

Crested Butte Mountain Resort Master Development Plan and Snodgrass Mountain Development Proposal

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is a Ski Area Master Development Plan (MDP)?

A Master Development Plan for a ski area on National Forest System lands is a “vision” for design and future management of the ski area. Information is provided through narrative, conceptual drawings, maps and other graphics to show the desired future facilities, layout and services for the ski area in accordance with the Forest Plan and the Special Use Permit for the area. The MDP is a conceptual illustration for the entire area under consideration, including private lands within the ski area. This enables the long term vision and potential implications to be identified and considered in the review process.

Does the MDP “approve” everything that is encompassed in the Plan?

The MDP is part of a planning hierarchy that actually begins with the Forest Land Management Plan, which sets desired future conditions, parameters and specifies management objectives for national forest lands permitted to the ski area. The Master Development Plan is a guiding document which tiers from Forest Plan direction to disclose the desired future management and development of the ski area. It is a document that changes and is modified periodically to keep current with changes in user needs, the industry and technology. It is also a document that can be used by stakeholders, the industry and the Forest Service to plan for the future of the area and to provide public awareness of potential projects and development proposals.

Is the Forest Service asking for public comment on the MDP and/or the Proposal?

There has been substantial public comment and input prior to the submittal of these proposals. That was one of the requirements Forest Supervisor Charlie Richmond made of CBMR to accomplish prior to submitting these documents. The Forest Service review is an internal process for both the MDP and the Snodgrass documents. It is not a NEPA process or analysis and the review process does not provide for public involvement/comment. Acceptance of the MDP or Snodgrass proposal by the Forest Service *is not* a decision to allow activity or project implementation to occur. That will require further analysis under NEPA and at that time, public involvement and comment will be requested.

What is involved with the review of the MDP?

The review of the MDP is a review of the conceptual vision for the ski area and how it links and functions in the deliverance of goods and services to the public. In reviewing the MDP there are a variety of criteria that the Forest Service considers, including:

- Is it consistent with law, regulation and policy?
- Is it consistent with the Forest Plan on national forest lands?

- Are there direct conflicts or un-resolvable disputes with other holders of special use permits?
- Is the MDP precedent setting?
- Is the MDP in the public interest?
- Will implementation result in obvious, unacceptable resource damage?
- Does the MDP provide sufficient detail to allow the Forest Service to understand it for purposes of the review?
- Is the MDP complete and does it address all the important aspects that have bearing on the MDP?
- Does the MDP provide enough detail and vision to integrate the aspects of the ski area and adjacent lands to offer the public a suitable/desirable recreation experience?

Who will do the actual reviews?

The reviews will be accomplished by a variety of personnel and expertise. Resource specialists at the District, Forest and Regional level may be involved in various aspects of the review—depending on the details of the MDP and proposal. It is important to note that the Snodgrass proposal review is only to determine whether to accept the proposal as a special use application, not a determination of the validity or effects of the proposal. A project leader will guide resource specialist and ski area expertise involvement and findings and provide recommendations, based on the review, to the Forest Supervisor. The Forest Supervisor makes the determination whether to accept the MDP and/or the Snodgrass Proposal application.

How long will the review(s) take to complete?

We anticipate that the concurrent review of these documents (MDP and Snodgrass Proposal) could take up to four months, given the complexity of the proposals and the timing of the year that these were submitted. We need to ensure adequate review time to be thorough and recognize that some of the specialists involved may have field projects and work that needs to be accomplished as well as the review.

What does it mean to “Accept” a proposal for Snodgrass Mountain?

The Forest Service will decide whether or not to accept the Snodgrass Proposal as a Forest Service proposed action and to initiate a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental analysis. Commonly put, the decision is whether to “move forward with the proposal and take it into NEPA.” NEPA is a formal analysis process that mandates certain requirements and analysis for compliance with policy, law and regulation. One of these requirements is public involvement which is anticipated to be substantial for this project proposal.

What are the criteria for review of the Snodgrass Proposal?

In reviewing the Snodgrass Proposal there are a variety of criteria that the Forest Service considers, including but not limited to:

- Is it consistent with law, regulation and policy?

- Is it consistent with the Forest Plan on national forest lands?
- Will the proposed use pose a serious or substantial risk to public health or safety?
- Will the proposed use create an exclusive or perpetual right of use or occupancy?
- Will the proposed use unreasonably conflict or interfere with administrative use by the Forest Service or authorized use of national forest land?
- Does the proponent have any delinquent debt owed to the Forest Service?
- Does the proposed use involve disposal of solid waste or disposal of radioactive or other hazardous substances?
- Is the proposed use consistent with the purposes for which the lands are managed or with other uses?
- Is the proposed use within the public interest?
- Is the proponent qualified and able to support the proposal financially, physically, technically and to comply with the terms and conditions of authorization?

How does the MDP relate to the Snodgrass Mountain Proposal?

The MDP includes development of skiing and facilities on Snodgrass Mountain as part of its vision for the future and management of the ski area. The Snodgrass Mountain Proposal is a more detailed proposal/application with the request to initiate analysis and decision-making on the suitability of this action to implement within the Ski Area's Special Use Permit.

How were the issues of community support for the proposal addressed in the proposal for Snodgrass?

In his letter dated January 29 to CBMR, Forest Supervisor Charlie Richmond stated:

With regard to my first issue, which is public support, I am of the belief that a consensus for expansion does not exist within the communities surrounding Gunnison and in the Upper East River Valley. I have received numerous letters and cards expressing strong opinion on both sides of the issue. The Town of Mt. Crested Butte clearly supports expansion onto Snodgrass, yet the Town of Crested Butte has stated that there isn't enough community support to consider an expansion. Crested Butte South and Gunnison have expressed support for the Forest Service beginning the NEPA analysis. High Country Citizens' Alliance and Friends of Snodgrass oppose expansion.

It is not uncommon for significant decisions about the use of National Forest, such as this, to be controversial, and to provoke strong opinion on all sides. We cannot please all parties. It is our job to ascertain that such use of the National Forest System is in the public interest. While I would prefer broader support for what you have presented to the community, I do not

find cause at this point to deny a proposal, presuming little changes by the time you submit it.

Please ensure the community and local municipalities, especially Gunnison County, receive ample opportunity to review your master development plan (MDP) prior to submitting it to me for my acceptance...

If your proposal is accepted as an application and we proceed into NEPA, I will have high expectations and requirements for public involvement.

How has the issue of geological hazards been addressed in the proposal for Snodgrass?

In his letter dated January 29 to CBMR, Forest Supervisor Charlie Richmond stated:

With regard to the second issue, which is geologic hazard, in early January I provided you with the USGS review of recent geologic studies on Snodgrass Mountain...Based on our careful consideration of these reports and the previous studies, I have identified two areas as not suitable for ski area. Ski area development is defined as including any of the following activities: clearing, grading, road construction, trenching, installation of lift terminals, and snowmaking. Lift towers would be allowed and grooming and skiing are permissible if natural snow conditions permit. Incidental tree removal could be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

The two areas have been studied to a different extent in several geologic studies dating back to 1976 and have been identified as geologically unstable. The geologic hazards in these two areas exceed my tolerance for risk. These two areas are deemed not suitable for ski area development because of the level of risk and uncertainty of impacts to natural resources, the level of risk to property and life, the uncertainty of the success of mitigation measures, and the incongruity of the scale of the mitigation measures with the natural setting...

While I have identified these two areas as having significant geologic concerns, it doesn't mean that the other areas have no geologic concerns. They may well be suitable for ski area development with specific mitigation measures in place, as may be derived from existing studies or future ones.

Where can I get more information about the MDP and the Snodgrass Proposal?

The Master Development Plan and Snodgrass Proposal are available on the following website: ww.skicb.com/cbmr/snodgrass/download-materials. Additional information, including the letter of guidance to CBMR and the Geological Reports is available on the GMUG website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/> under "Ski Areas" and "Crested Butte"