

FOREST SERVICE APPLICATION

July 3, 2008

7. A. This application is for a Special Use permit to allow for Guided Ski Touring via snowcoach in Management Area 5 on the Bitterroot National Forest as identified in Exhibit 1. We would like to glade an area of the forest directly west of the Maclay Ranch, south of Carlton Lake Road (See Exhibit 1, Proposed Gladed Skiing) to allow for Alpine ski touring that would interface with the existing trail network on the ranch. Management Area 5 in the Carlton Lake drainage would also be accessed by the snowcoach and guided tours would be offered in conjunction with the existing Alpine program.

Our application is also for mountain biking on the Lolo National Forest (Exhibit 2). We would like to develop a trail network that would include new sections of trail and blending them into existing road beds in the McClain and Mormon Creek drainage. This Exhibit is a preliminary trail layout but would be refined based on the ground soils and geologic analysis.

- B. No facilities are planned for the Alpine touring operation on forest lands.

For the Nordic system we intend to use the existing Yurt at the 6200 foot level of the Maclay Ranch as the trailhead. We propose positioning a second Yurt on the Overlook location at the 5850 foot level (Exhibit 2). Each Yurt will have port-a-lets. Trail identification and directional signage would be used throughout the system to identify trails and their level of difficulty.

- C. Alpine skiing would take place in the areas indicated in Management Area 5 on Exhibit 1. The acreage in Management Area 5 located directly west of Maclay Ranch and south of Carlton Lake Road would be gladed to allow for guided snowcat tours. Glading would conform to the visual quality objectives of "Retention" as defined by the *Bitterroot National Forest Plan (USDA, 1977)*.

The Nordic trail system would be a continuation of the trails currently developed on Maclay private land (Exhibit 2). We propose to use approximately 16 miles of existing logging roads for the Nordic trail network. We would construct approximately 19 miles of new trails with a maximum width of 12 feet.

Exhibit 2 illustrates an example trail layout. A final trail layout would be developed which addresses slope stability, soil erosion and other concerns following further study of these issues. The only slope stability information that is currently available (*Billingsley 1976*) was largely inferred by air photo interpretation with limited evaluation on-the-ground. It does not identify what portions of the information was observed on-the-ground and what was inferred by air photo interpretation. The Billingsley study suggests that there may be slope stability issues, but does not provide the accuracy, level of detail or confirmation of facts required to actually evaluate slope stability concerns related to our

proposal. We propose that prior to final trail design, we be given authorization to conduct a slope stability analysis. Once potential problem areas are identified and understood, those areas would be addressed in final trail layout.

Clearing and brushing would occur on existing road beds. We estimate 5 miles would require brushing and 3 miles of existing trail would require heavy brushing. Trails would be prepared to allow for skiing on minimal snow pack. All trails would be designed using best management practices to minimize erosion and enhance re-vegetation. Once we have been able to survey the overall length of the grades in the Nordic system, we can design a touring system that would accommodate all ability levels. The trail system would be designed so we do not expose anyone to a long sustained grade over 6%.

Certified ski patrolmen would be on staff and be trained to respond to all locations within the permit area. The Nordic trails would be swept at the end of each operational day and a head count would be taken with the guided tour groups to ensure everyone's return to the base. Nordic trails would be groomed an average of twice a week and as required by snow conditions.

D. The permit is requested for 99 years.

E. Alpine and Nordic skiing would begin (snow cover permitting) the 1st of November and conclude April 15th. Mountain biking would begin in May and go through October. Maintenance activities would be ongoing year round.

F. For Alpine skiing we anticipate running up to 5 snowcats (capacity up to 15 per snowcat) as many as 7 days a week from November 1st to April 15th.

We estimate the Nordic trail system would average 20 skiers a day during the first season.

A market evaluated fee would be determined prior to operation.

G. Glading in the Alpine touring area would take place in a 4 month period, and development of the Nordic/Biking trail system would take 5 months time to construct and re-vegetate.

H. Staging for all construction would take place at the Trailhead Yurt area of the Maclay Ranch.

15. A. Three years of touring the residents of Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley up to the established runs on the Maclay Ranch has demonstrated to us the growing need for quality winter recreation in this area. This past winter 800 people took advantage of our snowcoach tours. Approximately 2,800 people have signed their name to express their interest in developing skiing on Carlton Ridge

and Lolo Peak, after hearing a presentation of the benefits both socially and economically to our region.

We estimate our cost to construct the Alpine and Nordic trails to be \$275,000. We estimate our annual operating costs for both Alpine and Nordic to be \$450,000. We estimate annual maintenance for both Alpine and Nordic to be \$20,000.

B. We have not developed any alternatives.

C. Given the loss of forest related jobs in the area, and the general downward trend in agriculture, the number of guest service jobs this resort would create provides a needed economic stimulus. This resort would allow for easy year round access to a much broader spectrum of age groups and ability levels than currently enjoy our forest lands. A permit for developed recreation on Carlton Ridge and Lolo Peak is an excellent response to the goal of Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell to put more “kids in the woods.” The public benefits of this project are illustrated by the *Bitterroot Resort Economic Impact Analysis prepared for Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation & Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce by ECONorthwest*.

16. The economic impacts would be similar to what has been experienced the last 3 years that we have conducted tours on the Maclay Ranch. There would be an additional 10 employees needed to support the upgraded operation. We estimate \$300,000 in supplies, salaries and equipment would be spent locally.

The social impact involves faster and easier access to Forest lands. The guided experience would promote an increased appreciation for the opportunities to be found on our public lands. It would provide quality access in the limited time frame that the majority of the public has to recreate with their friends and families.

There would be little, or no effect on surrounding rural lifestyles.

Additional information is available as illustrated by the *Bitterroot Resort Economic Impact Analysis prepared for Missoula Area Economic Development Corporation & Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce by ECONorthwest*.

17. The likely environmental effects for this project would be addressed in the Environmental Impact Study.

Billingsley 1976 identified potential unstable soil areas. This was a preliminary study based largely on air photo interpretation that needs further evaluation on the ground to confirm the presence of potential slope stability problems. Prior to final trail design a slope stability analysis would be conducted by soil/geology

professionals to identify potential problems and these areas would be avoided in final trail layout.

We plan to minimize tree and shrub removal as we route the Nordic and mountain biking trails to retain as much vegetation as possible and meet the management goals assigned to those areas. Glading would conform to the visual quality objectives of “Retention” as defined by the *Bitterroot National Forest Plan (USDA 1977)*.

20. United States Forest Service: Bitterroot National Forest & Lolo National Forest