Federal policies for mountain resort development on public lands in the United States: access, rural development and sustainability

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An Integrated Planning Approach and Illustration of Good Practices in Developing Mountain Resorts

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed herein are solely the author’s and in no way represent the positions or policies of any US Government entity.
122 ski resorts operate on U.S. National Forests

Photo credit: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort
Laws establishing recreation as a use of the National Forests

1897
Organic Act

1905
National Forests established

1915
30-year recreation permits authorized

1960
Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act (MUSYA)

Photo credits: Forest History Society / USDA Forest Service
Federal investment in the 1930s begins rapid development; 236 resorts by 1980

Photo credits: USDA Forest Service Photography Collection, US National Agricultural Library
Environmental concerns

Photo credits: PA Environment Daily/GoogleEarth; David Palmer/National Wildlife Federation; Forest History Society
Environmental concerns lead to new legal protections and analysis requirements

- **1969**: National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):
  - Environmental Impact Statement for all Fed actions
  - Rigorous analysis requirements

- **1974**: National Forest Management Act (NFMA):
  - Interdisciplinary teams
  - Viability requirements
  - Duplicative EIS
Mineral King, 1969

Invitations to participate have been sent to—
- Congressmen
- U.S. Forest Service
- Disney Corporation

Learn the facts behind the controversy

MARCH ON DISNEYLAND

We can save Mineral King.
Make Earth Week 1973 effective and help us stop Disney Productions' planned destruction of this beautiful wilderness mountain basin. Meet us at St. Andrews Park (entrance is on Park Rd.) at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 13 in Anaheim. Bring your signs and posters and rally to the cause. Call or write us at address above for more info.

SEE YOU THERE!

Potential North-facing bowls for alpine skiing above Mineral King Village.
The bowls are glacial cirques.
Vail, 1998

Photo credit: Vail Fire Department/Vail Daily
1986: National Forest Ski Area Permit Act (NFSAPA)

- Intended to provide more certainty by replacing previous system of combined short- and long-term permits with single long-term
- Specifies conditions for recalculating fees
- But also replaces previous requirements to approve conforming uses with specified criteria for denial in case of:
  - conflict with other management goals
  - availability of non-NF land
Troubled times?
• Difficult regulations
• Climate change
• Demographics

Photo credits: USDA Forest Service;
Four Season Recreation

Vail's $25 million summer development sparks new era of year-round ski resort playgrounds

Vail on Tuesday officially unveils the new face of the ski resort industry.
Collaborative Planning
New expansion and New profits

Photo credits: Snow King Mountain Resort; Freshymap.com
Pros and cons

Photo credits: USDA Forest Service
Ground zero of the housing crisis: Jackson Hole

Photo credits: Sotheby’s Realty; Jackson Hole News & Guide
Conclusions

• Collaboration is critical.
• So is moderation: pros/cons
• Massive economic growth requires creative solutions.

Photo credit: Jackson Hole Mountain Resort