

*Decision Memo*  
**Baldy RAC Sites**  
**Project number in the Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System database: 61387**  
**United States Forest Service**  
*Salt Lake Ranger District, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest*  
*Salt Lake County, Utah*  
**January 2022**

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

**1.0 DECISION AND RATIONALE**

This document details my decision to authorize Alta Ski Area's (Alta) proposal to install Remote Avalanche Control (RAC) devices on Mount Baldy to determine if they offer a viable alternative to the Baldy Tram. A total of 11 RAC devices may be required to replace the 105mm Howitzer. Eight devices would be installed on Alta's private land, and up to three would be installed on Forest Service land on the north-facing side of Mount Baldy. These are labeled as RAC #1, RAC #10 and RAC #11 on the project map.

Each RAC installation would consist of an approximately 1-square-meter concrete footing drilled into rock outcroppings and a tower mounted to the footing. Equipment, personal, and materials would be transported to the site via helicopter. On-site work would be done by hand. Once the towers are in place, helicopters would be used to place the O'bellx or devices on the towers and service them during the winter season. The devices would be removed during the summer.

When in place and armed, a remote signal would be used to trigger the devices. Detonations will occur in the air above the snowpack for better effect on weak layers and triggering of avalanche releases.

Each installation would disturb less than 250 square feet. Alta proposes to install RAC #1 during the summer of 2022. Dependent on its performance, RACs #10 and #11 would be installed the subsequent summer.

Based on environmental analysis and input from an interdisciplinary team of Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest resource specialists, I have determined that this action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. In particular, this action falls under: **Category 3: Approval, modification, or continuation of special uses that require less than 20 acres of NFS lands (36 CFR 220.6(e)(3)).**

The [Environmental Analysis Review 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. Specifically, the National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended; Clean Water Act; Congressional designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas; Inventoried Roadless Areas; Research Natural Areas; Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas; Migratory Bird Treaty Act; Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898).

I find that the proposed action is fully consistent with the 2003 Revised Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan, as well as in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Prescription 4.5 emphasizes developed recreation areas, which include, developed facilities such as campgrounds, trailheads, boat docks, and resorts as well as adjacent areas associated with these sites. High levels of visitor interaction can be expected where sights and sound of others are noticeable and there are moderate to high opportunities for social interaction... Management visibility is high with managers focusing on public safety, service education, user ethics, and enforcement... Because of the large capital investments in these areas, site protection is paramount.

Project is consistent with Recreation Desired Future Conditions in the Forest Plan, “Additional development...will generally involve the replacement and/or modification of existing facilities, modifications of existing ski runs, and adjustments to evolving technologies and user preference” (p. 4-161).

## **2.1 Design Criteria - The following Design Criteria will be required as part of this decision:**

### **Engineering:**

1. Submit detailed design drawings that include site plan, architectural, structural, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical requirements. Plans should include:
  - a. Site plan – location of proposed and existing structures and constructed features, utilities, related roads and parking areas, accessible routes to/from the proposed structures.
  - b. Architectural Plans - dimensioned plans with foundation plan, floor plans, roof plan, door and window requirements, stair and railing, building elevation, and any other accessible features. Include exterior building materials and colors.
  - c. Structural Plans – size and requirements for structural members, supports, connectors, shearwalls, etc.
  - d. Electrical Plans – Include location of electrical service on the site plan, electrical plan for building with building service panel identified. Include grounding details.
2. The drawings must be stamped by the Professional Engineer and Architect responsible for the design, and must comply with all current building codes (IBC, IPC, IMC, NEC, etc.), standard, and other safety requirements.
3. Submit Structural Calculations for the structure (building, tower, etc.) that includes loads required by IBC, ASCE-7 and TIA-222-G (vertical and lateral). Structural calculations must be stamped by the structural engineer responsible for the design. Schedule - Indicate approximate starting date for construction of the improvement(s) and/or related infrastructure.
4. If required, obtain the appropriate building permits from the local building permitting agency with jurisdiction prior to beginning work. Provide copy of permit or documentation of application for permit.

Provide a construction schedule for all elements that will be built.

### **Recreation:**

Make sure the recreating public doesn't have access to the project site during the construction phases of the project. Place signs up notifying the public that construction is in progress once the project begins. Follow BMP's outlined in the 2018ALTA MDP EA for similar remote avalanche control technology installation.

### **Scenery:**

Per the Scenery Conversion Table in the 2003 Forest Plan, Alta Ski Lifts has a Landscape Character Theme of Resort Natural Setting with a High Scenic Integrity Objective (p.4-93). Visual impacts will be present during the construction phase of the project. Alta Ski Lifts will follow ski area Best Management Practices to rehab project sites so they will blend in with the natural surroundings once construction is complete.

Alta Ski Lifts will treat the galvanized steel on the towers of the Wyssen Towers so they aren't as reflective in the non-winter months.

### **Vegetation:**

Surveys conducted on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 detected a population of *Erigeron garrettii* within the project area. Locally common in area, this population extends outside of project area to top of ridgeline. This project May Impact Individuals or their Habitat But Will Not Likely Contribute To A Trend Towards Federal Listings or Loss of Population Viability. There were no noxious or invasive weed populations detected in the project area. Follow BMP's to prevent the spread of noxious and invasive weeds:

1. All existing infestations within/adjacent to project area should be treated prior to project implementation.
2. Do not stage equipment, materials, or crews in invasive plant populations.
3. All equipment should be cleaned and free of vegetation, soil, and debris prior to beginning work on Forest Service land.
4. Revegetation should be initiated as promptly as practical. Seed only where natural regeneration of desirable species is unlikely or is susceptible to or threatened by invasive or noxious plants. Seed mix will be approved by the Forest Service and certified weed free.

5. For at least three years after project completion, treat invading noxious weeds as needed on areas impacted by ground disturbing operations.

#### **4.0 AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS & PERSONS CONTACTED**

The Forest Service conducted internal scoping with the interdisciplinary team of Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest resource specialists at the September 2021 Small NEPA meetings and external scoping by entering the project into the Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System database (PALS).

#### **6.0 ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (Agriculture Act of 2014 [Pub. L. No. 113-79], Subtitle A, Sec. 8006). The project may be implemented immediately.

#### **7.0 CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information about the project, contact Ben Kraja, [arben.kraja@usda.gov](mailto:arben.kraja@usda.gov), (385) 421-1458

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**David Whittekiend**  
**Forest Supervisor**  
**Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest**

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**Date**

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