



MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN SKI AREA SNOWMAKING AND WOOLLY'S ADVENTURE SUMMIT PROJECTS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DECISION NOTICE

July 2021



USDA Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Inyo National Forest



In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Contents

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND	DN-1
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION	DN-1
DECISION AND RATIONALE	DN-2
Selected Alternative Description	DN-2
<i>Snowmaking</i>	DN-2
<i>Snowtubing</i>	DN-3
<i>Parking</i>	DN-3
<i>Snow Play</i>	DN-4
<i>Mountain Coaster</i>	DN-4
<i>Zip Coaster</i>	DN-4
<i>Adventure Challenge Ropes Courses</i>	DN-4
<i>Relocate Snowmobile Adventure Tours</i>	DN-5
<i>Base Lodge Facility</i>	DN-5
Project Design Criteria	DN-5
Rationale for My Decision	DN-5
OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED	DN-6
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	DN-6
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	DN-7
FINDINGS REQUIREMENT BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS ..	DN-7
RESULTS OF THE PRE-DECISIONAL OBJECTION PROCESS	DN-7
IMPLEMENTATION DATE	DN-8
CONTACT	DN-8
APPENDIX A. PROJECT-SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA	DN-9
SELECTED ALTERNATIVE FIGURES	DN-12

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BMP	Best Management Practice
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DN	Decision Notice
EA	Environmental Assessment
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FSR	Forest Service Road
ID Team	Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team
MMSA	Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NFS	National Forest System
NOPA	Notice of Proposed Action
PDC	Project Design Criteria
SCC	Species of Conservation Concern
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SUP	Special Use Permit
TEP	Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers

LIST OF HYPERLINKS

EMBEDDED LINKS	URL
<u>36 CFR § 218.5(a)</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2017-title36-vol2/pdf/CFR-2017-title36-vol2-sec218-5.pdf
<u>36 CFR § 218.8(d)</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2017-title36-vol2/pdf/CFR-2017-title36-vol2-sec218-8.pdf
<u>36 CFR § 218.8</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2006-title36-vol2/pdf/CFR-2006-title36-vol2-sec218-8.pdf
<u>36 CFR § 218.9</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2017-title36-vol2/pdf/CFR-2017-title36-vol2-sec218-9.pdf
<u>36 CFR § 220.7(b)(2)(iii)</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2/pdf/CFR-2011-title36-vol2-sec220-7.pdf
<u>36 CFR § 800.11</u>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2009-title36-vol3/pdf/CFR-2009-title36-vol3-sec800-11.pdf
<u>40 CFR § 1508.27</u>	https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title40-vol34/pdf/CFR-2012-title40-vol34-sec1508-27.pdf
<u>Clean Water Act 404 Permit</u>	https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/section-404-permit-program
<u>Endangered Species Act Informal Section 7 Consultation</u>	https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/section7/section7.html
<u>Forest Plan</u>	https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd664404.pdf
<u>Forest Service Handbook 1909.15</u>	https://www.fs.fed.us/cgi-bin/Directives/get_dirs/fsh?1909.15
<u>Forest Service Technical Guide to Managing Ground Water Resources</u>	https://www.fs.fed.us/biology/resources/pubs/watershed/groundwater/ground_water_technical_guide_fs-881_march2007.pdf
<u>National Forest Management Act of 1976</u>	https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/NFMA1976.pdf
<u>National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Consultation</u>	https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/regulations/2017-02/regs-rev04.pdf
<u>NOPA</u>	https://www.fs.usda.gov/nfs/11558/www/nepa/109776_FSPLT3_5237869.pdf
<u>project webpage</u>	https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54453

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This Decision Notice (DN) documents my decision and rationale for approving the proposed projects on the Mammoth Ranger District, Inyo National Forest. The Project Area is located within the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA) special use permit (SUP) boundary, in Mono County, California. My decision is based on and supported by the March 2021 Mammoth Mountain Ski Area Woolly's Adventure Summit and Snowmaking Projects Environmental Assessment, which can be found on the [project webpage](#).

MMSA operates under a SUP administered by the Inyo National Forest's Mammoth Ranger District. The [2019 Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan](#) (Forest Plan) provides general standards and guidelines for the operation of MMSA regarding its activities and operations on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The SUP and associated summer and winter operating plans, as well as other resource management documents, provide more specific guidance for annual winter and summer ski area operations and projects.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The **purpose** of the snowmaking expansion project is to ensure timely opening of the resort as well as provide adequate snow coverage on key trails. The expanded snowmaking infrastructure would enhance the reliability and consistency of the skiing surface in response to site-specific operational concerns, guest expectations, and increased variability in climatic conditions like precipitation and temperature. The snowmaking component of the project is fundamental in ensuring a predictable opening date and providing adequate snow coverage through the season.

The **purpose** of the winter upgrade projects at Woolly's Adventure Summit is to increase operational aspects of the snowtubing facility and snow play area, and to provide improved winter recreation opportunities for children and non-skiers. In addition, the tubing lanes would be realigned to a west-to-east aspect from the current south-facing aspect to ensure adequate snow coverage throughout the season.

The **purpose** of the summer upgrades at Woolly's Adventure Summit is to expand the nature-based recreation opportunities available at MMSA and provide activities that are available to a wider spectrum of guests during all seasons of the year. There is a growing demand for summer outdoor recreation activities at ski areas nationwide, which is particularly evident in California. Summer recreation activities have evolved to include a considerable variety of opportunities and visitor experiences. MMSA currently provides a number of activities that cater to users with outdoor experience and skills (e.g., mountain biking and hiking trails) but needs to better accommodate visitors who may not possess the requisite level of skills or experience to engage in those activities. By offering experiences inclusive of these visitors, MMSA believes this would enable a wider spectrum of guests to engage in nature-based experiences, as well as encourage new users to visit and experience the National Forest in a safe and managed context.

There is a **need** for a broad and diverse mix of multi-season recreational activities that collectively provide the public with a range of outdoor experiences from passive to active, intimate to interactive, and serve a range of personal interests, skills, and abilities among guests. In order to meet guest expectations, there is also a need to provide a reliable snow surface and adequate coverage throughout the season, while ensuring a predictable and timely opening date.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

After thoroughly considering the Purpose and Need for Action, issues, range of alternatives, and analyses presented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), as well as public comments received, **I am approving the Proposed Action** with the inclusion of all Project Design Criteria (PDC) identified in Table 2-1 of the EA and included as Appendix A of this document. The Selected Alternative will include winter and summer recreation enhancement projects at Woolly's Adventure Summit and expanded snowmaking on existing ski trails, all located within the MMSA SUP area. All project components are described in this document and depicted on the attached figures.

The Selected Alternative, with required PDC, meets all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. Implementation of PDC will ensure the project will not result in any unacceptable effects to NFS lands. Failure to comply with the required PDC will constitute a breach of the project approval and could result in the suspension of construction and/or operations of the facilities approved by this decision.

Selected Alternative Description

All components of the Selected Alternative will occur within MMSA's existing SUP area and are depicted on both DN Figure 1 and DN Figure 2. The proposed snowmaking projects will occur on previously disturbed ski trails. Within Woolly's Adventure Summit, lands were previously disturbed by the prior permit holder and their operations. A combination of hand crews and heavy equipment will be used for construction, and all ground disturbance and staging will be confined to the existing SUP area. Each component of the Selected Alternative is detailed in the following discussions.

Snowmaking

An additional 206 acres of snowmaking coverage is approved and will be provided via the upgrades depicted in DN Figure 2. Approved snowmaking pipelines and associated coverage will occur on the following existing ski trails: *Back for More, Bottom of 22, Canyon Connector, Christmas Tree, Dry Creek, Hully Gully, Juniper, Manzanita, Milk Run, New Critters, Ponderosa, Quicksilver/Lower Gold Hill, Red Wing, Repeat 22, Rock Garden, Lost in the Woods/Roller Coaster West, Roma's Road (and Back Ramp of 5), Round Robin (Lower), Secret Spot/Critters, Side Ramp of 11, Ski Back Trail, Spring Canyon, St. Anton, Terry's, Top of 21, Tower 7 Cutoff, Wall Street, and Water Tank*. Snowmaking coverage on *Quicksilver/Lower Gold Hill, Dry Creek, and Lost in the Woods/Roller Coaster West* was approved in past National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses; however, it has not yet been implemented.¹ This coverage has been included in the Selected Alternative for a more comprehensive analysis of snowmaking at MMSA.

Additionally, the existing snowmaking pond's perimeter is approved to be expanded by approximately 200 feet and excavated to a depth of approximately 25 feet. Two new wells, located near the existing Well 8 and the existing compressor building, are approved to ensure that adequate water volume is available to refill the snowmaking pond and replenish the aquifer (refer to DN Figure 1).

¹ Snowmaking coverage on *Lost in the Woods/Roller Coaster West* was analyzed and approved in the 2012 Mammoth Mountain Winter Recreation Project EA and DN/FONSI. Snowmaking coverage on *Dry Creek* and *Quicksilver/Lower Goldhill* was approved in the 2008 Chair 9 Run Improvement Project Categorical Exclusion and Decision Memo.

Installation of approved snowmaking lines will be located on previously disturbed ski trails and involve the excavation of a trench approximately 4 feet wide by 4.5 feet deep, which will require an approximately 40-foot disturbance corridor, resulting in approximately 66 acres of ground disturbance. A combination of hand crews and an excavator will be used to perform the majority of work. Expansion of the snowmaking pond will entail the use of heavy excavation equipment to widen and deepen the catch basin. Any excess backfill generated at the pond expansion area will be recontoured as berms along the perimeter of the pond. To the greatest extent possible, MMSA will use existing routes and previously disturbed ski trails to access the project area; however, temporary access roads will be necessary in order to reach portions of the snowmaking supply line. Following construction, all temporary access roads will be revegetated with native, certified weed-free seed. Equipment and materials will be staged on existing parking areas, ski trails and previously disturbed areas in the ski area permit boundary.

Snowtubing

The Selected Alternative includes the realignment and widening of the existing winter tubing lanes at Woolly's Adventure Summit (refer to DN Figure 2). The tubing lanes will be realigned to a west-to-east aspect from the current south-facing aspect in order to ensure adequate snow coverage throughout the season. The tubing lanes will be lengthened from 500 feet to 700 feet and widened from six to nine lanes. Soil from excavation will be used as fill material for existing portions of the snowtubing area that will no longer be operational. Excess fill material from the snowtubing improvement project will be placed on *Schoolyard*, which was previously approved for up to 44,600 cubic yards of fill materials in the 2007 Decision Memo for the *Schoolyard Ski Run, Fill and Grading Project*. In addition, a 500-foot-long magic carpet will be installed to transport guests from the bottom to the top of the tubing lanes. Plastic tube lanes will be installed in the summer months for year-round use of this activity. The approved snowtubing improvement project will require approximately 4.7 acres of grading on previously disturbed land.

Parking

MMSA will expand on-site parking to the east and west of the existing parking lot at Woolly's Adventure Summit (refer to DN Figure 2). The approved parking expansion will create 72 additional parking spaces for a total of 179 parking spaces. A driveway will be constructed to the west of the existing parking lot to allow for transit (bus) circulation and a transit stop outside the State Route 203 right-of-way and adjacent to the approved base lodge facility. The approved driveway will adjoin the existing Forest Service Road (FSR) 03S27, which connects to State Route 203. Ground disturbance will be required in areas of expanded parking.

MMSA will work with Caltrans to address increased circulation through the intersection of FSR 03S27 and State Route 203, as it is currently difficult for drivers to turn onto State Route 203 from FSR 03S27 due to limited visibility. Appropriate measures have been incorporated into PDC (refer to Appendix A).

Permanent underground utilities including gravity sewer, propane, telecommunications, and snowmaking supply will be extended from the area of MMSA's Vehicle Maintenance Garage which is located south across State Route 203 (refer to DN Figure 1 and DN Figure 2). Excess fill material from the project will be placed on *Schoolyard*.

Snow Play

The Selected Alternative includes the expansion of the existing winter snow play area by utilizing the remaining lower portion of the existing tube lanes vacated by the approved snowtubing realignment project (refer to DN Figure 2). All construction activities will occur on previously disturbed land. The snow play upgrade will include an approximately 100-foot-long magic carpet to transport guests from the bottom to the top of the snow play area for sledding and other activities.

Mountain Coaster

A mountain coaster will be constructed on the previously disturbed former snowtubing corridor (refer to DN Figure 2). The coaster will extend to the upper elevation of the Woolly's Adventure Summit area with an approximately 1,900-foot-long climb and then follow the natural terrain on a 3,200-foot-long gravity descent. The descent will fall along an approximately 11 percent average grade and include a series of turns, corkscrews, and dips through the native forest canopy. The mountain coaster will offer the riders control over their speed and provide an experience that will be appropriate for a wide range of guests.² The mountain coaster will load/unload in the immediate vicinity of the approved base lodge facility.

Construction of the coaster track will require installation of concrete pads at the base station, top station, and on the looping sections of the downhill track. The track foundation will be constructed on top of the ground and concrete pads. The track will be generally near ground level and incorporate natural terrain elements into the activity. Some vegetation removal will be required to create a corridor for the coaster's alignment. Additionally, ground disturbance will occur in areas where infrastructure is approved to be installed.

Zip Coaster

A zip coaster paralleling the up-haul alignment of the approved mountain coaster is approved (refer to DN Figure 2). The zip coaster will descend on a 3,800-foot-long circuitous path at an approximately 9 percent average grade. The zip coaster will transport guests through the native forest canopy, working with the natural terrain and eventually arriving back at the loading/unloading platform adjacent to the approved base lodge facility. Incidental tree removal may be required along the coaster alignment and ground disturbance will occur in areas where infrastructure is approved to be installed.

Adventure Challenge Ropes Courses

Two adventure challenge ropes courses and one modular junior challenge ropes course uphill of the realigned snowtubing lanes are included in the Selected Alternative (refer to DN Figure 2). The adventure courses will wind through the native tree canopy and include short sections of challenge elements and short zip lines. Guests will be led by a guide with an opportunity to include an interpretive component to the tour to educate guests on the local forest flora and fauna. The junior course will provide a similar experience for younger children not capable of participating in the larger adventure ropes courses. The overall goal of the ropes challenge course will be to provide a family-friendly, teambuilding, and multigenerational challenge experience.

² An automatic braking system ensures that guests do not exceed the top speed designed for the track.

Incidental tree removal may be required along the course and ground disturbance will occur in areas where infrastructure is approved to be installed.

Relocate Snowmobile Adventure Tours

The existing Snowmobile Adventure Tours operation, which is currently located at the Main Lodge base area, will be relocated to the southwest corner of Woolly's Adventure Summit area in order to consolidate the expanded non-skiing activities (refer to DN Figure 2). Guests will access trails by way of the "C" Trail connector which accesses routes currently in use on the existing tours. The "C" Trail is currently groomed as a part of the existing Snowmobile Adventure Tours operation.

Base Lodge Facility

MMSA will construct an approximately 3,000-square foot base lodge facility in the Woolly's Adventure Summit Area (refer to DN Figure 2). The approved facility will include permanent restrooms, ticket sales, food and beverage services and retail sales in order to support the existing and approved activities in the area. Ground disturbance will be required to create a footprint for the approved base lodge facility. Further, the base lodge facility will be landscaped using native plants and include a demonstration garden with native plants and pollinators.

Project Design Criteria

PDC have been applied to avoid and minimize potential resource impacts from construction and operation of the Selected Alternative. PDC are identified in Table 2-1 of the EA and Appendix A of this document. This list supplements the list of Best Management Practices (BMP) that MMSA will be required to prepare for the Forest Service prior to the start of construction and implementation.

Rationale for My Decision

In reaching my decision I relied heavily upon an Interdisciplinary (ID) Team comprised of Forest Service resource specialists who analyzed the effects of the Selected Alternative documented in the EA. I considered the following issues and concerns: anticipated effects to wildlife, botany, watershed, soils, recreation, social and economic, traffic and parking, scenery, and cultural resources. I recognize that certain resources were not carried forward in detailed analysis for the EA; however, those resources were considered by the ID Team and eliminated from detailed analysis with supporting rationale. These resources and their rationale for elimination is included in the *Issues, Resources, and Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward* document available on the [project webpage](#). I also reviewed the PDC included in the EA as well as public comments received during the 30-day scoping/comment period and considered how the Selected Alternative will respond to the stated Purpose and Need.

In reviewing the qualitative and quantitative effects on the human and biological environment presented in the EA, I find they have been adequately addressed and disclosed. I considered impacts to the full range of resources affecting the human, biological, and physical environments. I have reviewed the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Through the application of appropriate PDC identified to minimize impacts to the resources of concern, I am confident that potential impacts have been thoroughly assessed and disclosed.

The planning and design of the Selected Alternative reduces environmental impacts, allowing for a more straight-forward analysis that does not include significant impacts. The Selected Alternative will benefit recreation resources at MMSA and on the Inyo National Forest by improving and expanding the nature-based recreation opportunities available at MMSA and providing activities that are available to a wider spectrum of guests during all seasons of the year. I recognize that the project area contains potentially suitable habitat for the endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis sierrae*); however, because the habitat is suboptimal due to previous disturbance, I do not expect the project to adversely impact the species. A determination of no effect was reached for this species. I recognize that internal and external comments have expressed concern over impacts to watershed resources, including aquifer volume and groundwater-dependent ecosystems. However, the groundwater flow model prepared for the project determined that the Selected Alternative will have a negligible effect on aquifer volume, as well as springs and groundwater-dependent ecosystems in the Dry Creek drainage and adjacent watersheds. Furthermore, the PDC included in Appendix A will ensure that aquifer levels in the Dry Creek watershed are not causing detrimental impacts to springs within the MMSA SUP boundary, or effects to downgradient groundwater users through continued review and coordination with the Authorized Official. I also understand the Selected Alternative will require approximately 129 acres of ground disturbance on NFS lands, which could potentially impact soils in the project area. However, all disturbance will be located in previously disturbed areas within Woolly's Adventure Summit or on previously disturbed ski trails within the MMSA SUP area. Furthermore, BMPs and PDC will be implemented to minimize impacts to soil resources. Overall, I believe my decision will improve the experience of guests to the Forest within the MMSA SUP area in and outweigh the stated environmental impacts.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Selected Alternative was the only alternative analyzed in detail in the EA, which is available for review on the project webpage. In accordance with Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 40, Section 41.22, and 36 CFR § 220.7(b)(2)(ii), the EA did not include an analysis of the No Action Alternative; however, numerous other alternatives were considered early in the NEPA process. These alternatives were thoroughly considered by the Forest Service for consistency with Forest Plan direction and were not carried forward into detailed analysis (refer to the *Issues, Resources, and Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward* document available on [project webpage](#)). Alternatives suggested by the public are included in this document and are also included in the *Response to Comments* document available on the [project webpage](#).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In February 2020, a Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) was mailed to 36 community residents, interested individuals, public agencies, tribal governments, and other organizations, initiating a 30-day scoping/comment period. Six comment letters were received during the scoping/comment period and were then utilized by the ID Team to identify substantive issues and consider potential alternatives to the Selected Alternative. I considered these comments and the ID Team provided a response to them (refer to the *Response to Comments* document available on the [project webpage](#)). After reviewing public comments, as well as internal concerns raised by Forest Service specialists, a final list of issues was assembled that helped guide subsequent analysis. Issues are identified in Chapter 1 of the EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (according to 40 CFR § 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. Refer to Appendix A of the EA for the explanation of the Finding of No Significant Impact.

FINDINGS REQUIREMENT BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Forest Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and all other laws, regulations, and policies that govern Forest Service actions. Site-specific PDC and Forest Plan standards and guidelines will be applied, as appropriate, to meet Forest Plan goals and desired conditions. While the Forest Service assumes no responsibility or enforcing laws, regulations, or ordinances under the jurisdiction of other governmental agencies, Forest Service regulations require permittees to abide by applicable laws and conditions imposed by other jurisdictions. The project was designed to conform to the Forest Plan and all other laws, regulations, and policies, including:

- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Endangered Species Act Informal Section 7 Consultation;
- ◆ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Clean Water Act 404 Permit;
- ◆ National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Consultation; and
- ◆ Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

RESULTS OF THE PRE-DECISIONAL OBJECTION PROCESS

This decision was subject to the objection processes pursuant to 36 CFR § 218.8 (project-level components objection), subparts A and B. The objection period closed on May 2, 2021. One objection was received during the objection period. The objection was submitted by MMSA, who had not previously submitted a specific written or substantive formal comment regarding the approved project during a comment period, and therefore, was not eligible to object in accordance with 36 CFR § 218.5(a). Regardless of MMSA's objection eligibility, the Forest Service met with the ski area on June 14, 2021 to discuss the contents of the objection letter and attempt to resolve issues identified by MMSA. The meeting resulted in language being modified and incorporated into this DN; however, the EA and supporting documents have not been altered. Specifically, these changes were related PDC and can be reviewed in Appendix A of this document. An objection response letter detailing how the objection was addressed can be found in the project file.

It was determined that the EA and supporting project documents present an adequate analysis and disclosure of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to relevant aspects of the natural and human environment, sufficient to inform both the public and the decisionmaker regarding any consequences of implementing the proposed action. The reviewing officer concluded that the responsible official did not violate applicable laws, regulations, or policies and that all necessary due diligence was given by the responsible official to each issue and all concerns have been adequately address in the EA and associated reports.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this decision may begin following the signature of this Decision Notice.

CONTACT

Additional information regarding this decision and the objection process can be obtained from project leader Erin Noesser at erin.noesser@usda.gov or by phone at **(760) 920-3048**.

Lesley Yen
Forest Supervisor
Inyo National Forest

Date

APPENDIX A. PROJECT-SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA

Project Specific Design Criteria

PROJECT PHASE	PROJECT SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA
General	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prior to starting construction activities on NFS lands, MMSA shall develop a Construction Implementation Plan for Forest Service review and authorization. All proposed construction methodologies and practices will be reviewed for compliance with the decision and resource management direction. This plan shall include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Management: Project timelines, project contracts, disturbance boundaries, grading and site plans, staging and parking areas, construction access, and any required survey information. • Timber Management: Defined logging deck areas and skid paths, and protocol for timber removal. • Erosion Control and Drainage Management: Long-term erosion and sediment control measures, slope and soil stabilization, and monitoring procedures. • Post-Construction Revegetation and Restoration: Methodology, locations, vegetative mixes, and soil amendments. Additional project-specific requirements are detailed in the <i>Biological Memo</i>. • Noxious Weed Management: Weed control methodologies including equipment cleaning, pretreatment, and post-construction monitoring and treatment. Additional project-specific requirements are detailed in the <i>Biological Memo</i>. • BMPs: Resort BMP list to be employed and adhered to during project implementation. 2) MMSA shall obtain all required county, town, and state permits prior to the start of construction.
Pre-Construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prior to any ground disturbing activities, project areas shall be surveyed for federally threatened, endangered, and proposed (TEP) and candidate plant and wildlife species, non-native plants, and noxious weeds. Inyo National Forest plant and wildlife Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) will be surveyed in consultation with Inyo National Forest resource specialists. (<i>Note: Pre-construction surveys for other resources within the project area are not explicitly mentioned as surveys have either already been completed or were not determined to be necessary based on the nature of the proposed projects.</i>) 2) If more than two years have passed since the last preconstruction floristic plant survey and construction activities have not been initiated, a qualified botanist will conduct a complete floristic survey (i.e., all plant species present will be identified to the taxonomic level necessary to determine if they are special-status species or invasive plants) of construction activity areas (including all vehicle travel routes), and lands within 50-feet of construction activity areas. The floristic survey will be conducted during a time that coincides with the blooming periods for target species (special-status species that have potential to occur in the project area). This survey will be conducted no more than one year prior to the start of construction and no later than the blooming period preceding construction. Populations of special-status plants or weed-infested areas identified within the survey area shall be flagged or fenced at the direction of the qualified botanist no more than 30 days prior to the start of construction. Flagging and fencing shall be refreshed and maintained throughout construction. 3) Exclusion zones will be established around any identified special-status plants if they are found. The project applicant, in consultation with the qualified botanist and the Forest Service, shall first attempt to avoid effects of project implementation on special-status plants and protect their occurrences/populations in situ. In the event that a special-status plant cannot be avoided by construction activities, the project applicant shall coordinate with the Forest Service to establish appropriate mitigation measures. If sacrifice seed collection or transplantation are selected as appropriate mitigations, then the following measures would apply: a) a qualified biologist will collect any mature seeds from the affected plants and store them at an appropriate native plant nursery or comparable facility; b) upon the completion of work, the qualified biologist will redistribute the seeds within the original location of the population;

Project Specific Design Criteria (cont.)

PROJECT PHASE	PROJECT SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA
Pre-Construction (cont.)	<p>c) the project applicant shall establish Forest Service-approved performance standards for survivorship and will monitor and document the success rate of the transplanted individuals for three consecutive growing seasons; d) if performance standards are not met, as determined by the Forest Service, corrective measures shall be implemented and monitoring and adaptive management continued until success criteria are met.</p> <p>4) PDC shall be modified in consultation with Inyo National Forest resource specialists in order to avoid impacts that could affect the persistence of at-risk (Endangered Species Act [ESA] and SCC) plant and animal species.</p> <p>5) After spring runoff and prior to any construction activities that would occur related to this project, MMSA will conduct a comprehensive analysis of their current drainage management plan within the Dry Creek drainage. If drainage structures are determined not to be functioning to standard, these identified structures shall be maintained and/or improved as part of the initial construction phase of the project.</p> <p>6) Should temporary disturbance of any waters of the U.S., including wetlands, be determined necessary, MMSA shall coordinate with the USACE to determine if proposed activities require the use of a Pre-Construction Notification. If the Pre-Construction Notification requires the preparation and approval of a mitigation plan, the plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Inyo National Forest prior to project implementation.</p> <p>7) MMSA shall develop a Groundwater Monitoring Plan to ensure that aquifer levels in the Dry Creek watershed are not causing detrimental impacts to springs within the MMSA SUP boundary, or effects to downgradient groundwater users. Implementation will not be permitted until the monitoring plan is accepted by the Authorized Official. The monitoring plan needs to address both potential short- and long-term effects. It must specifically address, at a minimum: a) there are not unacceptable impacts to nearby springs; b) there is no potential for unacceptable impacts to downgradient groundwater users within the Dry Creek watershed.</p> <p>Once MMSA submits the draft Groundwater Monitoring Plan, the Forest Service will work with MMSA or their hydrologic consultant to set appropriate trigger points for management changes.</p> <p>To meet guidance in the Forest Service Technical Guide to Managing Ground Water Resources and ensure that unknown impacts do not occur, the drilling of the new wells will be phased as follows: a) the test and production wells will be phased; b) the test wells will be permitted first, and only after a monitoring plan is accepted by the Forest Service. The monitoring plan must include monitoring of the test wells and pump tests to determine whether there is sufficient water to proceed with production wells, and whether nearby springs or downstream water users may be affected; c) if the results of the test pumping show sufficient water is present, and there are not potential detrimental impacts to downgradient groundwater users, the production wells will then be permitted to proceed.</p> <p>MMSA shall provide the Forest Service with annual reports of the following: a) groundwater levels, both pumped and static, in the new wells and all other production and monitoring wells on NFS lands; b) volume of water pumped for both domestic and snowmaking use in the new wells and all other wells on NFS lands.</p>
During Construction	<p>1) If undocumented historic and/or prehistoric properties are located during ground disturbing activities or planning activities associated with approved construction activities, a Forest Service archaeologist shall be contacted and all construction in the immediate vicinity shall cease in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.11.</p> <p>2) The Forest Service shall be contacted if Inyo National Forest SCC are discovered within the project area during implementation.</p> <p>3) If white bark pine individuals are discovered in the alignment of the proposed snowmaking pipeline, the pipe segment would be realigned to avoid removal of individuals to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>4) A PVC liner or similar impermeable structure shall be installed in trenches where high groundwater is encountered adjacent to or in the vicinity of any wetland resources. In order to prevent the proposed snowmaking pipelines from dewatering wetlands.</p>

Project Specific Design Criteria (cont.)

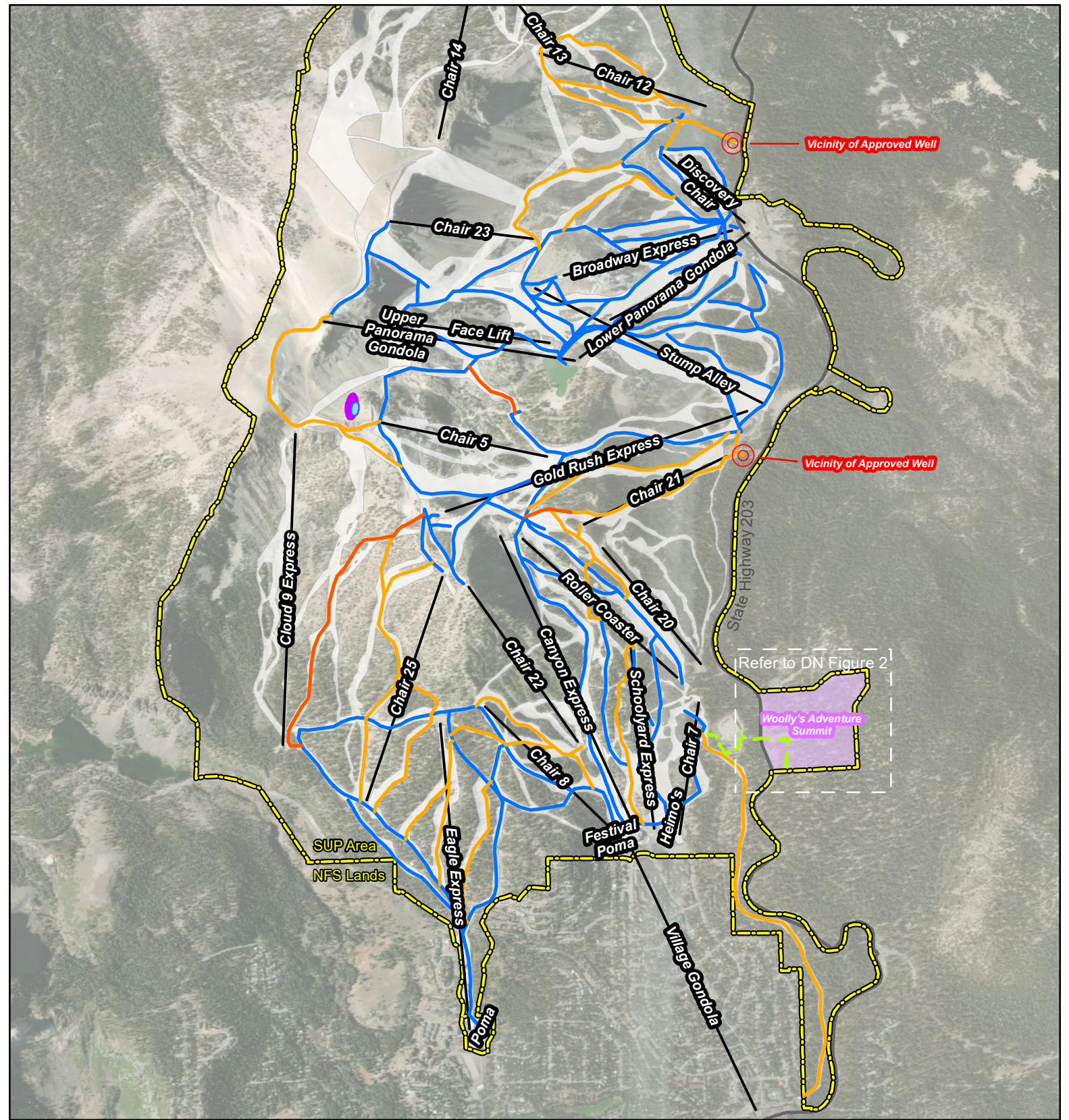
PROJECT PHASE	PROJECT SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA
<p>During Construction (cont.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Open snowmaking line trenches would be covered or ramps would be constructed at the end of trenches to allow Sierra marten to avoid injury in the project area. 6) All construction activity would be restricted to daylight hours unless it is necessary to work at night for operability (such as the case of well drilling or other activities that require 24-hour operations). If there is no other option, exceptions may be made by the Authorized Official with advanced request in writing by MMSA, and any approvals will include appropriate mitigations to minimize impacts to nocturnal wildlife. 7) Prohibit the use of heavy equipment during the Sierra marten denning season (March 1 to June 30). 8) To facilitate revegetation in temporarily disturbed areas, topsoil, where present, shall be salvaged in areas that to be graded or excavated. Topsoil shall be segregated, stockpiled separately from subsoil, and covered. The topsoil shall then be replaced to the approximate location of its removal after project construction has been completed to facilitate revegetation of temporarily disturbed areas. Topsoil may also be salvaged from where permanent facilities are planned or where operation and maintenance activities preclude the establishment of vegetation and used to assist in revegetation of adjacent areas.
<p>Post Construction</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure that on-site snow removal at Woolly’s Adventure Summit does not negatively affect State Route 203 operations. 2) MMSA would work with Caltrans, located adjacent to Woolly’s Adventure Summit on FSR 03S27, to increase signage in the area. 3) Obtain a Caltrans encroachment permit for any work in State Route 203 right-of-way.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE FIGURES

DN Figure 1: Proposed Snowmaking Projects

DN Figure 2: Proposed Projects at Woolly's Adventure Summit

This page intentionally left blank.



Inyo National Forest
Mammoth Ranger District

**Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
Snowmaking and Woolly's Adventure Summit
Environmental Assessment**

DN Figure 1: Approved Snowmaking Projects

Existing

- Snowmaking Pipe
- Lifts
- Snowmaking Pond
- Ski Trails
- Woolly's Adventure Summit
- SUP Area

Approved

- Snowmaking Pipe
- Previously Approved Snowmaking Pipe (Included in Analysis of Selected Alternative)
- Snowmaking Pond Enlargement
- Utility Lines
- Vicinity of Approved Well

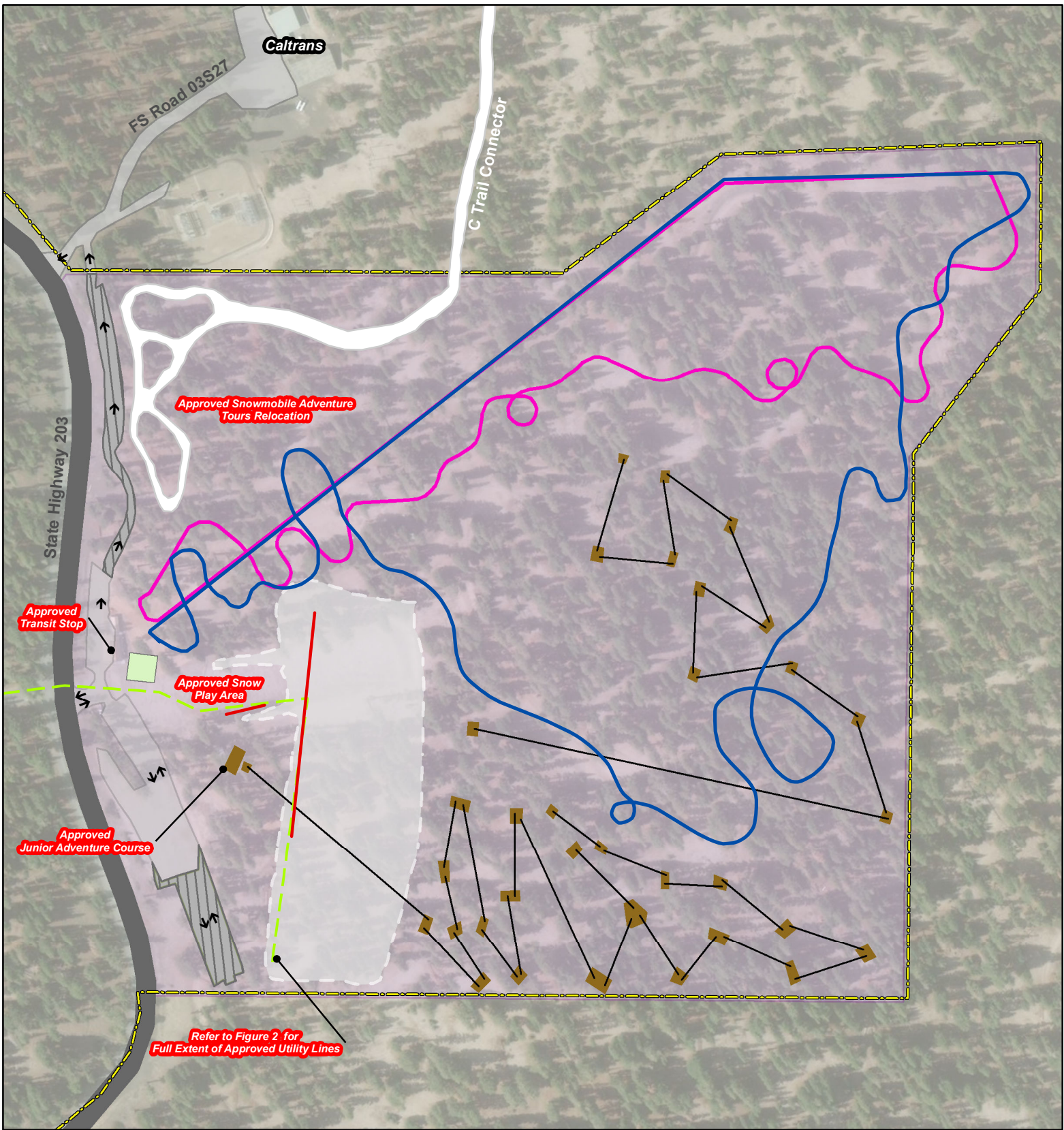
0 1,000 2,000'



Prepared by:



This page intentionally left blank.



Inyo National Forest
Mammoth Ranger District

**Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
Snowmaking and Woolly's Adventure Summit
Environmental Assessment**

**DN Figure 2: Approved Projects
at Woolly's Adventure Summit**

Existing

- Parking Lot
- SUP Area
- Woolly's Adventure Summit
- C Trail Connector (Over Snow Access Route)

Approved

- Magic Carpet
- Mountain Coaster
- Zip Coaster
- Adventure Course
- Snowtubing Lanes
- Parking Lot Expansion
- Base Lodge
- Utility Lines



0 100 200'

Prepared by: **SE GROUP**