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Agriculture

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## Joint Agency Public Scoping Notice

### Shoshone National Forest, Washakie Ranger District and Bureau of Land Management, Lander Field Office Fremont County, Wyoming

### Beaver Creek Cross-Country Ski Area

#### Introduction

The Washakie Ranger District, Shoshone National Forest, and the Lander Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have received a proposal from the Lander Nordic Ski Association to designate, develop, and maintain a cross country ski area to address winter recreational needs for the Lander Nordic Ski Association members, the general public, and the Lander Valley High School Ski Team. The proposed project area is located south of Beaver Creek (T30N, R99W, portions of Sections 19, 20, 29 and 30) approximately 22 miles south of Lander, Fremont County, Wyoming (Map 1).

#### Proposed Action

The proposal includes approximately 30 kilometers of groomed cross country ski trails 6 meters in width (Map 2); a parking area off Highway 28; three warming huts; two to three vault toilets; two to three storage buildings for targets, signs, race equipment, snowmobiles, and first aid/rescue supplies; a biathlon shooting range; and appropriate marking and signing equipment (Map 3). The approximately 700 acres of project area, encompassed by the trail system, would be closed to winter motorized travel except for designated ski trail administration and maintenance needs. Approximately 5 kilometers of groomed trail and one or two warming huts may be located on BLM administered lands (east of USFS Boundary). The remainder of the facilities will be located on USFS administered lands. Additional ungroomed ski routes providing a backcountry ski experience could be marked on the BLM administered public lands. These routes could provide winter ski or snowshoe access to other locations on the public lands.

#### Purpose and Need

**Purpose for the Action.** The primary purpose of this project is to designate a specific area for winter use in the Lander area related to cross country skiing and other associated non-motorized winter events. Additionally, the permittee would be allowed to construct appropriate buildings and other facilities to support various winter events and general public use (Map 3).



**Need for the Action.** The proposed project is needed to provide for winter, non-motorized recreation demand. The area provides cross country ski trails near the town of Lander with consistent snow for general public skiing, as well as Lander Valley High School sanctioned events and trailing. Previously, these recreational activities were conducted on private ground, near the proposed site, but the land has been subdivided and is offered for sale. The present ski trails in Sinks Canyon and the Lander golf course have very inconsistent snow and are unusable many times during the winter months. The ski trails at the Old Rock Shop on South Pass have inappropriate terrain for modern skate skiing and the parking and highway access is significantly more dangerous for school buses in bad winter weather.

### **Forest Plan Consistency**

The project area is within Forest Service Management Areas 2B (Rural and Roded Natural Recreation Opportunities) and 9A (Riparian Area Management). Management Area 2B emphasizes rural and roded natural recreation opportunities. Motorized and non-motorized recreation activities such as driving for pleasure, viewing scenery, picnicking, fishing, snowmobiling and cross country skiing are possible. The specific proposal is consistent with the following recreational management directions for this area:

- Provide roded natural or rural recreation opportunities along Forest arterial, collector, and local roads, which are open to public motorized travel. Manage recreation use to provide moderate to high incidence of contact with other groups and individuals. Where arterial, collector, or local roads or areas are closed to public motorized recreation travel, provide for dispersed non-motorized recreation with a moderate to high incidence of contact with other groups and individuals in a roded natural or rural setting (p. III-127)

Although the proposed action would include a seasonal (winter) closure for motorized travel, except as needed for administration, the closure would be within an area noted for minimal snowmobile use due to limited access across adjacent private property and there are no groomed snowmobile trails in the area. Therefore, the closure would have no measurable impact to current use patterns. The proposal for non-motorized recreational development would be consistent under these circumstances.

- Facilities provided include development level 1 and 2 campgrounds, trails suitable for motorized trail-bike use, local roads with primitive surface, and parking lots at trailheads where signing is compatible with intended use (p. III-128).

The proposed activity would include vegetative clearing of some trails and limited ground disturbance for leveling some trails and supporting facilities. However, the intended use of these trails would be non-motorized over-the-snow, except as needed for transportation. Therefore, the proposal activity would have less impact under the proposed level of trail development than that allowed under the current management direction.

- Encourage development of private sector recreation oriented support services (p. III-129).

The proposed activity encourages continued development of public and private recreation through support of the local Nordic ski association and the Lander Valley High School Ski Team.

Management Area 9A emphasizes the management of all of the component ecosystems of riparian areas. These components include the aquatic ecosystem, the riparian ecosystem (characterized by distinct vegetation), and adjacent ecosystems that remain within approximately 100 feet horizontally from both edges of all perennial streams and from the shores of lakes and other still water bodies. The specific proposal is consistent with the following riparian management direction for this area:

- Do not develop additional recreation facilities within 100 feet of water bodies except for facilities necessary to allow water related recreation use (p. III-208).

The proposed activity does not include any trails or related facilities that are within 100 feet of Beaver Creek. Therefore, the activity would be consistent with this management direction.

- Semi-private non-motorized, semi-private motorized, roaded natural and rural recreation opportunities can be provided (p. III-208).

The proposed activity would provide for public and semi-private non-motorized use during snow covered conditions. Therefore, the activity would be consistent with this management direction.

## **BLM Resource Management Plan Consistency**

The primary goal for recreation management stated in the Final Resource Management Plan (RMP) is to ensure the continued availability of outdoor recreational opportunities the public seeks that are not readily available from other governmental or private entities. Other goals include protecting resources, meeting legal requirements for visitor health and safety, and mitigating resource-user conflicts involving recreation. A broad range of recreational opportunities will continue to be provided for all segments of the public, commensurate with demand and resource availability. Trails and other means of public access will continue to be maintained and developed where necessary to enhance recreation opportunities. The 1987 RMP Record of Decision for the Lander Field Office Resource Management Plan in the South Pass Management Unit provides for recreation management oriented toward maintaining recreational opportunities in terms of a rustic, open-space setting. Development will be limited to facilities that will protect visitors and resources. The use of over-snow vehicles, including snowmobiles, is allowed in the management unit however, providing a non-motorized cross country ski trail system is consistent with providing facilities to protect the health and safety of public land recreationists.

## **Scoping and Public Involvement**

This notice is the public's opportunity to identify and submit issues and concerns they feel the Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management should address related to this project. If you feel you have information pertinent and specific to the proposed action, we welcome your participation.

## **Contact**

The public should submit any issues and/or comments related to this project, regardless of agency property administration, in writing to: Mark King, NEPA Coordinator, South Zone/Washakie Ranger District, 333 E. Main Street, Lander, WY 82520, by email at [comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-washakie@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone-washakie@fs.fed.us) or faxed to (307) 578-1204 ATTN: Mark King.

Please refer to "Beaver Creek Ski Area" in the subject line of your response. Electronic responses should be submitted in plain text, Microsoft Word, or WordPerfect format. **Your comments would be most helpful if received before June 30, 2004.**

Questions related to the proposed action should be directed to Skip Shoutis, South Zone Recreation Planner, Washakie Ranger District, telephone (307) 332-5460, or email at [ashoutis@fs.fed.us](mailto:ashoutis@fs.fed.us).

/s/ Skip Shoutis (for) \_\_\_\_\_

Burns Davison  
District Ranger  
Washakie Ranger District

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

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