

Added to agenda 5/19/15

CITY OF  
**ASHLAND**

May 19, 2015

Ms. Donna Mickley  
U.S. Forest Service  
Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District  
6941 Upper Applegate Rd.  
Jacksonville, OR 97530

Dear Ms. Mickley:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on proposed plans for summer activities within the Mt. Ashland Special Use Permit Area. The City of Ashland has no opinion for against the specific uses proposed. In general we believe year-round use of the area would be a positive development and consistent with the City Council goal of "Support Mt. Ashland in diversifying eco-friendly recreational opportunities."

However, the permit area is within the City of Ashland's watershed and we believe we must be mindful that increased summertime use may also increase the risk of wildfire that could negatively impact the watershed. To that end, we request that Forest Service approval of the proposed action be accompanied by the following conditions:

1. Increased and improved signage to warn visitors of wildfire danger and urging caution in order to prevent wildfire risks.
2. Increased or improved education for Ski Area staff on spotting and responding to wildfire risks.
3. Limit smoking to paved areas of the parking lot.

Again, we believe year-round use of the ski area would provide community benefits in terms of economic development and recreational opportunities. We hope the above concerns can be addressed in any Forest Service approval.

Sincerely,

John Stromberg, mayor  
On behalf of the Ashland City Council





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**File Code:** 1920  
**Date:** May 5, 2015

Dear Interested Citizen

The Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, is requesting your comments regarding a proposal by the Mt. Ashland Association to implement several activities for summer uses within the Mt. Ashland Special Use Permit area. This request initiates the scoping process under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated implementation regulations. Scoping is a procedure by which the Forest Service identifies important issues and determines the extent of analysis necessary for an informed decision on a proposed action.

#### Background

Mt. Ashland is a community-focused ski area that is owned and operated by the non-profit Mt. Ashland Association (MAA), operating under a special use permit from the US Forest Service. Low-snow years have required the ski area to remain closed for a majority of the past two ski seasons. Snow pack in future years remains uncertain because of climate change and its associated increased variability to local and regional weather patterns.

Mt. Ashland proposes to build an outdoor adventure park inside the current ski area footprint. The ski area currently operates under a year round special use permit, but generally operates 4 months or less each season. Located at 6,500 feet with sweeping views in an alpine environment, the area is typically 10-20 degrees cooler than the surrounding valleys in summer. This situation provides an ideal opportunity to become a year-round regional recreation center. It is hoped that by offering these activities, it will encourage people to visit their national forest and enjoy recreation on Mt. Ashland year-round.

The Mt. Ashland Outdoor Adventure Center would be designed to attract residents and visitors to the ski area, whether or not there is snow on the ground. MAA would reorient its marketing to reflect a new vision of the ski area as a year-round outdoor recreation opportunity. With a continued focus on its ski area operations, and by diversifying revenue streams beyond those relying on snowfall, it is hoped that Mt. Ashland will be much better positioned to remain a trusted community asset.

#### Purpose & Need for Action

The underlying need for this project is to respond to a proposal by MAA that would develop summer use activities within the designated Special Use Permit area.

More specifically, the need for the proposed action is to provide a more diverse array of outdoor recreation experiences that would provide year-round opportunities and help the Mt. Ashland Association supplement the income it receives from skiers and snowboarders.



The purpose of this proposed project is to implement direction from the Rogue River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (page 4-3): “Offer a wide range of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities by providing recreational settings, access, facilities, and education necessary to meet public demand.”

### Proposed Action Details and Preliminary Design Features

MAA proposes to develop a suite of activities including a zip line and disc golf course within the current special use permit boundary. Other proposed activities would be placed on already-compacted ground near the Ski Lodge and would be portable and thus would not cause any new ground disturbance. These activities would include a bounce house, a portable rock climbing wall, and activities that would occur within the Ski Lodge.

#### **Zip Line** (see Figure 1 for approximate location)

The zip lines would be anchored by existing natural features, including large boulders and trees. The top of the zip line would be anchored with cables wrapped around a large boulder. The anchor line would be secured in three places on the boulder to ensure that it does not move. This would require placement of expansion anchors inserted and grouted into small holes drilled into the boulder.

The upper launch deck for the zip line would be placed above grade surface and secured in place with gabion boxes placed around the base of the support structure. It would also be cross-braced to ensure that it would remain stable. The structure would be placed on the face of the knoll area below the Sonnet ski run.

The bottom of the zip line would be anchored by a set of three trees which are on skier’s left side of the Juliet ski run. These trees would be tested for health and strength by a licensed arborist to ensure they would be able to withstand the forces applied on them, and provide years of reliable anchorage. The trees would have a protective barrier placed around the trunks and the zip line cables would not be permanently affixed to them.

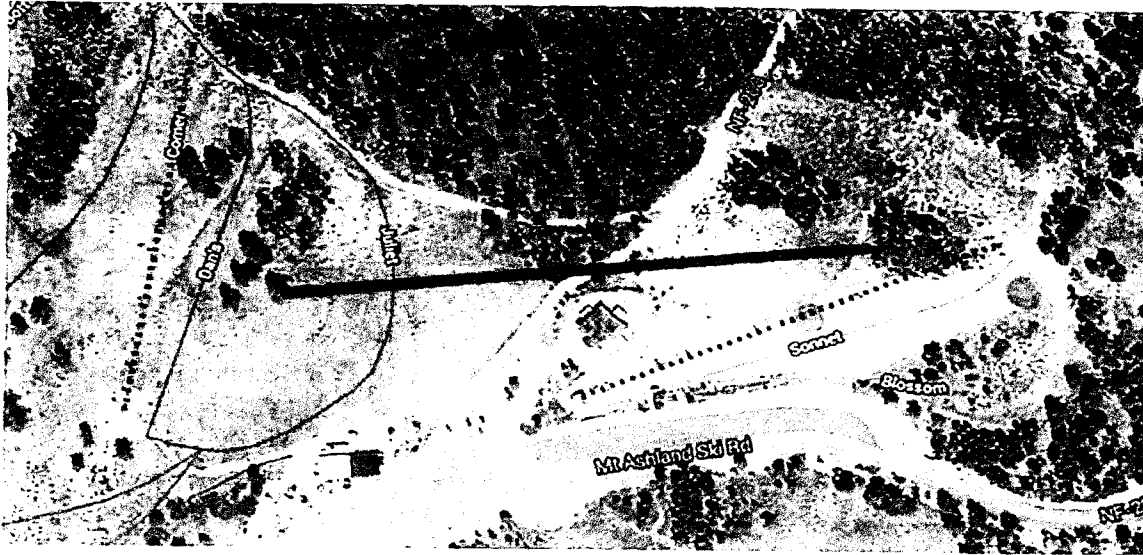


Figure 1: The route of the Twin Zip line

## Disc Golf

The Disc Golf course will require no construction activity. The tees will be made of 3 landscape timbers connected together and placed on the ground. The baskets will be self-contained units with only a small spike placed in the ground next to it and tethered to the basket to prevent theft.



Figure 2: Sample disc golf basket or "Hole"

The disc golf course would be in the general area of the Juliet ski run.

The "Holes" are metal wire baskets that are portable and self-sufficient. Disc golf users occasionally lose track of their disc, especially if wind carries it a long distance. Tee placements would help ensure that errant discs do not travel long distances into forested areas. The goal for placement of the course would be to ensure that, in as much as possible, foot traffic stays on existing ski runs. Tee boxes would be constructed above grade surface with no anchoring in the ground. All literature describing the course would include information about the fragile ecosystem found at Mt. Ashland and encourage users to "Leave no Trace".

## Public Involvement

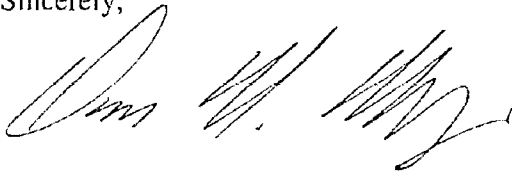
I am interested in hearing any comments, concerns, ideas, or issues you may initially have regarding this Proposed Action. A decision has not yet been made; this letter simply initiates the planning process. Those who respond to this request for involvement will be kept informed of our progress. To be most useful, your comments regarding these proposals should be received by May 29, 2015 and should address specific concerns regarding this proposal.

Throughout scoping, comments submitted to the Forest Service, including names and addresses of those who respond, will be considered part of the public record for this proposal and as such will be available for public review. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied; the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without names and addresses.

For additional information regarding the Proposed Action, please call Brian Long at (541) 899-3800. Please mail comments to: Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District, 6941 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530 or FAX to: (541) 899-3888. You may also hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours which are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments may be submitted to: [comments-pacificnorthwest-rogueriver-siskiyoumountains@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-rogueriver-siskiyoumountains@fs.fed.us) in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc) or Portable Document Format (.pdf).

Thank you for your participation in this process. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list or prefer to receive electronic letters in the future please send us your name and e-mail at the following e-mail address: [comments-pacificnorthwest-rogueriver-siskiyoumountains@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-rogueriver-siskiyoumountains@fs.fed.us)

Sincerely,



**DONNA M. MICKLEY**

*District Ranger*

Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District