximate ground disturbance: 1 acre
- 3) Assessment of geologic risk

Special Use Permit

Forest Service will issue a short term, 1 year special use permit authorizing the construction of a temporary road and associated geologic risk assessment.

Temporary Road Construction

The temporary road would be constructed in order to conduct the geologic risk assessment. The road would not be open to public use. A gate would be installed at the junction with the existing Mission Ridge parking lot. The road would be designed to meet Forest Service standards for short-term use. This temporary road would essentially be a bladed lane pushed into the project area. Use of this road would be typically limited to dry or frozen conditions to minimize rutting and compaction. Soil would be moved by an excavator accessing the project area from the Mission Ridge Ski Area parking lot and activity would be monitored by an approved Archaeologist. The site has been surveyed for cultural resources, and none found (report pending). In all cases, a trackhoe would be used to clear and grade a 14 to 16 feet wide temporary access road for a tracked drill rig. Trees greater than eight inches diameter at breast height (DBH) would not be removed, however some trees less than eight inches DBH and shrubs may need to be cleared. The temporary road will fall within the proposed access road corridor width of 30 feet. This would allow the trackhoe to avoid larger trees and minimize vegetation removal to the extent practical while minimizing the final length of the road. Temporary road construction would be completed by Mission Ridge Inc. Mission Ridge shall be solely responsible for providing and maintaining facilities to comply with applicable erosion control regulations and to maintain clean access routes.

Because roads take soils out of production, effort would be made to keep the length and width of roads to a minimum without sacrificing safety. The greatest potential for soil erosion occurs immediately after construction so disturbed areas would be shaped and stabilized as soon as possible to minimize erosion.

potential. The road would be rehabilitated by covering with organic material, seeded using native species, and drainage features installed as necessary, once it is no longer needed.

The temporary road would require two stream crossings, one at each end of the route. The creeks are both non-fish bearing perennial streams and are not currently located within designated riparian reserves. The riparian vegetation adjacent to the creek on the south end of the route is limited and restricted to a band within 25-50 feet of the stream at the point of the crossing. The riparian vegetation adjacent to the creek on the north end of the route is of higher quality and greater abundance and distribution. The number of water crossings would be minimized and constructed with 1) preference to crossing locations where streambeds and banks are composed of firm, cohesive soils or rock, 2) approaches to streambanks that have low-percent slopes and short slope lengths, 3) in a manner that would disrupt a minimum amount of natural stream channel, 4) crossings that would be constructed as close to a 90-degree angle as possible to the streambed, 5) crossings that would not change the cross-sectional area of the stream channel, impede fish migration or natural water flow or degrade water quality or riparian habitat. Activity in the water would be restricted to periods of low flow. In-stream work will follow requirements of MOU number NFS 17-MU-11062754-049 between USFS and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding hydraulic projects.

Categorical Exclusions

FSH 1909.15, Chapter 32.12 (8) Approval, modification or continuation of minor, short term special uses of NFS lands, 36 CFR 220.6(d)(8) for the issuance of a special use permit for a term of 1 year

36 CFR 220.6(e) (8) Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing road.

Based on findings in the analysis file supporting this decision, a categorical exclusion is appropriate because there are no extraordinary circumstances that could potentially result in a significant effect on the environment, as described below.

Findings of No Extraordinary Circumstances

Based on findings in the analysis file supporting this decision no extraordinary circumstances exist regarding the following resource conditions:
Mitigation measures and design criteria were developed to address some of the potential impacts the proposed action may cause.

Wildlife

Effects on Federally listed threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service identified sensitive species has been determined to "**may affect, not likely to adversely affect**", this species include

- Gray wolf, Grizzly bear, Northern Spotted Owl, Lynx

Aquatics/Soils

Mission Ridge shall be solely responsible for providing and maintaining necessary erosion control facilities to comply with applicable erosion control regulations and to maintain clean access routes for this action (construction of temporary access road and drilling of test pits).

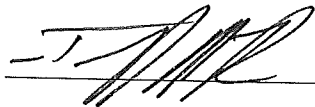
Botany/Invasive Species

Road construction would require some removal of vegetation. The road clearing width would result in a maximum of 1 acre of ground and vegetation disturbance. Stand density varies along the route and will result in some slash and some cut trees (<8inch DBH). Mitigation measures and design criteria were developed to address some of the potential impacts the proposed action may cause.

Cultural Resources

In the event that cultural resources or human remains are discovered during project implementation, all activities in the area of the discovery would stop and a Forest Archaeologist would be notified immediately. The area would be reasonably secured and protected during inspection and evaluation by the archaeologist. If the discovery is determined to be a National Register eligible site and avoidance during project implementation is not possible, site specific mitigation would be developed by the Forest Archaeologist in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO) for the Confederate Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Cultural Resources surveys have been completed for the site.

Any future request by MRSBR to conduct ground disturbing activities pertaining to this line will be considered on a case by case basis, and may require additional NEPA. Internal scoping was completed with wildlife, botany, cultural, recreation, hydrology and fisheries resource managers. No extraordinary circumstances as defined in the Forest Service Handbook regulations FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31.2 were found to exist that might cause the proposed action to have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment as described under 40 CFR 1508.27.



Jeffery Rivera, District Ranger



Date