



## BITTERROOT RESORT

### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **BITTERROOT RESORT IDENTIFIES SKIING AS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL FORESTS – THE ‘LAND OF MANY USES’**

MISSOULA, Montana – Bitterroot Resort, in urging that forest planners provide an opportunity for the community to consider establishing a destination ski resort in the future, today asserted that skiing is among the most popular activities on national forests, and that western Montana has the fifth-highest concentration of avid skiers among all U.S. markets.

Forest plans are being re-written to guide management decisions for the next decade or more on the Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests.

Bitterroot Resort today summarized the forest planning priorities it submitted to the planning team as draft management plans are being finalized.

“U.S. Forest Service partnerships with private businesses to create organized recreational opportunities for Americans date back to the 1930s,” said Jim Gill, chief operating officer of Bitterroot Resort and the former general manager of Breckenridge and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. “There would be no Sun Valley or Big Mountain or Jackson Hole Mountain Resort today if the Forest Service had not stood by its original commitments to create a ‘land of many uses’ for the enjoyment of the American public.”

Bitterroot Resort noted that downhill skiing already accounts for 15% of the recreation on the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests – a big recreational benefit being provided under very controlled conditions on about .4% of the land of the two forests. Bitterroot Resort makes these statements in its submission to the team establishing draft forest plans for the two forests.

“A future Bitterroot Resort would open that recreational opportunity to thousands more people per day,” Gill said. “We think that’s good for the forest and good for Americans.”

Nationally, demand for skiing is at an all-time high. The National Ski Area Association reported in 2005 that four of the five highest visitation years ever have occurred since 2000. Ski areas contributed \$28 million in payments to the federal treasury in 2004 while occupying less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1% of the 192 million acres of national forest land.

In a 2002 memorandum of understanding with the National Ski Areas Association, the Forest Service stated that it will “emphasize the value of developed recreation, and the value of enhancing the experiences of participants, in forest plan revisions and project level plans” and it will “look for opportunities to share with the public how both parties can sustain viable communities and healthy ecosystems “while providing recreational opportunities and public enjoyment of the National Forests.”

Gill said that as new plans are developed for these forests, allocating a small amount of public land to potential skiing gives the Forest Service flexibility to enable Montanans and future visitors to the Bitterroot Valley easy access to skiing and other organized recreation from four-lane U.S. 93 – to a site the Forest Service has recognized as an ideal winter recreation opportunity for decades.

Gill said ski resorts are good neighbors to wilderness areas. In west-central Idaho, where the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness stretches its 2.3-million-acre reach toward Montana, Tamarack Resort is under development and is projected to generate \$1.5 billion in

economic development over the next 15 years. Hundreds of people have been employed for three consecutive construction seasons bringing the destination ski resort to life. The economic transformation of these communities is on, and high unemployment from the decline of the timber industry is disappearing. If suitable land uses are carefully crafted into the new forest plans for Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests, similar numbers of jobs could be created for Montanans, too.

**About Bitterroot Resort**

Bitterroot Resort is a proposed all-season destination utilizing the private land of the Maclay Ranch and the National Forest lands of Carlton Ridge and Lolo Peak. With the greatest vertical descent in North America, Bitterroot Resort is designed to be a world-class alpine, snowboard and cross-country ski venue, complete with a four-season resort village and residential community. The Bitterroot Team aims to incorporate the ideas and interest of the Bitterroot Valley community to create a village replete with cultural and recreational opportunities for both the local and visiting public. For more information visit [www.broot.us](http://www.broot.us)

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