

**Coronado National Forest**  
**300 West Congress Street**  
**Tucson, AZ 85701**

LMP

JANUARY 1990

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

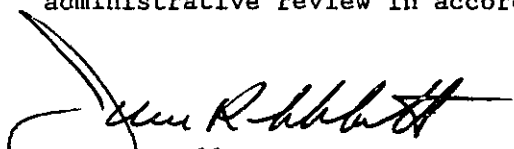
Cochise, Graham, Pima, Pinal and Santa Cruz Counties, Arizona  
Hidalgo County, New Mexico

In January 1990, a decision was made to allow limited expansion of facilities at the Mt. Lemmon Ski Area within the Santa Catalina Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest. Most of the planned facilities are within the area already under permit to Walter Dawgie Ski Corporation for the purpose of operating a winter and summer sports site. The proposal included a maintenance and storage facility which would fall outside the existing permit area, thus requiring an amendment to the Forest Plan. This amendment was determined to be non-significant because it involves less than one acre of land which was previously cleared and leveled as a borrow site for a road.

Details of this decision are documented in the attached Decision Notice. An Environmental Assessment and Public Response Package was sent to those parties involved in the scoping and environmental analysis for this proposal. Copies are available for review at the Santa Catalina Ranger District and Forest Supervisor's Offices, both in Tucson, Arizona.

The Coronado National Forest Plan dated August 4, 1986 is amended by this decision. The nature of the amendment is explained in the attached Decision Notice. A copy of the amended page is attached. You should replace the old page 60 with the new page identified as Forest Plan Amendment No. 5, January 1990.

As noted in the Decision Notice, this decision is subject to administrative review in accordance with provisions of 36 CFR 217.



James R. Abbott  
Forest Supervisor

Management Practices

Activities

Standards and Guidelines

12. Encourage private sector development of campgrounds with facilities such as electricity, sewers, and dump stations on private land.
13. Initiate and continue environmental education program for Cave Creek, ~~the~~ Sabino Canyon and Madera Canyon.  
 Emphasize environmental education by considering the following:
  - a. Employing interpreters and educators (volunteer or paid).
  - b. Construction of nature trails.
  - c. Publishing plant and animal guides and visitor etiquette brochures.
  - d. Building environmental displays.
  - e. Conducting visitor programs.
14. Specific standards and guidelines for the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area are:
  - a. Prohibit hunting, fishing, and trapping in, and the removal of, native animals or plants from the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area.
  - b. Refrain from the introduction of non-native animals or plants into the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area. Through information and education, discourage the public from releasing non-native species in the area.
  - c. Study the feasibility of eliminating all species of non-native fishes from the portion of Sabino Creek within the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, and reintroducing the native Longfin Dace, (*Agosia chrysogaster*).
  - d. Encourage research to increase available information concerning the flora and fauna of the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area. Emphasis should be on inventory of species present and evaluation of their status.
  - e. Continue to prohibit camping, pets, and glass containers in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area.
  - f. Prohibit the possession of, or discharge of a firearm or any other implement capable of taking life, causing injury, or damaging property within the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, except that unoperable implements may be transported through the area on designated routes.
15. Continue the year-round operation at the Mt. Lemmon Ski Area. Facilities will be those necessary to directly support the winter and summer operations. Operations will be limited to the current special use permit area as amended to include a maintenance and storage facility. (Amendment No. 5)
16. Manage the planned Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory multi-purpose facility to provide adequate public service and access. The trailhead and visitor center will be open 7 days a week yearlong. Interpretive tours of the mountain and observatory facilities will be offered daily by reservation. These things will be done as needed to meet public demand and weather permitting. Smithsonian Institution will provide needed staffing to operate and maintain recreational and interpretive facilities. Forest Service will assist with design and layout of interpretive programs. (Amendment No. 2)

Recreation Site  
 Construction &  
 Reconstruction  
 (DU 6)

A05, A06

1. Table 5 shows the schedule for rehabilitation or upgrading of existing facilities.
2. Development of new sites will be in accordance with schedule shown in Table 4.

Forest Plan Amendments No. 2, February 1987, and No. 5, January 1990. (Replacement Pg. 60)

DECISION NOTICE  
and  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

MT. LEMMON SKI VALLEY  
MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Pima County, Arizona  
Coronado National Forest  
Santa Catalina Ranger District

A master development (concept) plan was prepared for Mt. Lemmon Ski Valley to address the potential for expanding use of the permit area for increased yearlong recreation opportunities. An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the effects of implementing the proposed master development plan. This document was circulated to the public for comment during August and September 1989. The EA, along with the Response to Public Comments, document the environmental analysis which was used in reaching this decision. These documents are available for public review.

It is my decision to approve limited upgrade and expansion of facilities at the Mt. Lemmon Ski Area. This decision in no way implies a requirement on the part of the permittee to develop all of the facilities. It does define an upper limit on development. This development of facilities will occur in areas already disturbed and committed for recreational development. The following facilities will be permitted:

- 1- Redevelop the existing base area to provide improved day use customer service facilities (including food services, toilet facilities, sewage treatment) and administrative facilities as per the proposed development plan outlined in the Environmental Assessment.
- 2- Develop the observation deck at the top of the existing chair lift to improve viewing of the area as per the proposed development plan outlined in the Environmental Assessment.
- 3- Develop a maintenance facility as per the proposed development plan outlined in the Environmental Assessment. Due to its location outside the permitted area, this requires amendment of the Forest Plan.

4- Develop an alpine slide. This facility will be sited and designed to both complement the existing facilities and to fit into the natural environment. It will be located to avoid conflicts with the downhill skiing facilities, listed sensitive species, and to minimize the need for additional clearing of trees. Additional area may be cleared for the alpine slide if it is constructed outside the Mexican spotted owl core area. If additional area is cleared, mitigation for sensitive wildlife and plant species and visual quality must be employed. The design will be subject to the following guidelines:

- a) If Aspen Ridge run is selected, no additional clearing will be allowed in the Mexican spotted owl core area. Also, use of the slide in the core area will not be allowed during the breeding season, which normally is March 1 to July 15.
- b) If another clearing is selected as the primary route, additional removal of vegetation will be limited to provide for listed sensitive species and visual quality. Slide design should minimize additional clearing, in particular larger trees.
- c) The slide track will be sited and colored to blend with the surrounding warm season ground cover and vegetation.
- d) Survey for presence or absence of listed sensitive wildlife species and determine potential impacts. The Forest Service will conduct the initial survey upon receipt of construction plans. Employ mitigation measures for wildlife if needed.
- e) Mitigation measures to limit noise will be included in the siting and design plans.

5 Develop a west side chair lift within areas already cleared for downhill skiing. This lift would provide at least a partial substitute for the one proposed for the east side of the permit area.

The following guidelines will apply to all approved facility development:

- 1- Revegetation of areas disturbed during construction will be accomplished within one growing season after construction.
- 2- No construction may take place within the riparian area.
- 3- A registered Landscape Architect will prepare plans for rehabilitation and revegetation. The permittee should follow guidelines in the National Forest Landscape Management publication "Ski Areas" Volume 2, Chapter 7, Agriculture Handbook No. 617. This guide describes the procedures available for minimizing any adverse visual impacts associated with ski areas, while providing optimum recreation opportunities.

4- The order for implementing actions follows and is intended to provide for necessary customer services before supplemental projects are undertaken. All items in Group I must be completed before, or at the same time as, the first of any items undertaken in Group II.

Group I

Restrooms  
Sewage facilities

Group II

Chair lift  
Alpine slide  
Maintenance facility  
Observation deck on southern ridge  
Base area facilities

These approved changes will upgrade service to the public at existing skiing facilities, retain current hiking and nature study opportunities, and provide for expanded recreation opportunities outside the winter months for visitors now traveling to the mountain. The overall result will mean more effective and efficient use of the area already committed to skiing. It should also increase the economic stability of the entire operation including the existing downhill skiing opportunities.

The presence of the alpine slide is not expected to significantly increase the number of visitors to the area in the long-term. It will likely result in people spending more time at the site since they will have more to do once they arrive. Any adverse effects from previous clearing and facility development have stabilized to an acceptable level. Because the facility expansion will occur in areas already disturbed, the additional environmental effects will be limited and in some cases result in benefits.

The following activities as described in the Environmental Assessment will not be allowed:

1- Construction of remote parking (identified in Appendix C, west of the satellite lot) for an additional 33 cars. This facility would require extensive soil movement (cut and fill) which will likely result in environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated to an acceptable standard. In addition, the location of the parking area could result in adverse impacts to a population of the Gooddings onion which cannot be acceptably mitigated.

2- Construction of an additional chair lift on the east side of the permit area with additional ski runs. These facilities would result in clearing additional trees in a mostly undisturbed area that is now known to be important habitat (core area) for the Mexican spotted owl. The necessary clearing would result in unacceptable habitat disturbance for the owl. Additional vegetation removal on existing runs within the spotted owl core area will not be completed except as required for safety. An additional benefit from this decision will be

retention of the old growth characteristics of the area and habitat for wildlife species of concern such as the orange-crowned warbler

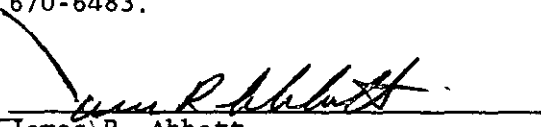
I have determined through the environmental analysis and from past experience, that the proposed action as described in this Decision Notice will have limited context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27(a) and (b)) and will produce limited environmental effects, individually or cumulatively, to either the physical, biological or social components of the human environment. Therefore an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors.

1. No threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants or animals will receive additional adverse affects from the permitted facilities. Potential significant impacts to the Gooddings onion and Mexican spotted owl have been eliminated by not developing the remote parking area or east side chair lift and ski runs.
2. This proposal will not adversely affect public health or safety. All facilities, including sewage facilities, will meet local, state and federal guidelines. Sewage facilities will operate within guidelines previously determined to be acceptable for the Mt. Lemmon area.
3. This proposal will not violate any federal, state or local laws.
4. Facility locations will be surveyed for cultural and historical resources prior to any site disturbance. Most of the areas have been surveyed in the past. Necessary clearances will be obtained.
5. This proposal does not involve highly uncertain or unknown risks. This area has been used by the public for many years for a variety of recreational experiences. The approved actions will insure continued and more efficient access and use by the public.
6. The effects of the action as described in this document are not considered to be highly controversial. The major public concern has been with additional clearing of trees and the potential impact to the existing natural environment. Alpine slides have been located on other National Forests in similar circumstances and their use has resulted in acceptable supplemental recreation experiences.
7. There are no special or unique areas, such as wetlands or flood plains that would be adversely affected by this proposed action. Existing riparian areas will be avoided by facilities or development thereby eliminating possible unacceptable impacts.

8. There are no adverse cumulative effects expected. This area has been used and accessed by the public for many years. Additional tree clearing will be minimal. This action will increase the chances that the current opportunities will continue to be available
9. The only precedent likely to be set by this proposed action would be providing increased recreation opportunities. This involves the continuation and expansion of a variety of recreation activities to fit the demands of users of Mt. Lemmon.

This proposal is within the scope of the objectives, standards and guidelines of the Coronado National Forest Plan. It responds directly to the objective of providing a variety of public recreation experiences within the capacity of the land and resources to accommodate them. The development of the maintenance facility necessitates a modification to the Mt. Lemmon Ski Valley special use authorization to include the site within the permit area, requiring an amendment to the Coronado National Forest Plan. I have determined this to be a non-significant amendment because the site involved is already cleared and leveled and is less than one acre in size. A copy of the amendment is attached.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of Notice of Appeal), including the reasons for appeal. It must be filed with the Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, 517 Gold Avenue SW, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87102, within 45 days of the date of this decision. For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact James R. Abbott, Forest Supervisor of the Coronado National Forest, 300 West Congress, Tucson, Arizona, 85701. The phone number is (602) 670-6483.

  
James R. Abbott  
Forest Supervisor

1/18/90  
Date



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**END  
OF  
PHYSICAL  
FILE**