



M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Terry Martino
FROM: Jim Connolly
DATE: May 1, 2013
RE: Whiteface Mountain Unit Management Plan Amendment for Little Whiteface Mountain Ski Patrol Building and Emergency Communications Infrastructure

Attached is a review copy of the Whiteface Mountain Unit Management Plan amendment which provides details for the replacement Ski Patrol building and emergency communications system on Little Whiteface Mt.

The Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), as lead agency, and in consultation with DEC and APA staff, has released the UMP amendment for public review. Written comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted by ORDA until May 24, 2013. It is available on CD and on line at DEC's web site:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90459.html>.

Section 816 of the APA Act directs DEC to develop Unit Management Plans for each unit of land under its jurisdiction and classified in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Pursuant to enabling legislation and an inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding with DEC, the Olympic Regional Development Authority manages the Whiteface Mountain Intensive Use Area and, in consultation with DEC, updates and amends the unit management plan for the area. The original Unit Management Plan for Whiteface Mountain Ski Area was developed in 1987 and subsequently updated in 1996 and 2004.

The amendment to the Whiteface Mountain Unit Management Plan has been developed in response to a request by Essex County and NYS Police for the installation of a Public Safety Radio Communications System at the Little Whiteface Ski Patrol Building. This involves the redevelopment of the existing Ski Patrol Building and the installation of antenna systems for a public safety radio communication system and improved Ski Patrol Services. The project involves an approximately .03 acre

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construction area where ground cover will be impacted. The management action has been analyzed for potential impacts to both natural and human resources.

The Ski Patrol building will also house the equipment for the State Police/Essex County communications system as per APA Project Order 2012-128 which was issued on December 18, 2012. An existing 654 square foot structure exists at the site and will be replaced by a 1,380 square foot structure, 34 feet in height, which will house the State Police and Essex County communications equipment. All abandoned and obsolete equipment and structures will be removed from the site. The replacement of the ski patrol building will require only minor clearing, excavation and grading. No cutting of trees will occur at the site. Access to the site will take place along existing trails and via the gondola. The proposed construction activities do not meet minimum thresholds for DEC's General Permit for Stormwater Discharges which governs construction activities involving soil disturbance of one or more acres, however, best management practices will be employed on-site regardless of the need for a general permit.

The overall Agency Project Order has a condition that restricts development during Bicknell's Thrush breeding and nesting season. This condition will ensure adequate protection while allowing for the construction of the critically important emergency communications system upgrades to serve Essex County and the State Police. DEC has agreed to take the lead on a site specific assessment for the presence of Bicknell's Thrush. DEC staff will provide a report to the Agency regarding the presence of Bicknell's Thrush in the project area and to make recommendations whether or not additional measures are needed to restrict use of heavy equipment.

ORDA has sponsored previous reports which summarize existing information on ecological data and mitigation measures for ski areas through the Vermont Institute of Natural Science and the Wildlife Conservation Society. ORDA has incorporated Bicknell's Thrush habitat protection measures into regular ski trail maintenance activities. ORDA has also supported and will continue to support efforts to increase public awareness about challenges facing Bicknell's Thrush on its wintering grounds and to educate the public about the presence of this unique species in locations above 2800 ft on Whiteface Mountain. Additional outreach, including a Bicknell's Thrush logo, is proposed in the UMP amendment. The logo will be used to educate the public and

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enhance fundraising efforts in support of Bicknell's Thrush research and habitat restoration efforts.

A discussion of Bicknell's Thrush habitat concerns is provided in Section 3 of the DSEIS, Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures, pages 3-10 to 3-15. The DSEIS appendix also contains monitoring reports on high elevation bird species conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society between 2004 and 2008 on behalf of ORDA. The monitoring was focused primarily on pre and post ski trail construction for trails on Lookout Mountain.

JEC:lhb

Attachment