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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Aspen Highlands EIS, Ski Area Improvement and Expansion Analysis, White River National Forest; Pitkin County, Colorado

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to disclose effects of alternative decisions it may make to allow upgrading and/or expansion of recreational facilities within the existing permit boundaries of the Aspen Highlands Ski Area, on the Aspen Ranger District of the White River National Forest.

DATES: Written comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received on or before July 28, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Rob Iwamoto, Aspen District Ranger, White River National Forest, 806 West Town, Aspen, CO 81611. Veto J. LaSalle, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest, is the Responsible Official for this EIS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Arthur Bauer, Project Coordinator, Aspen Ranger District—(970) 544-0082 or (303) 925-3445.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On May 12, 1995, Special Use Permittee Aspen Skiing Company submitted a proposal to amend their Master Development Plan for the Aspen Highlands Ski Area. The scope of the proposal includes replacing two lifts with a new moderate capacity, high speed quad chairlift; extending a catwalk to serve additional expert terrain within the Loge Bowl area; adding a new lift and additional terrain to the Steeplechase area; replacing the existing mid-mountain restaurant with a new restaurant in the same location; relocating the Ski Patrol

Headquarters; adding two new ski lifts into two separate Bowl Areas; and the addition of approximately 300 acres of snowmaking. Actions proposed on National Forest System Lands fall within the existing permit area boundary. The applicant's proposal also would involve development on adjacent private lands which have land use jurisdictions outside of Forest Service control.

The applicant's proposal is consistent with governing programmatic management direction contained in the *Rocky Mountain Regional Guide* and FEIS for Standards and Guidelines (1983) and in the final EIS and *Land and Resource Management Plan for the White River National Forest* ("LMP," 1984). These documents direct that first priority for ski area development is the expansion of existing areas. The LMP allocated the proposed expansion area to downhill skiing use and assigned a potential development capacity of 4,500 skiers-at-one-time (SAOT). The site-specific environmental analysis provided by the EIS will assist the Responsible Official in determining which improvements are needed to meet the following objectives: Accommodate predicted short and long-term demand for skiing; continue the supply of high quality recreational opportunities at Aspen Highlands; maintain the attractiveness and viability of the permittee's operation; and, sustain the resource uses and amenity values which local communities depend on and enjoy. Alternative development plans will be carefully examined for their potential impacts on the physical, biological, and social environments so that tradeoffs are apparent to the decisionmaker.

Public participation will be fully incorporated into preparation of the EIS. The first step is the scoping process, during which the Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, and other individuals or groups who may be interested or affected by the proposed action. This information will be used in preparing the EIS.

Several public meetings will be held in the Aspen, CO area throughout the public involvement process. The exact dates and locations of these meetings will be published in local newspapers at least two weeks in advance. The first

scoping meeting is currently slated for late-June.

Preliminary issues include the potential effects of proposed actions and related off-site developments on the following elements of the biological, physical and social environments: Wildlife populations, big game habitats, and overall biological diversity; vegetation, wetlands and riparian areas; streamflow and fisheries habitat; scenic quality; air quality; noise levels; wilderness resource values; four-season recreational resource opportunities; surface erosion and landslide hazards; quality of and capacity for downhill skiing; traffic and transportation systems; the cost and supply of public utilities and services; local commercial establishments; housing availability and cost; personal income and revenue base to local and state governments; development in surrounding areas; health and human safety; and, the overall quality of life for local residents. The direct, indirect, cumulative, short-term, and long-term aspects of impacts on national forest lands and resources, and those of connected or related effects off-site, will be fully disclosed.

Preliminary alternatives include the applicant's proposal (described above) and No Action, which in this case is continuing current administration of the ski area. Additional alternatives will be developed after the significant issues are clarified and management objectives carefully defined. The Responsible Official will be presented with a range of feasible and practical alternatives.

Permits and licenses required to implement the proposed action will, or may, include the following: Amended Special Use Permit from the Forest Service; Section 404 Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers; consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for compliance with section 7 of the Threatened & Endangered Species Act; certification from the Colorado Department of Health Air Pollution Control Division that air quality standards would be met; certification from the Water Quality Control Division for Section 401 compliance and permit for Pollution Discharge Elimination System, certification from the Tram Board; review from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, Colorado Geologic Survey, Colorado Natural Area Office, Water Conservation Board, and Division

of Water Resources; approval from Colorado Department of Highways for any state highway redesign or access improvement; clearance from the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office; and various review, zoning, subdivision and permit approvals from Pitkin County and the Town of Snowmass Village.

The Forest Service predicts the draft environmental impact statement will be filed during the winter of 1995/96 and the final environmental impact statement during the summer of 1996.

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The Forest Service will seek comments on the draft environmental impact statement for a period of 45 days after its publication. Comments will then be summarized and responded to in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft environmental impact statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. (Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.)

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice at this early stage of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statement must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the DEIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the Final EIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Anqoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close

of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when they can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Dated: May 23, 1995.

Veto J. LaSalle,

Forest Supervisor.

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Rural Housing and Community Development Service

Industry Interface Pilot

AGENCY: Rural Housing and Community Development Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCD) announces a pilot test of software to provide an automated interface between RHCD and borrowers with Multiple Family Housing (MFH) projects to exchange MFH tenant information. The objective of the automated interface is to dramatically reduce reporting burden and streamline internal processing.

DATES: Borrowers who have projects in the pilot servicing offices and wish to participate in the pilot should contact their servicing office after June 1, 1995. Servicing offices participating in the pilot will receive informational packages for distribution by June 1, 1995.

ADDRESSES: RECD servicing offices participating in the pilot are as follows: RECD State Office, 3003 North Central Avenue, Suite 900, Phoenix, Arizona 85012.

RECD District Office, 4362 North Lake Boulevard, Suite 105, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33410.

RECD District Office, 3260 Eagle Park Drive, Suite 101C, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505.

RECD District Office, 1600 Valley River Drive, Suite 270, Eugene, Oregon 97401.

RECD District Office, PO Box Drawer 1328, 1809 Furgeson Road, Suite E, Mt. Pleasant, Texas 75456.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Larry Anderson, Senior Loan Specialist, Multiple Family Housing Servicing and Property Management Division (MHSPM), RHCD, Room 5321 South Agriculture Building, Washington, DC 20250, telephone (202) 720-1611. (This is not a toll free number.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The pilot test is scheduled to begin during June 1995, and will be conducted in five local servicing offices. The pilot will determine if software developed by RHCD can effectively transmit tenant data from borrower management sites to the servicing office. No ending date for the pilot has been established at this time.

During a later phase of the pilot, software developed by private vendors will be permitted to transmit information through the pilot system. To assist private software developers who wish to participate in the second phase of the pilot, the RHCD National Office will provide a copy of the official information transmission format upon request. On June 1, 1995, at 2:00 PM, a meeting with RHCD and interested software and housing industry representatives will be held in Room 0204, South Agriculture Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, Washington, DC, to discuss the pilot and other automation issues. Any individual or group interested in MFH automation is welcome to attend.

During the pilot period, RHCD will work closely with borrowers to assure the successful completion of the pilot. Administrative flexibility will be provided to accommodate tenant data submission in a pilot environment. Borrowers interested in participating in the pilot may contact the appropriate servicing office address above for more information.

Dated: May 19, 1995.

Maureen Kennedy,

Acting Administrator, Rural Housing and Community Development Service.

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