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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT – ARIZONA SNOWBOWL, CANYON  
EXPRESS CHAIRLIFT

SUBJECT: Supplemental Information Report - Arizona Snowbowl, Canyon Express  
Chairlift

FILE CODE: 1950; 2720

TO: The Files

DATE: February 08, 2016

ISSUE:

This Supplemental Information Report is in response to a February 4, 2016, letter from Arizona Snowbowl entitled, "Request for Construction Authorization - Approved Sunset Chairlift Replacement (Canyon Express Chairlift)." The letter included a request to begin implementation of activities approved in the 2005 Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements Final Environmental Impact Statement with limited modifications. In compliance with FSH 1909.15(18.1), this Supplemental Information Report (SIR) has been prepared to document the Coconino National Forest Supervisor's determination of "... whether or not the new information or changed circumstances are within the scope and range of effects considered in the original analysis."

BACKGROUND:

On February 18, 2005, then Coconino National Forest Supervisor Nora Rasure issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on the Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Supervisor Rasure identified the Selected Alternative as Alternative 2 - the Proposed Action, as described and analyzed in the FEIS. Among other projects, the selected alternative authorized the Sunset Chairlift was to be replaced, realigned, and lengthened; and the construction of a new surface lift to serve the terrain park and halfpipe.

A Request for Construction Authorization letter dated February 4, 2016, from Arizona Snowbowl identified a minor deviation from what was originally approved. Their letter included plans and rationale for construction of the proposed Sunset Chairlift replacement/realignment, but they have included retention of the existing Sunset Chairlift to continue to allow access to terrain in lieu of the proposed surface lift that would have been built.

The purpose of this information report is to review the potential on-the-ground impacts of this approach and whether this limited deviation from the 2005 Record of Decision is within the scope and range of effects identified in the FEIS. To determine whether additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis must be conducted, the potential impacts of the improvements as finally designed must be compared against the potential impacts as analyzed in prior NEPA documents.



Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 -National Environmental Policy Handbook - (18.1) directs Deciding Officers to review "new information or changed circumstances relating to the environmental impacts of a proposed action" that occur after a decision has been made, but prior to completion of the approved project in order to determine whether a Supplemental EIS is necessary. FSH 1909.15(18.1) goes on to state:

*If, after an interdisciplinary review and consideration of new information within the context of the overall program or projects, the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to an environmental document is not necessary, implementation should continue. Document the results of the interdisciplinary review in the appropriate program or project files. This documentation is sometimes called a supplemental information report (SIR) and should conclude with whether or not a correction, supplement, or revision is needed, and if not, the reasons why.*

In compliance with FSH 1909.15(18.1), this Supplemental Information Report (SIR) has been prepared to document the Coconino National Forest Supervisor's determination of "... whether or not the new information or changed circumstances are within the scope and range of effects considered in the original analysis. "

The changed circumstances that are evaluated in this SIR include: 1) Leaving in-place and not removing the existing Sunset Chairlift when the new chairlift<sup>1</sup> is installed; and 2) not installing the approved surface lift for serving the terrain park that would have occurred in the same alignment as the existing Sunset Chairlift.

#### PROJECT ANALYZED UNDER ORIGINAL NEPA ANALYSIS:

The 2005 Arizona Snowbowl Facilities Improvements FEIS specifically identifies the proposed Sunset Chairlift replacement/realignment/lengthening on page 2-7 of the description of the proposed action. The proposed surface lift that would not be built due to the ongoing use of the existing Sunset Chairlift is identified on page 2-8 of the proposed action, which describes the installation of four surface lifts, one of which was specifically identified to service the halfpipe and terrain park. The FEIS includes discussions on the visual impacts associated with the establishment of a realigned and lengthened Sunset Chairlift, and discusses that the new surface lifts at the base of the mountain, would result in the removal of several trees. There is no discussion of a beneficial effect from the removal of the current Sunset Chairlift once it is realigned.

#### EVALUATION OF CHANGED CONDITIONS:

In their February 4, 2016 letter; Arizona Snowbowl explains that the proposal to "...leave the existing Sunset Chairlift in place is in response to market demand to provide access to the terrain that guests prefer to ski. Simply stated, the existing Sunset Chairlift and terrain network works very well as is." This change from the 2005 Record of Decision appears to be in conformance with the stated

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<sup>1</sup> In the FEIS, since the Sunset Chairlift is to be replaced, the new chairlift does not have a name. For the sake of clarity, the approved lengthened/realigned chairlift will be referred to as the Canyon Express Chairlift (the existing Sunset Chairlift will continued to be referred to as such).

purpose and need from the FEIS and decision, which includes, "...to improve safety, skiing conditions, and recreational opportunities by bringing terrain and infrastructure into balance with existing demand." It appears that since 2005 the analysis did a very good job at estimating increasing market demand for skiing and related activities at the Arizona Snowbowl. However, given the existing lift can meet the current use patterns at the terrain park, it seems reasonable to implement the Canyon Express Chairlift with a slight realignment to allow for continued operation of the Sunset Chairlift. The proposed slight modification from the decision appears to better align terrain and infrastructure with existing and foreseeable demand within the permit area, and thus this change would be within the stated purpose and need of the decision.

While the realignment and placement of the new Canyon Express Chairlift without removal of the existing Sunset chairlift would require the new lengthened chairlift to shift 200 feet to the northeast (to avoid the existing bottom terminal of the Sunset Chairlift that will remain in place), it is estimated that the overall effects will be less than what was previously approved in the 2005 ROD and FEIS since it would mean there would be no ground disturbance and heavy equipment use from the removal and transport of the existing Sunset Chairlift and overall less new construction due to not building one of the previously approved surface lifts. Thus, this modification in implementing the decision would result in slightly less of an environmental footprint by using and maintaining existing infrastructure rather than replacing and building new infrastructure in the form of surface lifts

SUMMARY FINDING:

Based on my review, as documented in this SIR, and through consultation with my staff, I have concluded that the previously-approved/modified projects are within the scope and range of effects considered, documented and disclosed within the FEIS. The environmental effects related to keeping the existing Sunset Chairlift in place and foregoing installation of an additional surface lift, are either consistent with, or less than, the overall amount and intensity of those disclosed in the FEIS. Therefore, the difference between the activities approved in the ROD and the proposed modifications are de minimus in nature, and I am not requiring that any corrections, revisions, or supplements to the FEIS analysis be prepared. Therefore, no further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act is necessary.

Implementation may proceed upon submittal and approval of Snowbowl's project-specific Construction Implementation Plan.

AFFIRMED BY:



LAURA JO WEST  
Forest Supervisor  
Coconino National Forest

Date: 8 Feb 2016

