



Ski Santa Fe Chair 1 Replacement Project



Decision Memo

Ski Santa Fe Chairlift 1– In-line Replacement

U.S. Forest Service

Espanola District, Santa Fe National Forest

Santa Fe County, NM

This decision incorporates all information in this document and is included in the project file.

Decision

After reviewing the analysis conducted for the Ski Santa Fe Chair 1 – In-line Replacement project, I have decided to authorize the proposed action outlined in the "[Proposed Action](#)" section. This decision is based on the need to replace aging infrastructure, improve skier circulation, and relieve congestion at Ski Santa Fe. This action is fundamental to enhancing the overall recreational experience on National Forest System (NFS) lands at Ski Santa Fe.

The project is needed to upgrade declining infrastructure, ensuring efficient operations and improved user satisfaction. Implementation of the proposed action will not increase visitation on peak days, a metric which remains limited by available parking and number of passengers per car. Overall, this approved project will better meet the expectations of visitors of Ski Santa Fe and Santa Fe National Forest (Forest), NFS lands.

My decision includes several project-specific design criteria (PDC) and best management practices (BMPs) to minimize resource impacts, detailed in the [Design Elements](#) section and **Table 1**. For instance, lift terminals will be painted in dark green/dark gray hues to blend with summer foliage, reducing visual impacts to nearby traditional use areas.

This project is consistent with the *Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan* (LMP 2022) guidance for Developed Recreation, as it ensures that recreation facilities are safe, well-maintained, and function as intended, meeting the public's expectations, and contributing to a sustainable recreational environment (LMP, FW-DEVREC-DC).

This decision supports the mission of the Forest by addressing demonstrated public needs, aligning with the desired conditions for the area, and fostering responsible use by visitors and local communities as outlined under Recreation Special Uses in the LMP. It addresses a demonstrated demand for specific recreation opportunities and services, providing unique experiences for the recreating public without causing deviation from desired conditions for ecological resources and multiple uses (LMP, FW-RECSU-DC).

Applicable Categorical Exclusion and Findings Required by Other Laws

The "Applicable Categories" section identifies the appropriate category/categories for this action and provides rationale for categorically excluding this action from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) and for using the identified category/categories. The "Environmental Analysis" section documents rationale to support my finding that no extraordinary circumstances exist, along with findings required by other applicable laws and regulations to demonstrate compliance with the regulatory framework for the activities authorized by this decision.



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Agencies, Organizations and Persons Contacted

A list of Agencies, Organizations and Persons Contacted regarding this proposal is provided, along with a brief overview of comments/feedback received and how they were considered.

Implementation Date

The applicant intends to implement the projects as described in this Decision during the 2024 construction season.

Administrative Review

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS are not subject to an administrative review process (Agriculture Act of 2014 [Pub. L. No. 113-79], Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

Contact

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October 13, 2023

Shuan Sanchez

Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest



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Categorical Exclusion Review

Project Information

Proposal Name: Ski Santa Fe Lift 1 – In-line Replacement

Proposal Date: 7/4/2023

Project Contact: Ski Santa Fe

Responsible Official: Shaun Sanchez, Forest Supervisor

Unit: Santa Fe National Forest

Ranger District: Espanola District

Counties: Santa Fe County

State: New Mexico

Anticipated Implementation: Spring 2024

Signing Authority: Forest Supervisor

Public web link: [N/A](#)

General Location: Termination of NM-475 at USGS marked elevation/summit 11182 (35Deg, 47 min8.16 sec N by 105 deg, 47 min 44.29 sec W) (Project Maps).

Applicable Plan Components: - FW-ATRISK-DC-1, FW-ATRISK-DC-2, FW-ATRISK-G-1, FW-SFF-DC-4, FW-SFF-DC-5, FW-SFF-DC-9, FW-SSF-DC-1E, FW-MSG-DC-1D, FW-TERRASH-DC-1B, FW-INVASIVE-DC-1, 2, FW-INVASIVE-S-1, 2, FW-TERRASH-DC-3, FW-ATRISK-DC-1 , FW-ATRISK-DC-2, FW-ATRISK-G-1, FW-SFF-DC-4 , FW-SFF-DC-5, FW-SFF-DC-9 , FW-WATER-S & FW-SOIL-S, FW-SOIL-G, FW-WATER-G

Legal Description: Sec 8, Twp 18N, R11E – PM 23

Elevation Range: 10,350 – 11,200 ft

Watersheds: Pojoaque River HUC10 Watershed (1302010112) and Rio Nambé HUC12 Subwatershed (130201011201)

Applicable Categories

This proposal is categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS because it fits the following category:

Applicable Category or Categories:

36 CFR 220.6(e)(22) (DM Required)

This project is a limited low-level infrastructure improvement under an existing special use permit (SUP), managed by concessioners (Ski Santa Fe). (22) Construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, or disposal of buildings, infrastructure, or improvements at an existing recreation site, including infrastructure or improvements that are adjacent or connected to an existing recreation site and provide access or utilities for that site. Recreation sites include but are not limited to campgrounds and camping areas, picnic areas, day use areas, fishing sites, interpretive sites, visitor



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centers, trailheads, ski areas, and observation sites. Activities within this category are intended to apply to facilities located at recreation sites managed by the Forest Service and those managed by concessioners under a special use authorization. Examples include but are not limited to:

(vii) Replacing a chair lift at a ski area

Proposed Action

Ski Santa Fe proposes to replace the existing four-person Chair 1 with a detachable quad lift in the same alignment and in the same width corridor as the existing Chair 1. Above-ground infrastructure, including the lift terminals and towers, would be replaced. Ski Santa Fe's objective in proposing this action is to enhance the operational and guest experience by replacing the existing Chair 1 with a more reliable and efficient lift to reduce lift lines and improve the guest experience.

The existing Chair 1 is an aging quad chair with a capacity of 2,000 persons per hour (PPH) and the proposed replacement, a detachable quad chair, would retain the same alignment and maintain the same 2,000 PPH capacity. The new lift would travel faster but with fewer chairs (71 carriers, 120 ft spacing, 7.2 second load time) resulting in an unchanged operational capacity of 2,000 PPH. The replacement of the Chair 1 lift is not anticipated to cause an increase in visitation on peak days. Peak day visitation would remain constrained by the number of parking spaces available and riders per car.

The bottom terminal of Chair 1 would remain in its existing location at an elevation of 10,350 feet. The existing foundation from the bottom terminal would be reused. Some work may be needed to an existing retaining wall directly adjacent to bottom terminal and within the disturbance footprint for this terminal. The existing skier services building adjacent to the terminal would be removed. The top terminal of Chair 1 would also remain in its existing location at an elevation of 11,205 feet. A new foundation for the top terminal will be poured, although portions of the existing foundation may be reused. The top unloading area may be slightly reconfigured to accommodate the larger unloading terminal and the fence located at the end of the existing unloading area would be extended by up to 15 feet.

At this time, Ski Santa Fe has identified preliminary designs for the top terminal as well as approximate ground disturbance for the area. Minor adjustments to the terminal site designs may be made during implementation but would remain within the boundaries of disturbance estimated below. Power would be supplied to this lift via the existing power lines that serve the top and bottom terminals. The existing lift corridor would remain in its existing condition and would not need to be widened to accommodate the upgraded infrastructure; therefore, minimal tree removal would be necessary for the proposed in-line lift replacement. Lift tower foundations would be reused as much as possible, and the existing lift towers would be removed and replaced with new lift towers. New lift tower foundations would need to be constructed to supplement or replace existing foundations. Project construction is anticipated to require less than two acres of ground disturbance. The chair would operate primarily between November and April, with potential secondary use for summer and fall chairlift rides (which have been previously approved for Chair 1).

Construction

Ski Santa Fe anticipates removal of up to 10 trees with diameters greater than six inches (primarily hazard trees). Construction would require less than two acres of ground disturbance. Tree removal would be completed by hand felling and removal over snow with lop and scatter for limbs. Lift towers would be replaced using helicopter lifting for delivery and assembly of tower and terminal components, including foundation forms, steel, and concrete (adhering to standards and BMPs specific to helicopter lifting technique). The existing road network and lift corridor provide sufficient access to the proposed top and bottom terminal locations of the lift and would be utilized for construction access. The proposed project would require removal and replacement of the existing top terminal. The new top terminal would require some fill material and construction would be conducted using an excavator.



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Construction staging would primarily occur in Parking Lot A with secondary staging in the Pond A gated parking lot. No additional staging area would be required adjacent to the upper terminal. Construction of the Chair 1 replacement lift would occur during the spring and summer of 2024, with the aim of commencing operation of the upgraded Chair 1 in the 2024-25 winter season.

Mitigation

Ski Santa Fe will collaborate with the Forest to review the 2022 LMP as well as *Appendix A: Mitigation Measures and Project Monitoring of the 1997 Ski Santa Fe Master Development Plan (MDP)* and ensure applicable PDCs, BMPs, mitigation measures such as fugitive dust control, water quality measures, and erosion control are adhered to. Additional mitigation measures will include avoiding steep slopes, implementing revegetation measures, and designing storm-water drainage facilities for runoff.

Design Elements

The decision to proceed with the Ski Santa Fe Chair 1 replacement incorporates PDCs and BMPs to address potential impacts on various resources, including recreation, cultural sites, and wildlife. Responsibility for lift maintenance and operations will rest with Ski Santa Fe, and all activities must meet Forest Service standards. Additionally, adherence to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is mandated, with its primary focus on mitigating erosion as outlined in the *Watershed Report* [PR #78].

Both the 2022 LMP and the 1997 MDP were consulted to determine pertinent Desired Conditions and Mitigation Measures (MMs) for this project. Biological resource assessments identified three Species of Conservation Concern (SCC)— the Pacific Marten, Snowshoe Hare, and Water Shrew – that either inhabit or have suitable habitat within the project area. Species occurrence and habitat and conservation needs were assessed utilizing the LMP's compliance criteria, which encompass Standards (S), Guidelines (G), and Desired Conditions (DC). Please see the project's SCC Plan Consistency Report for more information.

Further details on protective measures related to biological resources can be found in the *Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Specialist Report (WFRP Report)*. Additionally, a SWPPP was developed and for the project and will be accessible on-site during construction activities to ensure that construction will not negatively impact the water quality of the Rio en Medio or other wetland areas. The proposed action addresses the requisites of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit (CGP) and ensures that all activities align with LMP stipulations. On-site monitoring will be provided by the Forest Service at three intervals during the implementation (construction) phase of the approved project. Monitoring will be conducted at the beginning of construction, at least once during construction, and after all mitigations have been implemented.

To eliminate, or minimize, potential resource impacts (e.g., recreation, cultural sites, vegetation and wetlands, watershed condition, wildlife, or visual resources), this decision incorporates PDCs and BMPs in attached reporting including the SCC Report and the SWPPP. The Forest Service watershed program manager will monitor but will not be onsite throughout the entirety of construction. Ski Santa Fe will be responsible to adhere to guidance described in the SWPPP. The Forest Service will be present for a site visit at the beginning of construction, a subsequent visit during construction, and a final visit once all post project mitigations have been implemented after project completion. All lift maintenance will be the responsibility of Ski Santa Fe and will be performed to Forest Service standards.

The following PDC and BMPs are intended to reduce and/or avoid potential impacts associated with approved project and will be implemented along with the SWPPP, which outlines erosion control methods as identified in the *Watershed Report*. These measures are required as part of this decision. Failure to comply with the stated PDC and BMPs will constitute a breach of the terms of the SUP and could delay or suspend implementation of this approval.



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Table 1. Design elements

Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
<i>Vegetation - 1</i>	<p>Project mitigations as outlined in the WFRP Report will ensure this project is consistent with desired conditions as described in the LMP for vegetation, as per the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Snags, 18 inches or larger dbh, range from 5 to over 30 snags per acre, with lower range of snags associated with early seral stages and the upper range associated with late seral stages. Snag density in general (larger than 8 inches dbh) averages 20 per acre with a range of 13 to 30.</p>	FW-SSF-DC [1E]
<i>Vegetation – 2</i>	<p>Project mitigations and BMPs outlined in SWPPP and the <i>Watershed Report</i> will ensure this project is consistent with desired conditions as described in the LMP for vegetation, as per the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Soil function is sustained. Soils are permeable and capable of infiltrating water to reduce overland flows during precipitation events, limiting erosion and deposition.</p>	FW-MSG-DC [1D]
<i>Nonnative Invasive Species – 1</i>	<p>Project mitigations for nonnative, invasive species as outlined in the WFRP report will ensure this project is consistent with desired conditions as described in the LMP for nonnative and invasive species, as per the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Undesired nonnative and invasive terrestrial species, as well as introduced pathogens are rare or absent (per Desired Condition 1 in Wildlife: Nonnative and Invasive Species)</p>	FW-TERRASH-DC [1B] & FW-INVASIVE-DC [1, 2]
<i>Nonnative Invasive Species – 2</i>	<p>Project mitigations for nonnative, invasive species as outlined in the WFRP report will ensure this project is consistent with desired conditions as described in the LMP for nonnative and invasive species, as per the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Forest management actions must apply BMPs (e.g., Forest Service Handbook, Region 3 Soil and Water Conservation Practices Handbook) to minimize the introduction or spread of invasive species, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Decontamination procedures on vehicles and equipment used in terrestrial and aquatic environments. b. Using weed-free products <p>Projects and authorized activities must be designed to reduce the potential for introducing new species or spreading existing invasive or undesirable nonnative species.</p>	FW-INVASIVE-S [1, 2]



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Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
<i>Wildlife, Fish, and Plants – 1</i>	<p>Project mitigations for nonnative, invasive species as outlined in the WFRP report will ensure this project is consistent with desired conditions as described in the LMP for nonnative and invasive species, as per the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Wildlife are free from harassment and human disturbance at a scale that does not impact vital functions of populations (e.g. breeding, feeding, rearing young, migration, and dispersal) resulting in a negative impact to the persistence of the species in the forest.</p>	FW-TERRASH-DC [3]
<i>At-Risk Species – 1</i>	<p>PDC and MMs stipulate the selective preservation of snags and cavity trees to provide for habitat retention and preventative measures to mitigate introduction/propagation of noxious weeds.</p> <p>No impacts are expected to aquatic habitats or wetlands by implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Ecological conditions (physical and biotic) contribute to the survival and recovery of federally listed, proposed, and candidate species; preclude the need for listing new species; and allow for the recovery and persistence of species of conservation concern.</p>	FW-ATRISK-DC-[1]
<i>At-Risk Species – 2</i>	<p>The proposed action will not alter habitat function from its existing condition. PDC's and MMs preclude negative impacts to snags and cavity trees from felling activities and the spread/propagation of noxious weeds. Therefore, the project is consistent with the following Plan Component:</p> <p>All authorized activities should be designed and implemented to address threats to at-risk species and their habitats, including, but not limited to: a Timing restrictions to encourage reproductive success; b Prevention of introduction of non-game invasive, competing, or predatory species (these are species directly and negatively impacting at-risk species populations), and prevention of introduction of nonnative game species to novel locations; c Prevention or introduction of pathogens leading to population impacts; d Creation or removal of obstructions that may alter natural migration or directly cause mortality to wildlife; and e Avoiding or protecting small or isolated populations.</p>	FW-ATRISK-DC-[2]



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Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
<i>At-Risk Species – 3</i>	<p>The project includes PDC and MMs that discourage the spread and propagation of noxious weeds and require equipment management to prevent the introduction of nonnative/invasive species and pathogens to the project area from outside geographies. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Plan Component below:</p> <p>All authorized activities should be designed and implemented to address threats to at-risk species and their habitats, including, but not limited to: a Timing restrictions to encourage reproductive success; b Prevention of introduction of non-game invasive, competing, or predatory species (these are species directly and negatively impacting at-risk species populations), and prevention of introduction of nonnative game species to novel locations; c Prevention or introduction of pathogens leading to population impacts; d Creation or removal of obstructions that may alter natural migration or directly cause mortality to wildlife; and e Avoiding or protecting small or isolated populations.</p>	FW-ATRISK-G- [1]
<i>At-Risk Species – 4</i>	<p>The proposed action will not alter forest structure or composition from its current condition. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Plan Component below:]</p> <p>Density ranges from 20 to 250 (or more) square feet per acre basal area based on age and site productivity and depending on disturbance and seral stages of the groups and patches.</p>	FW-SFF-DC- [4]
<i>At-Risk Species – 5</i>	<p>The proposed action will not alter ground cover from its current condition. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Ground cover consists of shrubs, perennial grasses, and forbs with basal vegetation cover values ranging between 5 and 20 percent, depending on the site potential and TEUI unit.</p>	FW-SFF-DC- [5]
<i>At-Risk Species – 6</i>	<p>The proposed action will not alter forest structure from its current condition. Furthermore, the proposed action will not impact the potential occurrence of natural disturbances. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Plan Component below:</p> <p>Gaps are present as a result of natural disturbances (e.g., insects, blowdowns).</p>	FW-SFF-DC- [9]
<i>Soils and Water – 1</i>	<p>Project mitigations and BMPs outlined in SWPPP and the <i>Watershed Report</i> will ensure this project is consistent with the LMP standards described below:</p> <p>BMPs (e.g., National Core Technical Guide for BMPs (FS-990A), FSH 2509.22 – Soil and Water Conservation Practices Handbook) must be used to minimize management impacts to maintain water quality and to ensure long-term soil productivity and satisfactory soil condition (soil health).</p>	FW-WATER-S & FW-SOIL-S



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Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
Soils – 1	<p>Project mitigations and BMPs outlined in SWPPP and <i>Watershed Report</i> will ensure this project is consistent with the LMP guideline described below:</p> <p>Ground-disturbing management activities should be designed to minimize short- and long-term adverse impacts to soil resources (e.g., soil compaction and soil loss). Where disturbance cannot be avoided, project specific soil and water conservation practices should be developed. When soil conditions are less than satisfactory as a result of management activities, restoration of soil condition should occur.</p>	FW-SOIL-G
Water – 1	<p>Project mitigations and BMPs outlined in SWPPP and <i>Watershed Report</i> will ensure this project is consistent with the LMP guideline described below:</p> <p>Stream channels should not be altered by new management actions unless necessary for resource protection or ecological restoration purposes. To maintain bank stability on perennial and intermittent streams, new or redesigned stream crossings (e.g., bridges and culverts) should be wide enough to successfully pass water, sediment, wood, and aquatic organisms. Measures should be taken to eliminate the risk of introducing new or spreading existing invasive species and pathogens to streams, riparian areas, or wetland ecosystem (per Standard 1 in Wildlife: Nonnative and Invasive Species).</p>	FW-WATER-G

The project will adhere to the BMPs from the "National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on NFS Lands, Volume 1" (USDA Forest Service 2012) including:

- **Facilities and Non recreation Special Uses:** Fac-2, Fac-6, Fac-7, Fac-10.
- **Recreation Management Activities:** Rec-1, Rec-2, Rec-9, Rec-12.
- **Road Management Activities:** Road-9, Road-10.
- **Mechanical Vegetation Management Activities:** Veg-1, Veg-2, Veg-8.

The SWPPP integrates BMPs to mitigate potential impacts to watershed and biological resources. The project commits to limiting disturbance to existing vegetation and soil, ensuring that erosion control is prioritized through maintaining as much original vegetation as possible. Construction activities will be strategically phased and timed to coincide with seasonal timing in this sensitive alpine area, to minimize impacts to soil, flora, and fauna and therefore reduce soil erosion and stormwater pollution. Implementation of the SWPPP will include installation of silt fences and straw bales in key areas to control stormwater flow and minimize runoff into nearby aquatic ecosystems. Upon completion of construction, immediate stabilization of soils will be conducted, including reseeding using a native species seed mix to establish vegetative cover on exposed soil and applying wood mulch where necessary to safeguard against erosion during high-flow rainfall events. Following measures outlined in the SWPPP will ensure retention of sediment on-site through swift reseeding and mulching post-surface disturbance, while also establishing stabilized construction exits by restoring all temporary access areas promptly upon project completion. These measures will collectively minimize environmental impacts and preserve the integrity of the surrounding ecosystem.



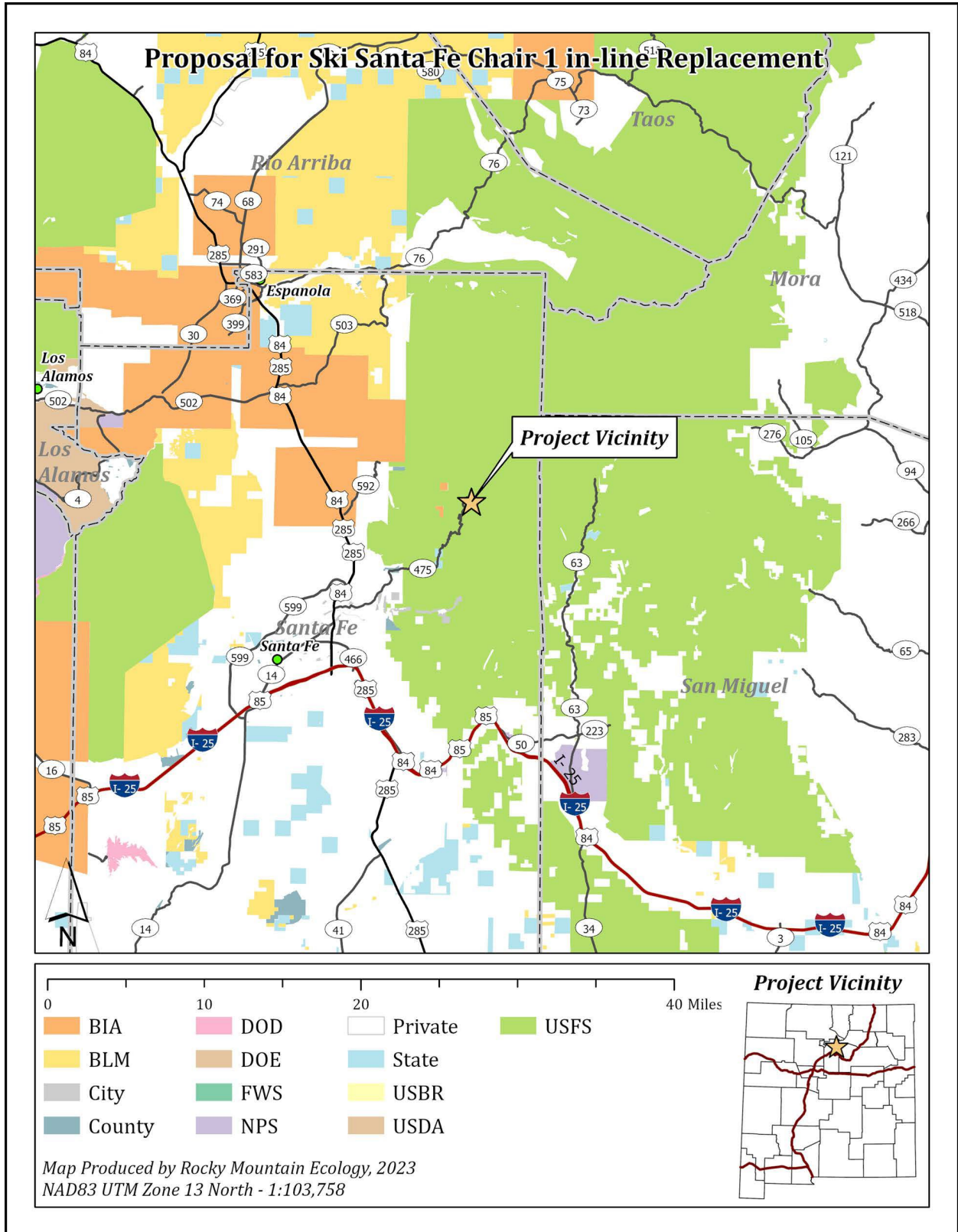
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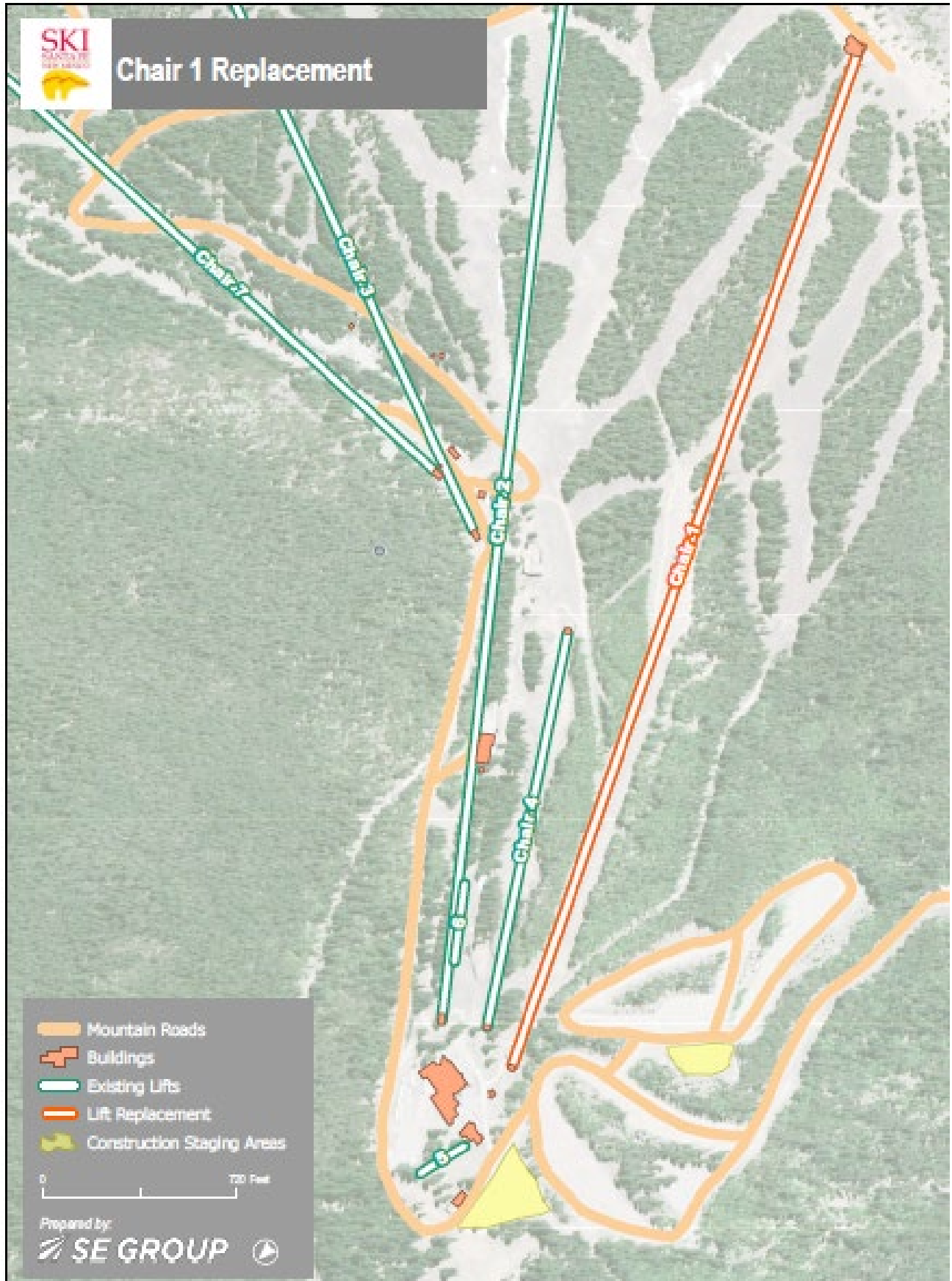


The Ski Santa Fe Chair 1 replacement project will prioritize minimizing visual and environmental impacts during and post-construction through adherence to construction BMPs. Post-construction, disturbed areas will undergo immediate stabilization and revegetation using native plant species, with ongoing monitoring for erosion control and final stabilization to ensure sustainability and minimal environmental disruption. The lift terminals will be painted with dark green/dark gray hues to blend with summer foliage, mitigating visual disturbances from nearby tribal traditional use areas and minimizing overall visual impacts of the new lift infrastructure. During construction, waste and material management will be required, including segregating hazardous materials, ensuring off-site vehicle maintenance, and employing a detailed spill prevention and control plan.

Refer to Appendix A of the Ski Santa Fe MDP for a complete list of mitigation measures and PDCs that will be adhered to during implementation of this project as defined by the resort's MDP. The MDP includes vegetation PDCs requiring that seed, hay, straw, mulch, and equipment are free of noxious weed seed to prevent the spread of invasive species. For wildlife and fisheries, PDCs mandate a pre-construction raptor survey (may be substituted with adherence to seasonal raptor closures and regulations). The MDP requires avoidance of the removal of cavity trees and snags during construction, a standard that will be adhered to unless a hazard tree is compromising ski run or trail safety.

Project Maps







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Environmental Analysis

National Forest Management Act (NFMA) - Land Management Plan Consistency

Resource specialists have reviewed the proposal, including specific Design Elements, as listed, to ensure consistency with applicable LMP direction. The following summarizes analysis and conclusions supporting LMP consistency.

Botany: Habitat characterization field surveys were completed, and a WFRP Report was prepared documenting impacts to botanical species. Implementing Botany Design Elements would minimize disturbance and spread of invasive species within and around the project area, consistent with LMP direction. The SCC Report (attached) addresses species viability, as described in the 2022 LMP, for species potentially occurring within the project area.

Cultural/Heritage: The intensive cultural resources inventory conducted of 27.28 acres (11.02 hectares) within Ski Santa Fe revealed no sites or isolated finds. Importantly, a visual impact assessment concerning an adjacent tribally important traditional use area concluded that both the lower and upper Chair 1 terminals posed no adverse visual effect on the viewshed. Proposed lift infrastructure will be painted to match the natural foliage. Thus, the project aligns with the LMP's objectives for preserving the visual and cultural integrity of significant areas. Detailed findings and visual assessments are documented in the cultural resource report.

Engineering: N/A: Not considered for analysis. Construction of lift and use of staging areas will follow general BMPs to prevent impacts to other resources as detailed in [Design Elements](#).

Fisheries: Design Elements restrict activities within riparian areas; therefore, impacts to fisheries will not occur. The SCC Report (attached) addresses species viability, as described in the 2022 LMP, for species potentially occurring within the project area.

Wildlife: Design Elements restrict activities that would impact wildlife; therefore, impacts to wildlife will not occur. For more information refer to the WFRP Report in the project record. The SCC Report (attached) addresses species viability, as described in the 2022 LMP, for species potentially occurring within the project area.

Fuels: N/A: After review of the proposal by the appropriate specialists, it has been determined that fuels are not directly applicable to this specific project. The project's design elements, as detailed above, have been tailored to adhere to all relevant aspects of the LMP. While fuels often play a crucial role in many forest-related endeavors, the nature and objectives of this project mean that they are not a primary concern or factor. Therefore, no specific components or considerations regarding fuels have been incorporated.

Hydrology: The project area encompasses the Pojoaque River HUC10 Watershed (1302010112) and Rio Nambu HUC12 Subwatershed (130201011201), with the latter being classified as functioning at risk per the *U.S. Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework*. Under the protocols of the CGP and SWPPP, the proposed action is designed to mitigate potential soil erosion and sediment loss, ensuring the maintenance of the watershed's integrity. Notably, the project aligns with the present land use of the Ski Santa Fe SUP area and won't alter the drainage profile. Post-construction restoration is expected to prevent lasting watershed impacts. Explicit design features aim to protect wetland ecosystems, with the action avoiding any disturbance to wetlands and related vegetation. While the replacement chairlift installation is proximate to the Rio en Medio, adherence to BMPs, PDCs, and the SWPPP's mitigation measures will ensure the safeguarding of wetlands and hydrological resources near the project area. These strategies, overall, deter sediment flow into delicate wetland zones both during the execution and post-completion of the project, preserving these important hydrological resources. For in-depth details, reference the project record file and specifically the *Soil and Watershed Specialist Report*.



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Lands and Special Uses: N/A: Not a resource considered for analysis as the proposed action does not involve the sale or transfer of any lands or occur in or adjacent to management areas. See [Management Areas](#) for more information.

Minerals: N/A: Upon review, no impacts to minerals are anticipated from this project. Given the project scope and objectives, minerals were dismissed from further consideration. [Design elements](#) ensure alignment with the LMP.

Range: N/A: Range resources, including livestock, range improvements, allotments, and rangeland management, are not anticipated to experience any changes or impacts due to this project. Consequently, range resources were not analyzed. Consistency with the LMP is maintained for range resources.

Recreation: N/A: Not considered for analysis. The proposed action is an in-line replacement of an existing chairlift and overall resort visitation, and recreation changes or impacts are anticipated as part of the implementation of the Chair 1 replacement.

Scenic Resources: N/A: No changes or impacts to the scenic values and visual integrity of the project area are anticipated as the project is within an existing ski area SUP and is a replacement of existing infrastructure. The project remains consistent with the LMP's objectives for maintaining aesthetic values. Further details can be found in the project record file. The lift terminals will be painted in dark green/dark gray hues to blend with the summer foliage. This color scheme aims to ensure that the structure is not visually intrusive from nearby tribal traditional use areas.

Soils: The proposed action could elevate soil erosion levels due to surface vegetation removal and mineral soil exposure. However, with the application of the CGP and the SWPPP, watershed impacts linked to potential soil erosion and sediment loss are expected to be addressed. Consistent monitoring and upkeep of erosion control measures are in place to mitigate these impacts. Furthermore, the prompt activation of stabilization measures, as stipulated in the SWPPP, aims to establish vegetation sufficient to deter long-term site degradation and uphold productivity. No long-term cumulative effects on environmental quality are anticipated, and all temporary disturbances will be stabilized and prepared for future revegetation. By rigorously adhering to mitigation measures, sediment transport into sensitive areas will be minimized, ensuring soil protection during and post-construction. This approach ensures alignment with LMP goals. For further insights, refer to the project record file and specifically the *Soil and Watershed Specialist Report*.

Silviculture: N/A: After review by specialists, silviculture was dismissed from further analysis. The project's design adheres to the land management plan, and silviculture isn't a primary concern for this initiative. No specific considerations regarding silviculture are included.

Designated Areas: N/A: Following review, there are no designated areas within or near the project scope. As such, this project does not necessitate considerations or components related to designated areas.

Special Management Areas: The project area does not fall within any Special Management Areas included in the 2022 LMP. The project is within close proximity to the Windsor Trail, which is identified as a National Recreation Trail (NRT). The Windsor NRT leaves the Lower Parking Lot at Ski Santa Fe and heads southwest toward Tesuque Village and the Pueblo of Tesuque.

The project aligns with the LMP, promoting well-maintained, safe recreation facilities that meet public expectations and contribute to a sustainable recreational environment (FW-DEVREC-DC). It supports the mission of the Forest, addressing public needs, fostering responsible use by visitors and communities, and providing unique recreational opportunities, all while maintaining ecological balance and multiple uses as outlined in the LMP (FW-RECSU-DC).



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Wildlife: The proposed project would adhere to wildlife protection protocols described in [Design Elements](#) and further detailed in the WFRP Report in the project record. Limiting operating periods during critical breeding seasons, including breeding bird seasons, which includes avoiding tree felling from April 1 to September 30, aligns the project with conservation measures outlined under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The project area does not include designated critical habitat for federally listed endangered and threatened species identified in the IPAC query, namely Mexican spotted owl, Southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. There are no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts expected to these species. A 'no effect' (NE) determination was reached for these species due to the absence of both critical and general habitats (Table 5).

Other Resources: N/A. None considered for further analysis.

Table 2. Applicable project file documentation to support LMP compliance.

Supporting Documentation
Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan
Sante Fe Ski Area Master Development Plan
Soil and Watershed Specialist Report
Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Specialist Report (Including Species of Conservation Concern LMP Consistency Report).
FS Report No R2023031000057 Class III Cultural Resources Survey for the Replacement of Chair 1

Other Law, Regulation and Policy Consistency

The following laws, regulations, or policies pertinent to this project include:

Clean Air Act

The proposed action will comply with the Clean Air Act. The proposed action is not likely to impact air quality or contribute to poor air quality standards.

Supporting Project Documentation

Table 3. Applicable project file documentation to support Clean Air Act compliance.

Supporting Documentation
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Clean Water Act

Under the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Forest Service is required to ensure the protection and restoration of public waters under its jurisdiction, with specific provisions highlighted in sections 303 and 319 of the CWA. The proposal intends to strictly adhere to the stipulations set out in these sections. Notably, BMPs are implemented to align with water quality standards pursuant to Section 319. Project actions comply with the CWA through the CGP and SWPPP. Furthermore, the proposal anticipates no impacts on wetlands. To solidify our commitment to water quality, a SWPPP has been developed in alignment with the CWA § 402 CGP. This SWPPP details the BMPs and additional measures for safeguarding surface water quality. By strictly adhering to the conditions of the CGP, the measures in the SWPPP, and the BMPs, impacts to potential surface water quality stemming from the proposed action will be negated. For further details, refer to the project record file specifically the *Soil and Watershed Specialist Report*.



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Supporting Project Documentation

Table 4. Applicable project file documentation to support Clean Water Act compliance.

Supporting Documentation
Soil and Watershed Specialist Report

Endangered Species Act – Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate Species and Critical Habitat

Table 5. Threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species and critical habitat effect determinations.

Species/Habitat	Status	Proposed or Designated Critical Habitat Present?	Determination	Brief Rationale (or refer to other project documentation)
New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse (Zapus hudsonius luteus)	Endangered	No	NE	Due to the lack of critical habitat and/or occurrence of suitable habitat within the project area, occupancy and use of the project area is considered unlikely. Furthermore, due to the lack of potential for direct and indirect impacts to the four federally listed endangered and threatened species, there is no potential for the proposed action to contribute to cumulative impacts
Mexican Spotted Owl (Strix occidentalis lucida)	Threatened	No	NE	Due to the lack of critical habitat and/or occurrence of suitable habitat within the project area, occupancy and use of the project area is considered unlikely. Furthermore, due to the lack of potential for direct and indirect impacts to the four federally listed endangered and threatened species, there is no potential for the proposed action to contribute to cumulative impacts
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Empidonax traillii extimus)	Endangered	No	NE	Due to the lack of critical habitat and/or occurrence of suitable habitat within the project area, occupancy and use of the project area is considered unlikely. Furthermore, due to the lack of potential for direct and indirect impacts to the four federally listed endangered and threatened species, there is no potential for the proposed action to contribute to cumulative impacts



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Species/Habitat	Status	Proposed or Designated Critical Habitat Present?	Determination	Brief Rationale (or refer to other project documentation)
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus)	Threatened	No	NE	Due to the lack of critical habitat and/or occurrence of suitable habitat within the project area, occupancy and use of the project area is considered unlikely. Furthermore, due to the lack of potential for Direct and indirect impacts to the four federally listed endangered and threatened species, there is no potential for the proposed action to contribute to cumulative impacts

NE – no effect; **NLAA** – may affect, not likely to adversely affect; **LAA** – may affect, likely to adversely affect; **No Jeopardy** – not likely to jeopardize the continued existence or adversely modify critical habitat.

Supporting Project Documentation

Table 6. Applicable project file documentation to support Endangered Species Act compliance.

Supporting Documentation
Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Specialist Report

Species of Conservation Concern (FSH 1909.12 21.22)

The LMP identifies at-risk species, which encompass federally recognized species and SCCs. SCCs are those not federally listed but still show substantial concern for their long-term persistence within the Forest. A thorough analysis, which involved habitat assessment and field reconnaissance, identified the Pacific Marten, Snowshoe Hare, and Water Shrew as SCCs with either known presence or suitable habitat within the project area. These species were evaluated in line with the LMP’s Standards, Guidelines, and Desired Conditions. The project’s design ensures the safeguarding of habitats and resources vital for these SCCs, with measures such as the preservation of snags, cavity trees, and protection against noxious weeds. Breeding bird habitat will be protected by avoiding tree felling from April 1 to September 30. The proposed replacement of Chair 1 is consistent with various LMP components, ensuring minimal alteration to the existing habitat conditions and forest structures while promoting species conservation. Detailed strategies for biological resources can be found in the WFRP Report.

This project is compliant with the LMP and will support the persistence of species of conservation of concern found within the project area. Copies of the SCC and WFRP reports can be found in the project record.



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Supporting Project Documentation

Table 7. Applicable project file documentation to support agency species of conservation concern compliance.

Supporting Documentation
Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Specialist Report
Santa Fe National Forest SCC Plan Consistency Report

Designated Areas (for example, Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc.)

Table 8. Designated area compliance determinations

Management Area Type	Applicable Law / Regulation to Demonstrate Compliance With	Rationale for Compliance
N/A		

Management Areas (for example, Valle Vidal Management Area, San Antonio Management Area, Grassland Maintenance, Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, Recommended Wilderness, etc.)

Table 9. Management area compliance determinations

Management Area Type	Applicable Law / Regulation to Demonstrate Compliance With	Rationale for Compliance
N/A		

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) – Section 106 Review

No adverse effects to historic properties - 36 CFR 800.5(b). Section 106 Review has been completed and National Register eligible cultural sites are located within the project area. Modifications can avoid/protect cultural resources (see comment section).

National Register-eligible cultural sites are located outside the area of potential effects for ground disturbance but within the visual area of potential effects. A visual impact assessment of the lift replacement affirmed that the proposed construction, including the new upper Chair 1 terminal, would not adversely affect the a nearby traditional use area, this determination was formally concurred with by the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Comments

The intensive cultural resources inventory of 27.28 acres (11.02 hectares) on lands managed by the Forest Service resulted in no sites or isolated finds being identified. A visual impact assessment of the upper and lower Chair 1 area relative to a nearby traditional use area found that from this traditional use area, the lower terminal was not discernable on the landscape. Regarding the upper terminal, while its location was readily identifiable from various points along the traditional use area at a distance of over 2.5 km (1.6 miles), the upper terminal itself was not discernable from the closest complex of sites associated with the traditional use area. As a result, the proposed new upper Chair 1 tower, although taller than the existing tower, will not be visible on the landscape from within the traditional use area. The proposed construction at the upper Chair 1 unloading area is, therefore, recommended as having no adverse effect.



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Supporting Project Documentation

Table 10. Applicable project file documentation to support NHPA compliance.

Supporting Documentation
FS Report No R2023031000057 Class III Cultural Resources Survey for the Replacement of Chair 1

Government to Government Consultation (EO 13175)

The responsible official identified the following regarding Government-to-Government consultation:

Government to Government Tribal consultation completed.

This consultation was conducted in compliance with the NHPA.

Comments

The responsible official confirms that Government-to-Government consultation, as outlined in EO 13175, has been undertaken. Tribal outreach meetings and site visits with Ski Santa Fe/USFS and the Pueblo of Tesuque leadership occurred on September 15, 2022, June 6, 2023, and July 3, 2023. Additionally, a virtual consultation session via Zoom involving the Forest Service, Ski Santa Fe, and representatives from the Pueblo of Tesuque took place on June 6, 2023. On July 27, 2023, the Forest Service's heritage leads initiated formal tribal consultation, sending letters to an internally maintained list of consulting tribes and pueblos.

Relevant Executive Orders

The responsible official determined the proposal complies with the following Executive Orders, which were deemed relevant based on the nature of the proposal.

Below is a list of Executive Orders that typically apply to Forest Service proposals. Links to all Executive Orders can be found in the [Federal Register \(https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/disposition\)](https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/disposition).

EO 11988, Floodplain Management – Executive Order 11988 requires the Forest Service to avoid “to the extent possible the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupation or modification of floodplains...”.

The proposed action would avoid harvest and equipment entry into all floodplains (except on roads at existing crossings). The implementation of PDCs and BMPs would result in no change to current floodplain condition. This project is consistent with this executive order.

EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands – Executive Order 11990 requires the Forest service to “avoid to the extent possible the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands”.

All seeps, springs, and wetlands (including stream-associated floodplain wetlands) would retain buffers where harvest and equipment entry would be restricted. This project is consistent with this executive order.

EO 12898, Environmental Justice – identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations.

The project will enhance recreation tourism and support local communities

EO 13007, Indian Sacred Sites – avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of these sites.



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Through the implementation of PDC, the project will not adversely affect the physical integrity of Indian sacred sites.

EO 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments - agencies consult with Indian tribes and respect tribal sovereignty as they develop policy on issues that impact Indian communities.

Government-to-government consultation has been conducted with affected Indian tribes throughout the project planning process.

EO 13112, Invasive Species – prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause.

With use of the described PDCs and BMPs, project activities are not likely to result in the establishment of invasive species.

EO 13186, Migratory Birds – identify actions that may have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations.

The proposed action could affect migratory bird habitat and individual birds but would not have a measurable effect on local population levels.

EO 13443, Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation – expand and enhance hunting opportunities.

The project will occur within the existing chairlift footprint. Existing hunting access would remain unchanged.



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Extraordinary Circumstance Determinations

Pertinent specialists have reviewed the proposal and made the following determinations with regards to degree of effects for the resource conditions considered:

The Ski Santa Fe Chair 1 replacement project has been thoroughly evaluated for any potential significant impacts on the environment. Upon detailed desktop review and field verification, no federally listed threatened or endangered botanical species were identified to have the potential to occur within the project area, and thus a determination of no effect was made for all threatened and endangered species, including the Mexican spotted owl, Southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. Moreover, the proposed action complies with the Clean Water Act, as no Waters of the United States will be impacted. With implementation of PDC and BMPs there will be no effects on wetlands. The SWPPP will further ensure the protection of surface water quality. A visual impact assessment confirms that the proposed upper Chair 1 tower will not adversely impact the landscape views from nearby traditional use areas. Furthermore, a comprehensive cultural resources inventory found no archaeological sites or historic properties within the area of potential effects for ground disturbance, and thus a determination was made that the chair replacement will have no adverse effect on these cultural resources. The New Mexico SHPO concurred with these determinations on September 29, 2023. Based on these determinations, I find no extraordinary circumstances that warrant further in-depth environmental analysis.

Table 11. Resource conditions considered for extraordinary circumstance determinations.

Resource Conditions Considered for Extraordinary Circumstances	Is there a degree of potential effect that raises uncertainty over its significance? Briefly explain.
Federally listed threatened or endangered species, designated critical habitat.	Botany: N/A, not present Rationale for yes/no: After desktop review and field verification it was determined that there is no potential for the occurrence of federally listed threatened or endangered botanical species in the project area.
	Fisheries: N/A, not present Rationale for yes/no: There is no potential for the occurrence of federally listed threatened or endangered aquatic species in the project area.
	Wildlife: NO, there is no uncertainty Rationale for yes/no: Due to the lack of critical habitat, general habitat, or occurrence, there was a no effect determination for the federal endangered and threatened species with potential to occur within the project area. These species include Mexican spotted owl, Southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse.



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Resource Conditions Considered for Extraordinary Circumstances	Is there a degree of potential effect that raises uncertainty over its significance? Briefly explain.
Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds	<p>NO, there is no uncertainty</p> <p>Rationale for yes/no:</p> <p>The Forest Service is mandated under the Clean Water Act (CWA) to ensure the protection and restoration of public waters under its jurisdiction, with specific provisions highlighted in sections 303 and 319 of the CWA. The proposal intends to strictly adhere to the stipulations set out in these sections. Notably, BMPs are implemented to align with water quality standards pursuant to Section 319. In the context of the proposed action, it's important to note that no Waters of the U.S., as defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), will be affected. Furthermore, the proposal anticipates no impacts on wetlands. To solidify our commitment to water quality, a SWPPP has been developed in alignment with the CWA § 402 CGP. This SWPPP details the BMPs and additional measures for safeguarding surface water quality. By strictly adhering to the conditions of the CGP, the measures in the SWPPP, and the Forest Service BMPs, we are confident in minimizing potential surface water quality impacts stemming from the proposed action. For further details, refer to the project record file. No designated municipal watersheds will be impacted by project activities. The project has wetlands as defined by the United States Army Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetlands Delineation Manual. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood map does not delineate any portions of the project area as being within the 100-year floodplain. A CGP and SWPPP were developed and include additional PDC and MMs to minimize effects to floodplains and wetland resources. These BMPs, MMs, and PDCs ensure consistency with Plan Components in the LMP.</p>
Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas	N/A, not present
Inventoried roadless areas	N/A, not present
Research natural areas	N/A, not present
American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites	<p>NO, there is no uncertainty</p> <p>Rationale for yes/no:</p> <p>A visual impact assessment of the upper and lower Chair 1 area relative to a nearby traditional use area found that from all points along this traditional use area, the lower terminal was not discernable on the landscape. Regarding the upper terminal, while its location was readily identifiable from various points along the traditional use area at over 2.5 km (1.6 miles), the upper terminal itself was not discernable from the closest complex of sites associated with the traditional use area. As a result, the proposed new upper Chair 1 tower, although taller than the existing tower, will not be visible on the landscape from within the traditional use area. The proposed construction at the upper Chair 1 unloading area is, therefore, recommended as having no adverse effect, a determination concurred by New Mexico SHPO.</p>



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Resource Conditions Considered for Extraordinary Circumstances	Is there a degree of potential effect that raises uncertainty over its significance? Briefly explain.
Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas	<p>NO, there is no uncertainty</p> <p>Rationale for yes/no:</p> <p>The intensive cultural resources inventory of 27.28 acres (11.02 hectares) on lands managed by the Forest Service resulted in no sites or isolated finds being identified. A visual impact assessment of the upper and lower Chair 1 area relative to a nearby traditional use area found that from all points along this traditional use area, the lower terminal was not discernable on the landscape. Regarding the upper terminal, while its location was readily identifiable from various points along the traditional use area at over 2.5 km (1.6 miles), the upper terminal itself was not discernable from the closest complex of sites associated with a nearby traditional use area. As a result, the proposed new upper Chair 1 tower, although taller than the existing tower, will not be visible on the landscape from within the traditional use area and thus the lift replacement is recommended as having no adverse effect, a determination concurred by the New Mexico SHPO.</p>

Supporting Project Documentation

Table 12. Applicable project file documentation to support NEPA compliance.

Supporting Documentation
Santa Fe National Forest Land Management Plan
Sante Fe Ski Area Master Development Plan
Soil and Watershed Specialist Report
Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Specialist Report
Santa Fe National Forest SCC Plan Consistency Report – Chair 1 In-line Replacement Project

Agencies, Organizations and Persons Contacted

The responsible official contacted the following interested and affected agencies, organizations, and persons about this project.

The Forest consulted with local tribes and pueblos with ancestral and/or current ties to the area. The Forest internally maintains a list of consulted tribes. The Forest consulted with New Mexico SHPO, as required, on the reporting and findings of cultural resource and visual impact assessment reporting.



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