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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl Improvements Project at Plumas Eureka State Park, Plumas County, California. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code §21000 *et seq.*, and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15000 *et seq.*

An Initial Study is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment [CEQA Guidelines §15063(a)]. If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the lead agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) may be prepared instead of an EIR [CEQA Guidelines §15070(b)]. The lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/MND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary approval authority over the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15051(b)(1), "the lead agency will normally be an agency with general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose." The lead agency for the proposed project is DPR. The contact person for the lead agency is:

Ken Anderson, Project Manager
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1.3 PURPOSE AND DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl Improvements Project at Plumas Eureka State Park. Mitigation measures have also been incorporated into the project to eliminate any potentially significant impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

This document is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1 - Introduction.**

This chapter provides an introduction to the project and describes the purpose and organization of this document.

- **Chapter 2 - Project Description.**

This chapter describes the reasons for the project, scope of the project, and project objectives.

- **Chapter 3 - Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.**

This chapter identifies the significance of potential environmental impacts, explains the environmental setting for each environmental issue, and evaluates the potential impacts identified in the CEQA Environmental Checklist. Mitigation measures are incorporated, where appropriate, to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level.

- **Chapter 4 - Summary of Mitigation Measures.**

This chapter summarizes the mitigation measures incorporated into the project as a result of the Initial Study.

- **Chapter 5 - References.**

This chapter identifies the references and sources used in the preparation of this IS/MND, and includes a list of those preparing the report.

1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the Environmental Checklist that identifies the potential environmental impacts (by environmental issue) and a brief discussion of each impact resulting from implementation of the proposed project. Based on the Environmental Checklist and the supporting environmental analysis provided in this document, the proposed Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl Improvements Project at Plumas Eureka State Park would result in less than significant impacts for the following issues: agricultural resources, noise, air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, and cumulative impacts.

Based on the Environmental Checklist and the supporting environmental analysis provided in this document the proposed project could have substantial impacts on aesthetics, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, transportation/traffic, and utilities and service systems if mitigation was not proposed and implemented to reduce the impacts below a level of significance.

In accordance with §15064(f) of the CEQA Guidelines, a Mitigated Negative Declaration shall be prepared if the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment after the inclusion of mitigation measures in the project. Based on the available project information and the environmental analysis presented in this document, there is no substantial evidence that, after the incorporation of mitigation measures, the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment. It is proposed that a Mitigated Negative Declaration be adopted in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines.

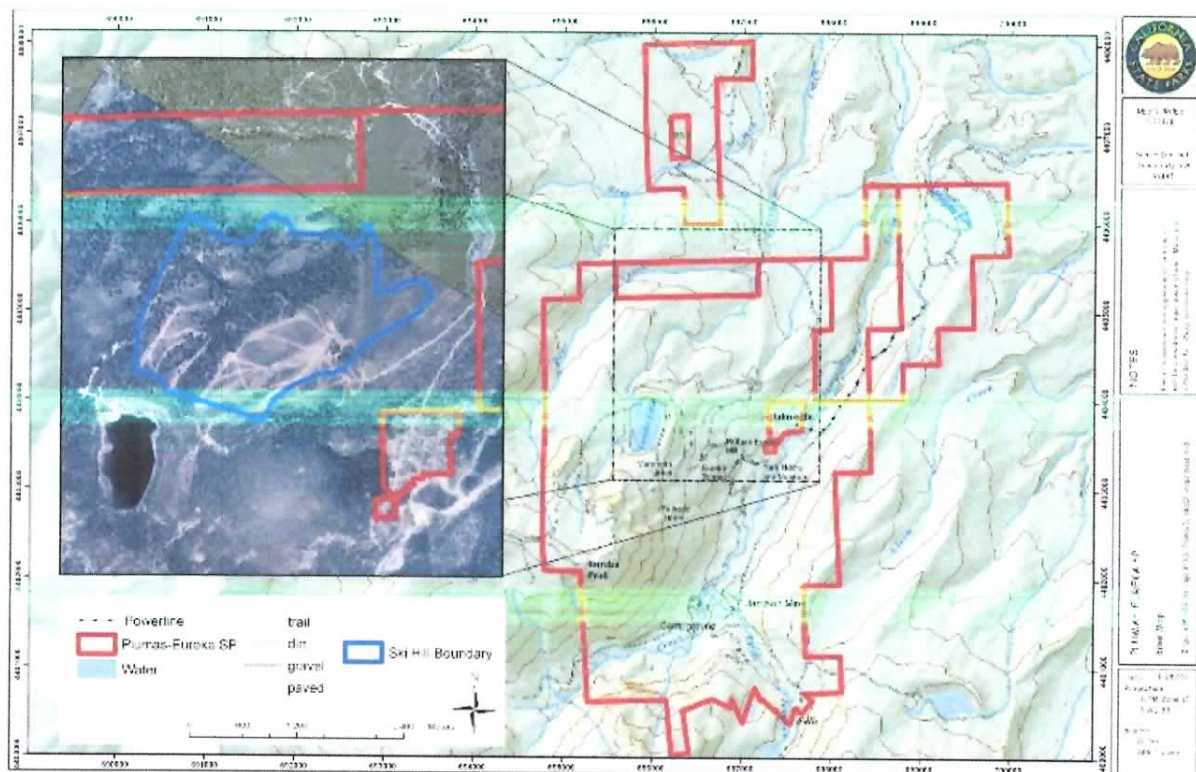
CHAPTER 2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This IS/MND evaluates the environmental effects of the proposed Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl Improvements Project. The project would result in upgraded and improved facilities at the ski hill. The main improvement would be to replace the existing poma ski lift with a chair lift. Hours of operation would be expanded from weekends only to include some weekdays. It is anticipated use would eventually increase from a historic average of 4800 skiers per year or 125 skiers per day to about 10,000 skiers per year or 250 skiers per day. On maximum, peak weekends (events and holidays) daily use is expected to be 500 skiers per day.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The project is located in the Sierra Nevada Range in Plumas Eureka State Park just north of Johnsville California in Plumas County. Located on the Gold Lake and Johnsville 7.5 minute quadrangles, the project site can be found at T 22 N, R 11 E, Sections 13, 14, and 23. The Graeagle Johnsville Road (County Road A-14) terminates at the parking lot for the ski hill.



2.3 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT



1 Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl

The Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl has a long history of downhill skiing. Ski races between miners were held beginning in the 1850s on the same ski runs still used today. Communities in Plumas County have operated a winter ski facility at this site since 1954, when the Plumas Ski Club (PSC) was incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

The PSC operated surface tows and lifts from 1955 onward, under a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service. In 1958 the lodge was constructed. In 1959 Plumas Eureka State Park was established by the California State Legislature. The PSC installed the existing Squaw poma lift in 1963 (called Squaw because it came from the 1960 Olympics at Squaw Valley).

In 1970, the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl was incorporated into Plumas Eureka State Park through a land exchange with the U.S. Forest Service. The PSC continued operation of the of the ski bowl under a concession agreement with California State Parks. A second poma lift was installed in 1975. In the spring of 1999, the Gold Mountain Foundation took over operation of the ski bowl until 2003, when the PSC again assumed responsibility for operations.

Over the years the ski bowl operators have had a very cooperative relationship with local school ski programs with many of the youth of the county learning how to first ski at the hill. Community organizers have expressed a desire to resume these educational community building programs.

Over the past several years the equipment and facilities at the ski bowl have become outmoded and unreliable for the PSC to operate consistently. A poma lift is basically a surface tow system where a seat or wood slat attached to a rope tow pulls the person up the slope while their skis remain in contact

with the snow surface. With the increased popularity of snow boarding the poma lift system has proven to be particularly obsolete as it is very difficult for most snow boarders to competently stay under control while being pulled up the hill.



2 Old Poma Lift Infrastructure

Currently, during the winter season, the area is used by the PSC to conduct the Longboard Race Revival Series, which features longboard racers in period garb, skiing on handmade versions of the original 12-16 foot wooden skis. Snow conditions permitting, at least three ski events are held each winter. Under current operations the ski bowl is closed for regular business because of the lack of funds to repair and maintain the old lift system.

Over the years, the ski bowl attracted an average of 4800 skiers a year with a high of 10,000 skiers in 1972, and several other years with 6,000 to 8,000 skiers. As the only downhill skiing facility in the region, the facility was heavily used by local schools, providing many children with their first skiing experience. The Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl facility has been a focal point of unique skiing and mining heritage, providing an opportunity to educate the public about the mining heritage of the site and offering outdoor recreation.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of the project is to improve and upgrade the existing facilities of the Plumas Eureka Ski

Bowl.

2.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

DPR, working through local and county entities, proposes the improvements for the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl. The following is a summary of the planned improvements:

- 1) Replacement of the existing 40 year old poma surface lift with a chair lift. A chair lift will make the ski hill more accessible to all skiers including those skiers with disabilities, and snowboarders.
- 2) All facilities required to meet current accessibility standards will be brought up to code.
- 3) The existing lodge will be upgraded with deck and stair handrails, new foundation supports added where needed, structural repairs performed, storage areas added, and electrical, plumbing, and venting upgrades installed as required by current building codes and standards.
- 4) The old lift generators will be replaced with new, quieter, more efficient models and moved from behind the lodge to near the parking lot.
- 5) The potable water system will be upgraded as needed to comply with all State Department of Health Services regulations. This may require construction of a water treatment facility near the water source or construction of a well. The maximum area of disturbance would be 40 x 40 feet. The quantity of water used is expected to remain approximately the same as the historic use.
- 6) The restrooms near the lodge will be upgraded to meet accessibility standards. The septic system will be evaluated and upgraded as needed.
- 7) The old maintenance building may be dismantled or renovated and reutilized for storage of ski patrol equipment, fencing etc. A new maintenance building will be constructed near the parking lot. The building will be constructed using non-glare materials that will be compatible with the surroundings. The building will house maintenance equipment, the generator(s) and fuel storage materials. The new location next to the parking lot will provide easier access for fuel and supply delivery.
- 8) The hours of operation will be standardized from 9 am to 4 pm. The days of operation will be increased from weekends only to include some week days.
- 9) A Vegetation Maintenance Program will be developed to treat ski run vegetation on a more regular and frequent schedule. This program will be developed under a separate proposal and CEQA document.
- 10) All hazardous material issues will be mitigated as part of the improvements project.
- 11) All building code violations will be corrected that are necessary for the operation of the facilities.
- 12) A Storm Water Drainage Plan will be developed and implemented as part of the project.

2.6 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

At this time there have been no funds identified to implement the proposed improvements. When funding becomes available a project construction schedule will be developed. If funding is secured in fiscal year 2006/07, construction could begin as early as summer/fall of 2006.

2.7 VISITATION

Visitation statistics for the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl were kept from 1965 until 1999. The average number of skiers per year during that time period was 4800 or 125 skiers per day for the ski season. The high year was 1972-73 with about 10,000 skiers (250 per day) coming to the ski bowl. The low year

was 1990-91 when there were 0 skiers due to lack of snow. Visitation since 1999 has been sporadic, because of ski bowl closures associated with equipment failures, and management changes.

2.8 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES

The area is zoned by the Plumas County General Plan as General Forest. Plumas County strongly supports the proposed ski bowl upgrades. The improvements will increase winter recreation and visitation to the county and may add jobs to an area deficient in jobs.

2.9 DISCRETIONARY APPROVALS

DPR has approval authority for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration at the Plumas Eureka Ski Bowl in Plumas Eureka State Park.

2.10 RELATED PROJECTS

There are no known projects planned or proposed related to this project.