

APPENDIX B – SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE BRIDGER BOWL SKI AREA PERMIT RENEWAL AND MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes public responses on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Bridger Bowl Ski Area Permit Renewal and Master Development Plan Update. The DEIS was released for public review and comment on April 26, 1999. Comments were to be received through June 28, 1999. A public information meeting explaining the DEIS was held in Bozeman on May 11, 1999, and those comments are also incorporated into this summary.

Comments were received from 280 individuals, organizations, and government agencies. Written comments arrived in 147 letters or post cards, one e-mail, and one documented phone conversation. Three form letters were identified with 78 signatures. The public meeting contributed 53 respondents. This degree of interest indicates the strong feelings people have in the operation of Bridger Bowl.

This analysis of the public's responses describes what people have said as completely and directly as possible without assigning weights or serving as a vote-count. The system used to analyze comments is objective, reliable, and traceable. All comments received and responses to the DEIS have been considered in the production of this summary.

It is important to note that this analysis is not based on vote-counting. The public involvement efforts of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are intended to gather information and ideas from the public on proposed actions and alternatives to the Proposed Action to provide a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public. An analysis of this summary of public comments will help the decisionmaker make better decisions, not to simply count pros and cons. Comments are most helpful when they point out inconsistencies or errors, provide additional information pertinent to the analysis, or provide rationale for support of an alternative. The reasons for people's concerns, preferences and criticisms are sought in this process.

Because some respondents address individual alternatives and others address specific issues relating to the analysis, this summary is separated into two sections:

Comments on Alternatives and Comments on Issues.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Solicitation of Public Comment on the DEIS: A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on June 13, 1997. A letter was sent, using the Gallatin National Forest mailing list, to federal, state and local government agencies, Native American tribes, and groups or individuals interested in Forest Activities. Numerous newspaper articles and local radio interviews have been prepared and conducted for the project at various times over the past 13 years. Numerous public meetings have also been held to discuss the various past proposals and consultant studies. Specific public involvement actions on this proposal include:

- April 1997 - first appeared in the Gallatin National Forest quarterly project proposal report and every quarter since.
- 6/12/97 - Notice of Comment Opportunity and response form sent for response to proposal and development of issues.
- News articles: Bozeman Chronicle 6-23-91; 10-23-96; 10-24-96; 6-20-97; 6-24-97 and Lone Peak Lookout 9-19-97.
- NOI published in Federal Register 6/13/97
- 6/23/97 Open House at the Bozeman Ranger District
- 4/23/99 mailed draft/summary EIS +100 interested parties.
- 4/27/99 news release that draft was available.
- 5/11/99 open house at Bozeman Ranger District.
- News articles and editorials: Bozeman Daily Chronicle 5/11/99; 5/12/99; 5/19/99; 5/21/99; 6/11/99

Alternatives Analyzed in the DEIS: Four alternatives representing different options were considered in detail. The four alternatives were: Alternative 1: No Action Alternative; Alternative 2: Proposed Action; Alternative 3: Reduced Development in the Slushman Creek Drainage; and Alternative 4: Reduced Development in the South Fork of Brackett Creek Drainage.

THE PUBLIC COMMENT ANALYSIS PROCESS

The analysis method used for this project provides a means of categorizing each person's comments into separate subjects, then grouping like subjects together so that the public's comments can be more thoroughly examined. It accurately displays public concerns and reasoning about particular issues and alternatives since each person's own words and

phrases are captured. It provides a traceable, visible system for displaying comments without injecting interpretation or judgment.

Responses were received in the form of letters or postcards, form letters, a public meeting summary, e-mails, and documented phone conversations. Each letter, postcard, etc. was first given a unique identification number. A coding system was developed to assign demographic information to each respondent and to record their opinions on issues and alternatives. Demographic information included identifying who the respondent represents, the medium used for responding, the respondent's overall preference for or against the proposal to renew the permit and update the master development plan, and where the respondent is from.

- Respondents were classified into one of the following categories, referred to in the coding system as "Organization Types:"
- Individual Citizens, Landowners, Business Operators, Attorneys, Universities, Professional Scientific Organizations
- Federal Agencies, State Government/Agencies, County Government, City/Local government, Indian Tribal Government, Congressional/Legislative Officials, Coalitions
- Industry interests such as Ranching, Timber, Environmental, and Recreation

Substantive comments related to a particular alternative were coded, along with particular reasons (issues) for support of, or opposition to, that alternative. In many instances a particular alternative was not identified, but issues relating to the analysis or ski area expansion in general were addressed. Some people asked for modifications to an alternative, suggested additional alternatives, or asked that previous alternatives be reconsidered; these suggestions were captured as well. All substantive comments, accompanied by the appropriate coding for alternatives and issues, as well as demographic information, were then entered into a computer database for easier sorting and retrieval.

All respondents' values, perceptions, and opinions were captured, including those based on misinformation. The exact words of each respondent were used rather than summaries of the person's words to insure accuracy and objectivity. All letters were read once and coded and then read again by another coder to ensure all issues were highlighted and entered into the data base.

Form letters were grouped to insure that identical coding was used on each letter. Form letters were entered into the database only once; however, the total number of signatures associated with the form letter was recorded to reflect the number of respondents submitting the form letter.

Comments in technical or complex letters were coded and included in the database and were also "red-flagged" because of their length and detail. These letters may then be

analyzed separately by the interdisciplinary team or the decisionmaker. Letters from all government entities have been provided for incorporation into the final Environmental Impact Statement.

A few respondents chose to inform the Forest Service of their opinion more than once. Some spoke at the public meeting and sent a letter; others wrote more than one letter. If multiple letters received from one individual or organization were different, the letters were treated separately.

Any respondent's substantive comments can be found in the database; the original letters and coded copies have been filed in the project file. A cross-reference file lists each respondent alphabetically and by a unique identification number (mail i.d.); thus original letters and coded copies, which are filed numerically, can be located.

The content analysis team consisted of seven people. Six were employees of the Forest Service Northern Regional Office. A neutral team leader was contracted to oversee the content analysis process and write this report. The team leader and a public involvement specialist conducted the coding of the responses; and six individuals assisted with the data entry. The analysis took place in Missoula Montana August 9-13, 1999. The team leader wrote this "Summary of Public Comments" the week of September 20-24 (three days).

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

This section presents demographic information of the responses received. Information displayed includes *who* responded (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.), *how* they responded (letter, meeting comment, etc.), and *where* they generally responded from.

WHO RESPONDED

Organization Type	Number of Signatures
Attorneys (legal)	7
Business Owners/Interests	6
Environmental Interest	6
Federal Agencies/Officials	2
Individual Citizens	244
City/Local Government	1
Landowner	6
Recreational Interest	5
Tribal Government	1
University	2
Total	280

HOW THEY RESPONDED

Response Type	Number of Signatures
Letter or Post Card	147
E-mail	1
Phone conversation	1
Form letters	78
Public meeting	53
Total	280

WHERE RESPONDENTS ARE FROM

Location	Number of Signatures
Unknown	3
Belgrade, MT	2
Big Sky, MT	1
Bozeman, MT	233
Calistoga, CA	8
Columbus, MT	1
Denver, CO	1
Helena, MT	1
Livingston, MT	15
Manhattan, MT	1
Missoula, MT	2
Moscow, ID	5
Pablo, MT	1
Pray, MT	1
Suginami-Ky, Tokyo, Japan	1
West Yellowstone, MT	1
Willow Creek, MT	1
Wilsall, MT	2
Total	280

COMMENTS ON ALTERNATIVES

Public comments on Alternatives 1 through 4 are presented in this portion of the report. Within the discussion of each alternative, text is broken into three sections: comments favoring the alternative, comments against it, and comments suggesting modifications to the alternatives. The majority of comments received on this DEIS were addressing issues rather than alternatives specifically. The comments pertaining to issues are found in the second portion of this summary.

No respondents suggested combining aspects of one alternative with another; however, some recommended entirely different alternatives. Others want previous alternatives reconsidered. These suggestions are provided following the discussions of Alternatives 1 through 4.

In the following discussions on alternatives, representative quotes from respondents' comments are used to illustrate what the majority of people said about particular concerns. In order to protect the integrity of the individuals' responses, the quotes are used exactly as provided, including some syntax mistakes, grammatical errors, and some misinterpretation of the data.

ALTERNATIVE ONE: NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

COMMENTS FAVORING ALTERNATIVE 1

A handful of respondents say they favor the "no action" alternative. They are concerned with the effects the expansion would have on the back country skiing opportunities and encroachment into the roadless area.

ALTERNATIVE TWO: PROPOSED ACTION

COMMENTS FAVORING ALTERNATIVE 2

The majority of comments received on alternatives were in support of the proposed action. Numerous individuals report they support the proposed action because they believe the expansion of the ski area and terrain is in the best interest of Bridger Bowl, local and visiting skiers, the local economy and the community at large. Many comment that the ski area is well-managed and provides a place they can take their families for an economical ski experience.

Compliance with the Gallatin National Forest Plan: Some respondents feel the Plan already allocated the lands in Slushman Creek for Management Area 2 and this "revisits" a decision already made.

The Bridger Canyon Plan and Zoning Ordinance: Several individuals herald Bridger Canyon as being the first planned and zoned rural area in Montana. They compliment Bridger Bowl management with their efforts to work with the Bridger Canyon people to come up with an ultimate capacity for the ski hill and a way to develop that capacity that is consistent with the overall Canyon Plan.

Backcountry Skiing: Numerous supporters of the proposed action say they support the expansion into more backcountry terrain. Some feel it will provide a space for high density recreation and discourage some people from trespassing into back country areas. On the other hand, some feel an expansion of the terrain by this alternative would facilitate their need to ski beyond the current boundaries.

CRITICISMS OF ALTERNATIVE 2

Numerous respondents who are critical of Alternative 2 object to the Bridger Bowl ski area changing from how it is today. They voice concerns with increased traffic, increased ticket prices, and that the local flavor of the area will be changed into a "destination resort" such as Big Sky. Most of the comments in the "issues" portion of this report are directly related to criticisms of this, the proposed action, alternative.

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO ALTERNATIVE 2

Proposed chair lift locations: There were a few respondents who generally support alternative 2, but had some chair lift location concerns and some suggested modifications.

ALTERNATIVE THREE: REDUCED DEVELOPMENT IN SLUSHMAN CREEK DRAINAGE

Very few comments related to this alternative specifically. One respondent is concerned with any encroachment into the Roadless Area in Alternative 3. This respondent says it is unclear how many acres of the Roadless Area would be impacted.

Several people refer to the Slushman Creek Drainage in their comments; however, unless they specifically attach those comments to an alternative, they are not covered here. Those comments are found in the "issues" section of this report.

ALTERNATIVE FOUR: REDUCED DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH FORK OF BRACKETT CREEK DRAINAGE

Comments favoring this alternative felt it results in fewer adverse environmental impacts than expansion to the north.

ADDITIONAL ALTERNATIVES SUGGESTED

Some additional alternatives are suggested by three respondents. They include the addition of an alternative of BBSA improvements within the existing ski area boundaries; specific locations of chairlifts (covered in the issues portion of this report); and an additional alternative for alternate means of transportation such as shuttle buses.

Three respondents want reconsideration of the "Support expansion without lifts" alternative.

COMMENTS ON ISSUES

This section addresses each of the issues identified in the analysis of public comments received on the DEIS. The issues or "concerns" are presented by logical groupings rather than by the numerical code number listed beside it. There were numerous letters in support of the proposal. The positive comments are also reflected in the following summary. The code numbers were assigned during the analysis process as a tool for the content analysis team to categorize comments.

100 - DRAFT EIS PROCESS

Many people question the data used throughout the DEIS. There are many questions asked and comments made about specific items in the document, as well as suggestions for corrections or changes on specific pages. Several individuals request that additional information be incorporated into either the final EIS or request that a second draft EIS be prepared. Specific comments included the following topics:

- Comments on specific data reported
- Writing Style
- Challenges to process and assumptions made
- Additional information needed
- Second draft of the EIS before the final EIS

101 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

102 - NEPA COMPLIANCE

Some respondents feel there was not enough public involvement during the formulation of the DEIS. They claim they did not have an opportunity to comment on the data collected, and the conclusions drawn from the data. They say this precludes meaningful analysis and meaningful public comment. A few say the public is only able to protest that data was not collected and that studies not undertaken in important impacts and social concerns. Some claim a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act in their statements, while others simply claim they want their interest heard. The claims of NEPA violation include inadequate range of alternatives; no discussion of an environmentally preferred alternative; and the need for a second draft EIS because of inadequate analysis. Several respondents refer to the closure of public access at Forest Road 3200 as a direct violation of regulations requiring public notice, comment and studies before permanent closure is permitted. Specific comments included the following topics:

- The need for more public involvement
- National Environmental Policy Act violations
- Closure of Forest Road 3200 at Bridger Bowl
- Incorporate new information into second draft EIS

103 - PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

A few respondents take exception with the proposed project's purpose and need. Some feel the discussion for purpose and need does not support all of the actions proposed for this project. The EPA in particular does not object to the expansion of the Bridger Bowl Ski Area, but believes that the purpose and need for ski area expansion beyond existing permit boundaries should be better supported.

104 - CONFORMANCE WITH PLANNING AND ZONING

105 - CONFLICTS WITH THE GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST PLAN

Several local respondents support Bridger Bowl's expansion as proposed and explain the expansion complies with the Forest Plan and local zoning ordinance. Others stress that the proposal needs to be consistent with the Gallatin County and Bridger Canyon

Zoning Regulations and Land Use Plans and needs to be analyzed in the FEIS.

A few respondents see no reason to change the lands in Slushman Creek to Management Area 2 as they feel that decision was already made in the Forest Plan.

Some individuals feel the project does not comply with the Gallatin National Forest Plan. Most of those comments refer to the need for the South Fork of Brackett Creek to be managed to maintain the lynx, wolverine, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and white bark pine, and not managed as a ski hill. Another respondent claims the DEIS fails to fully analyze dispersed recreation use (particularly backcountry skiing), and by failing to provide for a wide range of recreational opportunity, the Bridger Bowl DEIS fails to comply with the Forest Plan.

200 - EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSAL

This portion of the report concerns effects of the proposal on issues other than watershed, wildlife, fisheries or socio-economics. Those categories are addressed separately. Several respondents claim the impacts from the Gallatin Land Exchange were not incorporated into the cumulative effects analysis in the DEIS. The question is posed on whether the Gallatin Land Exchange is considered a future or present effect. Others are concerned with inadequate mitigation efforts resulting from the proposed ski area expansion. Several concerns are raised regarding inadequate cumulative effects analysis both direct and indirect and also reasonably foreseeable actions. Indirect effects include growth rate and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems. The majority of the examples regarding cumulative effects are found in the sub-categories of this section (i.e., codes 201 through 215).

201 - AIR QUALITY

202 - NOISE POLLUTION

Three respondents are concerned with the effects of the proposal on air quality. They claim increased traffic will have an effect on the air quality. One respondent is concerned with the current noise and the increased noise that will be generated by the Bridger Bowl expansion.

203 - SKIING SAFETY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

204 - LIFT SAFETY

205 - EMERGENCY SERVICES ACCESS

Several respondents voice concerns about safety with the proposed expansion. Those comments fall into three general categories: safety of skiers on the mountain; safety of people getting to the ski area itself; and safety of the physical layout of the lift and types of lifts. Specific comments included the following topics:

- Skier safety
- Public safety of transportation to the ski area
- Lift Safety
- Emergency Services Access

206 - ROAD CONSTRUCTION/ ROAD DENSITY

207 - TRAFFIC AND PARKING

Road Construction and Road Density

A few individuals raise the issue of road construction and the impacts of the proposed action on road density. What will be the new road density of the Bridger Bowl area once the expansion is completed?

Traffic and Parking

Several respondents are concerned with increased traffic and traffic safety. Some feel the DEIS did not analyze traffic safety while acknowledging increased vehicle-related wildlife mortality. Several landowners in the area raise concerns of the adverse impact to Bridger Canyon residents and advocate for a traffic management plan.

Parking is also an issue with some respondents. They are concerned that the expansion of parking facilities was not better described in the DEIS.

208 - ROADLESS AREA DEVELOPMENT

Any development into the roadless area is a big concern of several respondents. The expansion into the Slushman basin to the south is cited as a bad precedent for allowing development into inventoried roadless areas. Many claim the FEIS should include additional information to better support the contention that a current or near future skier demand warrants an expansion beyond the existing permit boundaries. Several request a clear disclosure of roadless area impacts of all alternatives should be provided to facilitate comparative evaluation of roadless area intrusions.

One respondent feels the proposed expansion may actually have a beneficial effect on roadless, back country areas by dispersing recreationists.

211 - GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT IN COMBINATION W/ OTHER PROJECTS

Several respondents feel ski area expansions can promote and hasten adjacent developments to serve the increased numbers of skiers. They feel the positive indirect effects need to be analyzed. They feel growth and development is positive; particularly those who are in businesses related to growth in the ski industry. On the other hand, respondents concerned with the effects of growth in the area call for cumulative effects analysis of this proposal in combination with impacts from surrounding ski areas.

212 - VISUAL ENHANCEMENT

A few people are concerned with visuals and how the ski area expansion will create new openings to the vista views. They are concerned with the new openings created for ski trails, access roads, lift facilities, base area buildings and parking.

213 - ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Several respondents are concerned with being "locked out of their public lands" and see their rights to access the terrain beyond the ski area boundaries as being violated. On the other hand a few individuals support the policy of no access to lands beyond the boundaries, particularly those who are private landowners.

214 - COMFORTABLE CARRYING CAPACITY (CCC)

Several respondents take exception with the carrying capacity figures in the DEIS. Some feel the carrying capacity has not been reached so there is no need to expand the ski area. Still others feel that the carrying capacity has been exceeded so the ski area expansion is warranted. Some feel the skier capacity can be achieved without expansion beyond existing permit boundaries. A few also feel skier capacity among alternatives should be discussed and clarified in the FEIS.

215 - NOXIOUS WEEDS

A few individuals are concerned the proposed expansion of the ski area will lead to noxious weed disturbances. They claim the Vegetation sections of the DEIS do not indicate if exotic or noxious weed species are found in the analysis area. They recommend the FEIS include a brief description of exotic or noxious weeds.

300 - RECREATION AND USER CONFLICT

307 - ADJOINING LANDOWNER OR OTHER LANDOWNER CONFLICT

Several respondents are concerned the proposed expansion of Bridger Bowl may block access to and result in a loss of potential backcountry skiing terrain. The existing developed Nordic skiing trails operated by the Bohart Ranch was also raised as a concern. Some also claim the required ORV (off-road vehicle) monitoring was not analyzed in the DEIS. One individual is concerned that the escalation in motorized use of the area is leading to a "de facto" motorized area, especially in winter with cross country snowmobile travel. There is also a lot of finger-pointing by both the skiing enthusiasts and the other resource advocates for use of the area. Others claim the Recreation Opportunity Classification (ROS) was not identified in the Draft EIS.

301 - LOSS OF BACKCOUNTRY SKIING

Numerous backcountry skiing advocates are concerned they will not be able to access the terrain beyond the current boundaries. They take offense to references made in the DEIS that they are accessing terrain illegally. They feel they are entitled to access public lands for backcountry skiing. Several skiers say they have used Bradley Meadows and Slushman Drainage for many years. They feel any expansion taken for a new 40-year lease with expanded boundaries north and south must allow backcountry winter use for skiers. They also feel it is a financial burden to some skiers who can't afford to ski at destination resorts.

302 - SKIING QUALITY AND QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

308 - EXPANSION OF SKI AREA BOUNDARIES

A few respondents comment on their need to maintain their quality of skiing and the experiences they enjoy. Some prefer the Bridger Bowl ski area stay as it is and some support the expansion because they think it would improve their ski experience. Some like to be accountable for their own risk-taking when skiing beyond the boundaries. Quite a few refer to the destination resort of Big Sky and that they do not want to see Bridger Bowl turn into a destination resort.

Several respondents feel the level of increase in skier capacity could be achieved without actually expanding the ski area boundaries. They call for an alternative involving ski area improvements within the existing ski area boundary. A few prefer expansion to the south, if expansion beyond existing boundaries is justified.

303 - COORDINATION WITH CROSS-COUNTRY NORDIC SKIING

The owner-operator of Bohart Cross-Country Ski Center commented on how the proposed expansion would affect Nordic skiing.

304 - SNOWMOBILE USAGE

There were no comments received relating particularly to snowmobile use in the area. Some of the issues pertaining to snowmobiles could be "inferred" from the discussion on off-road vehicle use.

305 - DESTINATION RESORT VS. LOCAL SKI AREA

Numerous respondents refer to the goal of Bridger Bowl and whether or not it should remain a small-town atmosphere, local ski area. Many fear the area will become a destination resort such as Big Sky. Many refer to their personal love of the local family-oriented ski area. Still others are excited about the proposed expansion as it meets the needs of a greater number of the skiing public. Many also are concerned that the reasonable lift ticket prices will disappear, that more novice skiers will have accidents in expert terrain. Many disagree with the purpose and need statement that "to remain competitive with other Montana ski areas, BBSA must improve and expand its facility".

306 - CHAIR LIFT LOCATIONS; NEW RUNS PROPOSED; RUNS CHANGED

Several respondents support the Master Development Plan Update contained in the Draft EIS and feel it addresses the needs for changes at Bridger Bowl. Many of this group have the common complaint there has been no "new terrain" in twenty years. Numerous individuals, on the other hand, see any change as affecting the small-town atmosphere of Bridger Bowl. They feel the uniqueness would be lost, along with the respect and patronage of local skiers. A few respondents request a watershed map to clearly show the drainages in relation to the proposed ski area improvements.

400 – WATERSHED

401 - WATER QUALITY

402 - WETLANDS

A few respondents trust that watershed, water quality and wetland concerns are addressed in the DEIS and any problems would be handled through mitigation, BMP's and well within compliance of Forest Plan standards. Some also feel any effects will be short-term. The majority of respondents commenting on these issues are, however, quite concerned with the treatment of these issues in the DEIS. They are worried about the increases in wastewater pollution loading, an increase in ground water pollution problems, the effects of surge winter-time pollutant loading, and where the treated sewage water will be disposed. They call for more analysis of these effects in the FEIS.

They are also concerned with effects to Bridger Creek, East Gallatin River, Maynard Creek, and the South Fork of Brackett Creek. One respondent points out that the required sewage facility for the Jim Bridger Lodge expansion is not addressed in the DEIS.

Several respondents request that the wetland impacts be clearly disclosed and quantified to facilitate comparative evaluation of alternatives.

500 - WILDLIFE

A few supporters of the proposed expansion for Bridger Bowl hail the ski area management for their consideration of wildlife in the area. They also feel the ski area management protects wildlife by dispersing recreationists. They also claim the people living in the area promote more wildlife populations because they discourage hunting and trapping in the area.

Most of the respondents are concerned with any changes to the wildlife habitat particularly from cutting trees and eliminating wildlife corridors. They point to the possibility of adverse effects to certain wildlife species in addition to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. They feel increased traffic will increase roadkill and decrease wildlife populations. They also believe increased human activity will lead to wildlife-people conflicts. Another concern is that different animals need different habitat requirements and that the DEIS lumped them all together.

501 - THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES

Several respondents are concerned with the impacts to T&E species. They point out that impacts to T&E species cannot be mitigated as described in the DEIS. They feel the proposed action along with other activities and developments in the area will contribute to species endangerment. They feel the viability of the wolverine and lynx is threatened by habitat fragmentation. Several respondents call for more recreation and ORV monitoring. Some respondents ask for analysis of the white bark pine and its status as a threatened or sensitive species. One respondent could not find any U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service correspondence related to T&E and candidate species in the DEIS. Several request that wildlife surveys be completed prior to the approval of the project. Particular surveys include: Boreal Owl nest trees; white pine blister rust; and habitat suitable for T&E species (lynx hair snags)

502 - HABITAT REMOVAL

504 - CONNECTING CORRIDORS, FRAGMENTATION

Some respondents are supportive of the proposal to expand the ski area; however, they are concerned with the removal of 187 acres of trees. Several are concerned with the adverse environmental impacts to wildlife habitat and the potential destruction of an important watershed through tree removal and road/trail building. Some recommend that areas of high erosion potential or mass failure be identified and disclosed, and that

disturbance to such areas be avoided. Several respondents refer to the removal of white bark pine and old growth forest. They feel it would adversely affect not only the white bark pine itself, but the crucial habitat to several sensitive species.

Several respondents point to the Bridgers as an important connection between wildlife populations in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem in northwestern Montana. Wide-ranging forest predators use this area as a dispersal or immigration route between other "island" habitats from the Gallatin and Absaroka ranges to the Crazyes, Little Belts, Big Belts and northward.

503 - MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES

Those who comment on the management indicator species for the Gallatin National Forest Plan incorporate those concerns along with their comments on threatened and endangered species. Several call for more surveys for the wolverine (existing dens), boreal owl, flammulated owls, goshawks.

600 - FISHERIES

Several people disagree with the DEIS statement that increased development of the Bridger Bowl Ski Area base area and surrounding area "could affect" fish habitat from increased timber harvest, housing development, and road construction. They question how these effects would not adversely affect fish. They also request more analysis of the snowmaking activities, and whether the total water amount would decrease and if runoff would increase with the increase of man-made snow.

601 - SEDIMENT DELIVERY; STREAM CHANNEL INTEGRITY; & ALTERATION OF FLOW REGIMES

Some people feel the development is a threat to the stream quality of Brackett Creek and other subsidiary creeks so crucial to the health and survival of cutthroat population in the area. They see erosion, sediment increases, and sediment instability as potential problems.

602 - YELLOWSTONE CUTTHROAT TROUT

Several respondents feel the fisheries analysis in the DEIS missed important impacts to resident Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout including: impacts from sewage facilities and an assessment of whether impacts will affect beneficial uses of streams; cumulative effects analysis of private lands development; and effects of wastewater discharges.

700 - SOCIAL/ECONOMICS

Many respondents feel it is past time for the Bridger Bowl Ski Area expansion. Several laud Bridger Bowl as a well-managed ski area. They feel the area provides an excellent recreation area to many families (local and visitors) and tourists. Several individuals

support the expansion because they make their living either at the ski area itself, or see the expansion as directly benefiting their business. They see growth in the area-as exceeding the capacity for the ski area and call for more ski terrain. Numerous people who ski Bridger Bowl want to maintain the local small-town atmosphere of the area. Several support the expansion of the ski area and say they do so for economic reasons. They cite high ticket prices elsewhere and that they don't want to become a destination resort such as Big Sky. On the other hand, a few individuals see ticket prices increasing as the area gets bigger. Some of the individuals who like to ski the backcountry see Bridger Bowl management closing off public access for those who are not paying clients.

A few respondents claim the DEIS violates the Justice In Minority Populations and Low Income Populations Executive Order No. 128898 (Environmental Justice).

701 - AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

A few respondents take time to compliment Bridger Bowl's leadership in the challenged skier program, particularly with the organization called Eagle Mount. The Eagle Mount organization says they are very excited about Bridger Bowl's plans for expansion as the new, additional beginners' slopes will give their participants much more terrain on which to practice their skills.

Others have a different viewpoint, however. While they agree it is important to address and solve access to all areas of Bridger Bowl for disabled skiers, access to the ridge should be discouraged for safety reasons.

702 - COST OF SKIING TO RECREATIONISTS

How the proposed expansion would affect the cost of skiing was a big issue with respondents. The comments ran the gamut from Bridger Bowl providing recreation at affordable prices to Bridger Bowl making what is now a family area unaffordable to the average Montanan. Many are unclear how the DEIS addressed lift ticket price increases and how local skiers will be affected by the expansion.

703 - EFFECTS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Many comment on the positive effects the Bridger Bowl ski area has had on the local economy. They feel the proposed expansion will provide the much needed terrain that will positively influence the local economy. They also feel it is in the best interest of Bridger Bowl to remain competitive and viable.

704 - VISITOR USE

705 - TOURISM

Several respondents commend tourism as a vital industry for the state's economy and that the ski resorts promote tourism in Montana. Some see out of town skiers as having a positive influence on the tourism economy.

706 - CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation conducted a review of their cultural resource records for the proposed expansion area. They currently have no significant cultural, historical or spiritual-use sites in the area.

A few individuals feel the DEIS is missing numerous historical and cultural factors.