



U.S. Forest Service

Themes & Questions



THEME: NATURAL RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY – Role of Ski Areas in Ensuring Natural Resource Sustainability

Background: The ski area special use permit has various clauses requiring permit holders to protect natural, cultural, and other resources and to comply with environmental laws. Many ski areas specify how they will control erosion, manage vegetation, protect water quality, and implement best management practices in their operating plans. Additionally, there are a variety of quality ski area programs like the “Sustainable Slopes” initiative and youth programs that combine resource conservation messages with skiing.

Given the existing requirements and industry initiated programs to conserve and sustain forest resources, what role and responsibility does the ski area have in ensuring the long-term sustainability of publicly-owned natural resources on public land?

THEME: WATER FOR FUTURE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES -- Availability of Water to Support Ski Area Improvements

Background: The USFS often receives requests from ski areas for modifications, additions or expansions that require additional water.

How can the USFS continue meeting the public interest inherent in having water available for those expanded purposes?

THEME: ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY-- Economic Sustainability is Important for Current and Future Public Needs and for Ski Area Longevity.

Background: The Forest Service mission is “to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.” Fulfilling this mission means sustaining water, as well as soil, vegetation, fish, wildlife and other resources, all while providing outdoor recreation and local economic opportunities. Water generated on National Forests is critical to current and future ski area. Historically, water rights necessary to meet those needs have been secured by clauses in the ski area special use permit.

What elements could the Forest Service include in a proposed water rights clause that would ensure long term ski area economic foundation?

THEME: COMMITMENT – Ensuring Long-Term Commitment of Water for Use at Ski Areas

Background: Ski areas are an important component of the outdoor recreation program on National Forests. Many people are introduced to and connected with outdoor recreation and our national forests through skiing. The Forest Service commits to ski areas for the long term through the tenure (40 year) provided in the ski area permit.

Given that water rights are critical to ski area operations and yet sometimes could be transferred as real property, how can the Forest Service ensure that sufficient water is retained and available to support a ski area over the long-term?