

Mt. Ashland Ski Area 2013 Annual Operating Plan Update and Summer Work Plan



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1.0 Project Summary

The Mount Ashland Ski Area (MASA) is an existing winter sports recreation area located within the Siskiyou Mountains in Southern Oregon on National Forest System Lands (NFSL). It is operated by the Mt. Ashland Association (MAA) under special use authorization issued by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Ashland Ranger District. A small portion of the ski area is located on the Klamath National Forest. MASA is located about 7 air miles south of the City of Ashland, primarily within the Ashland Creek Watershed. This municipal watershed serves as the source of drinking water for the City of Ashland.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Mt. Ashland Ski Area Expansion in September 2004. In addition, the USFS issued a second ROD in 2011. These decisions selected and approved a modified version of Alternative 2 from the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The modifications to Alternative 2 include:

- Alternative 2 with the ski run configuration associated with Alternative 6. Based on FEIS Alternative 2, this modification results in the inclusion of Run 12 (Alternative 6 version), Run 12B (Alternative 6 version), Run 14 (Alternative 6 version), Run 19, and Run 18G. This modification results in the deletion of Run 11.
- The use of a specified crossing Component IM-3 in the area of the Lower Run 12 Creek and Wetland Crossing, which will use log footings.
- The use of a lightweight, low ground pressure machine (e.g., a “spider”) is required for run clearing (and other excavation work associated with clearing for lifts; lift towers and creek crossings, except where accessible by road).
- Helispot IH-1 was added as a safety feature in combination with the Skiway Egress Route (R-18).

Following the USFS ROD, MASA prepared a phased development plan that outlines the implementation of the ROD. MASA has proposed to implement Phase 1-Year 1 of the approved ski area expansion activities in 2013. The following activities are proposed to occur during the 2013 season.

- Ski Run Tree Removal in Existing Ski Runs
- Re-contouring of Sonnet and Blossom ski runs
- Parking Lot Construction
- Watershed Restoration Projects

2.0 Required Mitigation Measures

The following presents the applicable Mitigation Measures from the ROD for the expansion activities proposed for 2013, as described in Section 1.0.

As required by the ROD, the expansion activities proposed for 2013 include all applicable Mitigation Measures in the planning, design, and implementation of the ROD. Therefore, the following list includes the pertinent Mitigation Measures from the ROD given the proposed suite of projects.

2.1 Standard Operating Procedures

(SOP-1) Prepare and submit a phased development plan (annual operating plan or Summer Work Plan) for Forest Service approval prior to implementation of any authorized expansion component project. This plan will detail specifically how and when development of authorized activities will occur. The Mitigation Measures (identified in the ROD) and listed herein will be made a part of this plan. Implementation plans will be periodically updated to reflect changing conditions. (E3, F3)

(SOP-2) Construction documents will be prepared and stamped by a professional engineer, as required by law or regulation, and approved by the Forest Service. (E3, F3)

(SOP-3) For each project, an Implementation Plan will be prepared with a list of site specific Mitigation Measures (including those from this section and others as deemed appropriate). This plan will be approved by the Forest Service prior to implementation of any project. Construction will not begin until authorized by the Forest Service and approved by all applicable Federal, State and local agencies. (E3, F3)

(SOP-4) Comply with all Terms and Conditions and standards for protection of Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species, in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. (E3, F3).

(SOP-5) Comply with all requirements and standards of the Clean Water Act. Comply with all requirements and standards of the Clean Air Act. (E3, F3)

(SOP-6) Pursuant to the American Disabilities Act of 1991, design and construct new and remodeled facilities on NFSL to meet the needs of the disabled. (E3, F3)

(SOP-9) Obtain all Federal, State, and local permits as required. (E3, F3).

(SOP-10) Provide for public safety at all times. (E3, F3).

2.2 Hydrology, Soils and Geology

2.2.1 Water Quality Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs) as identified in *General Water Quality Best Management Practices* (USDA PNW 1988) contain mitigation measures that will be used to protect watershed conditions and water quality. All of these measures are rated (E3, F3), in terms of effectiveness and feasibility. While the terminology in these BMPs is dated (for example, Streamside Management Unit now falls under Riparian Reserve), they are still considered effective under today's management direction. Further BMP guidelines as detailed in *Ski Area BMPs - Guidelines For Planning, Erosion Control and Reclamation*, will also be followed where applicable (USDA Wasatch-Cache NF 2001g).

Specific Water Quality BMPs determined to be applicable to ski area expansion activities identified in the 1988 publication (identified above and incorporated by reference) are made required mitigation. These Mitigation Measures (including the clearing for creation of new ski runs or modification to existing ski runs, which is similar to a timber harvest action, and maintenance road construction or reconstruction) include:

Timber Harvest

T-5 Limiting the Operating Period of Timber Sale Activities

T-7 Streamside Management Unit Designation

T-8 Streamcourse Protection

T-10 Log Landing Location

T-12 Suspended Log Yarding in Timber Harvesting

T-13 Erosion Prevention and Control Measures During Timber Sale Operations

T-14 Revegetation of Areas Disturbed by Harvest Activities

T-18 Erosion Control Structure Maintenance

T-21 Servicing and Refueling Equipment

Watershed Management

W-1 Watershed Restoration

W-3 Protection of Wetlands

W-4 Oil and Hazardous Substance Spill Contingency Plan and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan

W-7 Water Quality Monitoring

Specific Mitigation Measures

The following identifies more specific erosion control (EC) requirements for ski area construction activities that are authorized and required by the Forest Service ROD:

(EC-2) Operations may occur outside of dry weather conditions, however, certain requirements must be met in order to have operations proceed during periods of wet weather. Compliance with Best Management Practices (BMPs) by MAA is necessary to meet water quality requirements, as agreed to between the State of Oregon and the Forest Service.

The following specific criteria are provided as standards for operating during wet weather conditions (E3, F3):

Operations will be diligently monitored by MAA and the Forest Service to detect changes that can occur during wet weather conditions. If detrimental effects to the transportation system, water quality, or soil resources are encountered by either party, immediate notification of designated personnel by either MAA, or the Forest Service will occur. The Forest Service will work together with MAA to select or develop actions to be implemented by MAA necessary to alleviate these effects.

BMP guidelines dictate that no contaminant will flow into any stream courses from any facility used by MAA. Monitoring will occur.

Mitigation measures (BMPs) will be implemented to prevent accelerated sedimentation to streams.

On maintenance roads, snow will be removed without disturbing the road surface, cut bank, fill slope, or drainage structures. No soil should be intermixed with the side cast snow during plowing; at least 2 inches of snow will remain on the road surface after snow plowing.

Frozen roads may be used if they support the weight of vehicles to be driven on it. If any part of the active road or work area thaws and mitigation such as rocking cannot be implemented to ensure protection of water quality, the road will not be used.

After a precipitation event or at the beginning of operations following the wet season, it will be necessary to determine when conditions are dry enough for construction activities to resume. Local variations in soil type, hydro-geomorphology, and road composition will result in certain

areas or road segments drying sooner than others. Therefore, discretion is required and universal determinations can rarely be made. In general, if the roadway or work area can support vehicles without causing rutting, soil displacement, damage to drainage structures, and with no sediment delivery to streams, it can be used.

(EC-6) An Erosion Control Plan will be implemented as part of the construction documents. The plan will provide site-specific guidelines for erosion control, monitoring and an implementation schedule of approved projects. The plan will be reviewed and approved by the Forest Service. A maximum area of disturbance (that is, area of exposed and potentially erodible soil) will be established for any one operating season. Evidence of successful revegetation and/or other erosion control methods will be reviewed by the Forest Service prior to approval of additional ground-disturbing activities. (E3, F3)

Ski Runs and Lifts

(R&L-1) A Forest Service Hydrologist and/or Geologist will provide oversight for the placement of logs and implementation of Mitigation Measures. (E3, F3)

(R&L-4) Keep all mechanized equipment out of wet areas and wetlands, except in designated work areas (such as Run 12 creek crossing). (E2, F3)

2.3 Botanical Resources

2.3.1 Invasive Non-native Plants

(NW-2) Any new ski runs and lift corridors authorized for construction will be surveyed for noxious weeds and other invasive non-native plants during the second summer or autumn after construction occurs. If noxious weeds are detected, appropriate action will be taken, in accordance with the RRNF Integrated Noxious Weed Plan (for the RRNF and KNF). (E3, F3)

(NW-3) All activities will comply with the Best Management Practices for Noxious Weed Prevention and Management, Port-Orford-cedar Root Disease Prevention and Management, Sudden Oak Death Prevention and Management – Interim Direction for the Rogue River and Siskiyou National Forests, February 15, 2002. (E3, F3)

This Final EIS document incorporates by reference the Region 6 FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation (December 1988b), its Record of Decision and the terms of a Mediated Agreement (March 1989), which provides the basis for the *Rogue River National Forest's Integrated Noxious Weed Management EA* (1999d).

This attachment also incorporates by reference the Decision Notice signed by J. Michael Lunn, Forest Supervisor, on September 1, 1999 for the Environmental Assessment for Integrated

Noxious Weed Management Plan (Weed Plan) on the Rogue River National Forest. Under this decision, a list of all Forest infestations and locations are maintained in the Weed Plan.

(NW-4) Under the terms of the Weed Plan and the Special Use Permit, the ski area operator (MAA) is required to help prevent new infestations, limit the expansion of existing populations, and report new sites. (E3, F3)

2.4 Wildlife

(WL-1) Work activities (such as tree felling, yarding, road construction, hauling on roads not generally used by the public, blasting) that produce loud noises above ambient levels, will not occur within specified distances (see Table 1) of any nest site or activity center of known pairs and resident singles between 1 March and 30 June (or until two weeks after the fledging period) - unless protocol surveys have determined the activity center to be not occupied, non-nesting, or failed in their nesting attempt. (E3, F3)

March 1 - June 30 is considered the critical early nesting period. A Forest Service Biologist has the option to extend the restricted season to as late as 30 September during the year of activity, based on site-specific knowledge (such as a late or recycle nesting attempt). The restricted area is calculated as a radius from the assumed nest site (point).

**Table 1:
Northern Spotted Owl Restrictions**

Type of Activity	Zone of Restricted Operation
Blast of more than 2 pounds of explosive	1 mile
Blast of 2 pounds or less of explosive	120 yards
Impact pile driver, jackhammer or rock drill	60 yards
Helicopter or single-engine airplane	120 yards
Chainsaws (vegetation clearing, tree felling, etc.)	65 yards
Heavy equipment	35 yards

Source: MASA ROD, Table ROD B-1

2.4.1 Mitigation Measures to Minimize Effects to Goshawks

(WL-3) If a goshawk nest site is detected within the SUP area, a Forest Service Wildlife Biologist will determine nesting status (presence or absence of young). If young are determined to be present, activities will be restricted within 0.25 mile of the nest site until August 31 or a Forest Service Wildlife Biologist determines young to be successfully fledged from the nest. (E3, F3)

2.4.2 Mitigation Measures to Minimize Effects to Great Gray Owls

(WL-4) If a great gray nest is discovered during project implementation activities, protect nest site with a 0.25 mile no activity buffer around the nest site and a 300 foot no activity buffer around natural meadows and openings. (E3, F3)

2.4.3 Mitigation for Down Woody Material Habitat

(WL-9) For wildlife habitat, directionally fall and leave large woody material (logs greater than 24 inches DBH) landing outside and adjacent to cleared areas. Material to be removed can be cut into logical log lengths. (E3, F3)

2.5 Scenic Quality

2.5.1 Mitigation to Minimize Scenic Effects From Ski Runs

(SC-1) Minimize overall clearing widths for ski runs whenever possible, and not exceeding proposed design. (E3, F3)

(SC-2) Use undulation techniques (selective removal to allow for irregular or clumping of trees) within and along edges of ski runs. (E3, F3)

(SC-3) Revegetate cleared and soil disturbed areas as soon as possible to reduce erosion and contrast. (E3, F3)

2.6 Cultural Resources

(CR-2) Notify Forest Archaeologist of any heritage resources discovered during project implementation. If a cultural resource is found, cease construction activities at that location until site evaluation and determination of effect have been completed. (E3, F3).

2.7 Air Quality

(AQ-1) Site improvements will be installed promptly in order to reduce the potential for dust emissions. The area disturbed by clearing, earth moving, or excavation activities will be kept to a minimum at all times, allowing improvements to be implemented in phases. (E3, F2)

(AQ-2) Limit the amount of slash that requires burning by using an excavator to crush and distribute slash across the width of the ski trails, chipping where access allows, and lopping and scattering of small woody material. (E3, F2)

(AQ-3) Investigate opportunities for combustion of any slash at regional biomass co-generation facilities. (E3, F3)

(AQ-4) Stage burn hand piles to reduce the volume of smoke being produced at one time. (E3, F3)

(AQ-5) Time burning to ensure that heavy fuels are as dry as possible. (E3, F3)

(AQ-6) Implement prescribed burning of slash piles during periods when the atmospheric conditions will transport smoke in a southerly direction away from the Medford Air Quality Management Area. (E3, F3)

(AQ-9) Require prompt revegetation of all disturbed areas to minimize dust and wind erosion. Erosion control and revegetation efforts will commence immediately following construction as per Forest Service BMPs and an approved Erosion Control Plan. (E3, F3)

2.8 Recreation

(RecM-10) Post temporary signage to warn recreation users of construction activities, and if necessary, alternative routes will be provided. (E3, F3)

2.9 Noise

(N-1) Establish construction zones (including helicopter use), construction timing, and staging areas based on mitigation and management requirements established for the protection of wildlife species under the ESA, Northwest Forest Plan, or Rogue River and Klamath National Forest Plans. (E3, F3)

3.0 Project Organization and Schedule

3.1 Project Team Organization and Schedule

The 2013 Summer Work Plan will be implemented by MASA with oversight by the Forest Service. Illustration 1 presents the project team organization. Illustration 2 shows the anticipated project schedule.

Illustration 1 – Project Team Organization

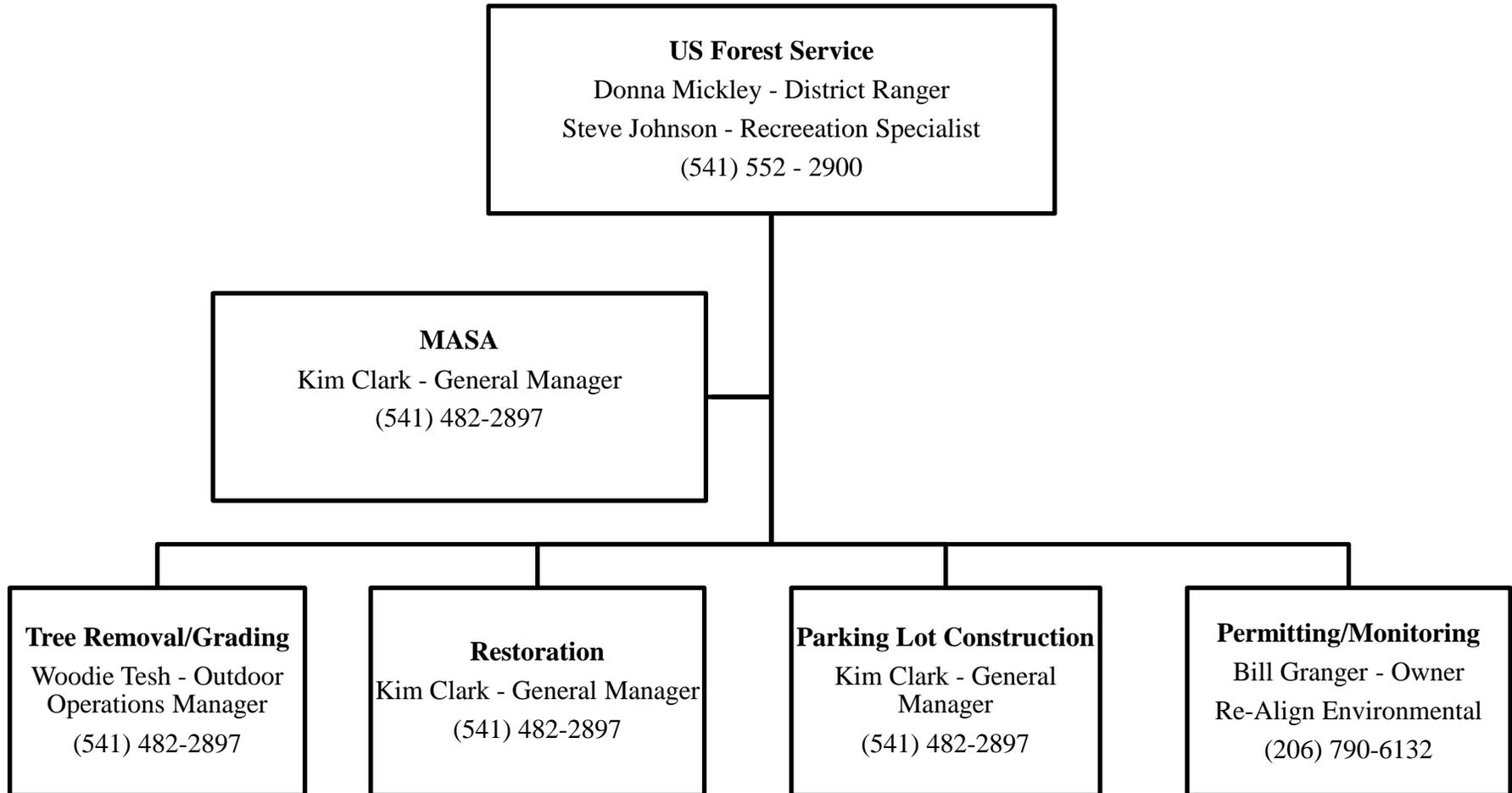


Illustration 2 – Project Master Schedule

Task	2013						
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct
Project 1 - Run Widening							
Tree Cutting and Removal (over snow)							
Slash Disposal							
Install Erosion Controls							
Final Stabilization							
Project 2 - Parking Lot Expansion							
Project Engineering							
1200-C Permit Process							
Tree Cutting and Removal							
Mobilization							
Install Erosion Controls							
Site Rough Grading							
Site Fine Grading/Drainage Controls							
Paving							
Project 3 - Sonnet and Blossom Re-grade							
Tree Cutting (Run 20)							
Slash Disposal							
Install Erosion Controls							
Site Rough Grading							
Site Fine Grading							
Final Stabilization							
Restoration Projects							
Rootwad and Log Preparation							
Rootwad and Log Placement							
Final Stabilization							
Timber Removal							
Decking							
Haul-off							