

USFS seeks second round of comments on Heavenly's plans

The U.S. Forest Service is seeking comment on an environmental assessment for proposed capital improvements at Heavenly Mountain Resort, the second round of review for this proposal.

Initial comments primarily supported the proposed improvements. There are no major changes from the proposal originally released for review. The projects, which include a new lodge, new runs and replacement of an existing lift are consistent with the improvements identified in Heavenly's accepted Master Plan Amendment. If approved, the resort would implement these projects over the next few years.

Heavenly is proposing to build a new lodge with 488 indoor seats near the top of the gondola. This would be a single-story building with a simple shed roof providing self-service dining, a small bar, open seating and restrooms. The building would cover 14,750 square feet and have a maximum height of 39 feet. The new lodge would also feature a 4,320-foot poured-in-place concrete patio for outdoor dining.

Other than a 300-foot delivery spur from the existence maintenance road, no new roads would be needed to construct or operate the lodge. The proposal calls for relocating a 300-foot spur of an existing maintenance road.

Heavenly plans to situate the lodge in an already disturbed site, minimizing the need to remove trees for construction. To accommodate the new lodge, Heavenly would relocate the Magic Carpet ski school conveyor lift and move the "Umbrella Bar" from the top of the Gondola to Snow Beach on the California side, requiring the pouring of new concrete footings and running utilities to the site.

The resort is also proposing to replace the Galaxy fix-grip

double chairlift with a new high-speed detachable lift. The alignment and terminal locations would be the same. Replacing the lift would require widening the lift corridor to a maximum of 33 feet, which would necessitate removing some trees.

Four new runs would increase the skiable terrain served by the faster lift. The proposal includes installing below-ground snowmaking infrastructure for these new runs, as well as the two existing runs. Temporary ground disturbance would result from installation of snowmaking lines, but these areas would be promptly restabilized and revegetated. The Galaxy runs are located outside the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's boundary.

A final element of the proposal would implement the Easy Street Run Hazard Reduction prescription on a section of the California Trail. This prescription, named for the trail on which it was initially implemented, would be used to carefully and selectively reduce the height of natural obstacles such as boulders and felled trees, minimizing the amount of snow required to cover the trail. The prescription is designed to remove large obstacles while keeping ground cover intact to avoid additional runoff, sedimentation and erosion. A buffer zone would protect Tahoe draba (a sensitive plant species). This prescription would also apply to the new runs served by the Galaxy lift.

The full proposal is available for viewing on the LTBMU website by visiting Heavenly Mountain Resort 2010 Capital Projects. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted until April 12.

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