
1.0 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED ACTION

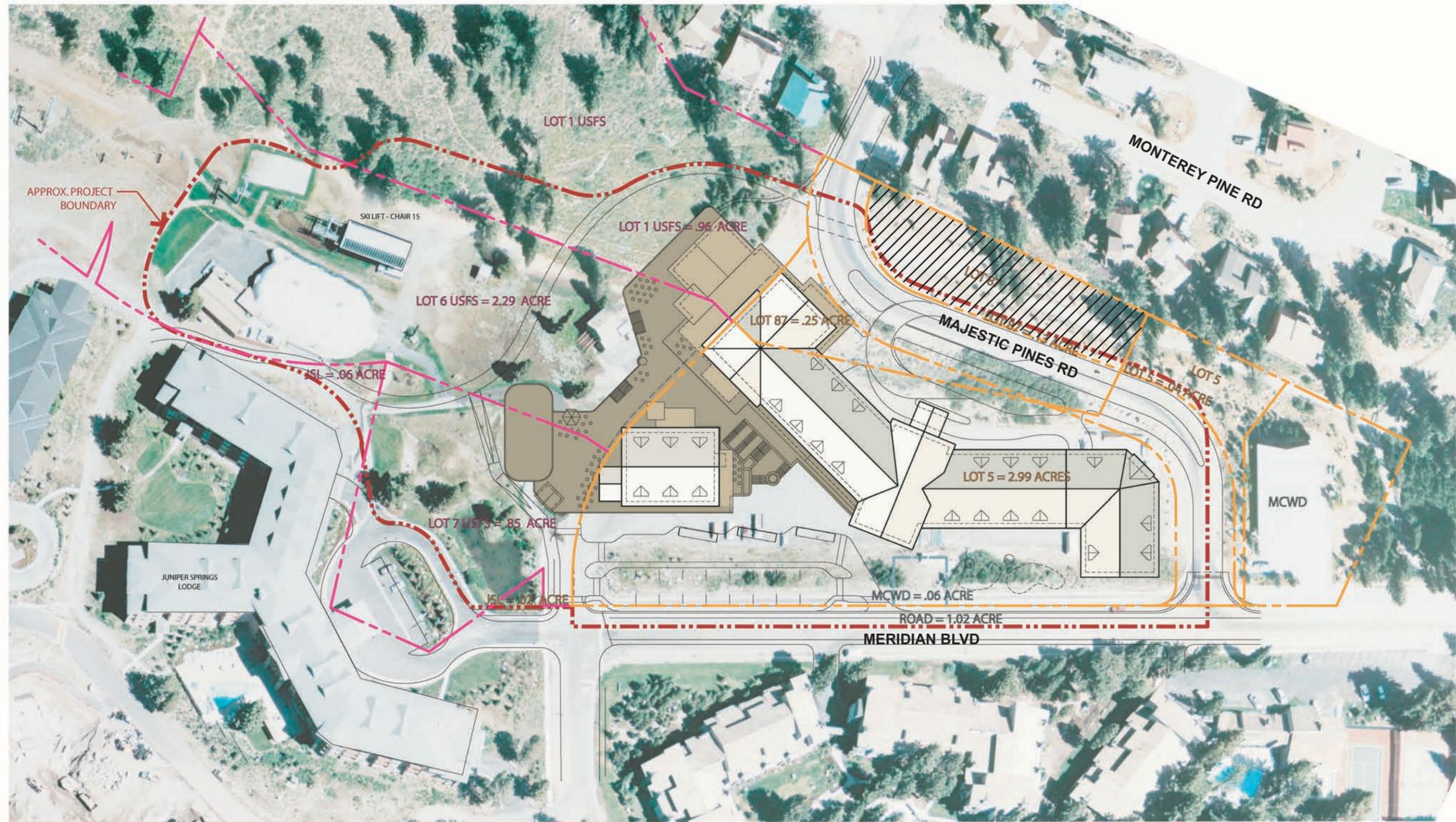
The Project Applicant, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA), proposes to amend the Juniper Ridge Master Plan to accommodate the proposed Eagle Lodge Base Area Development (the project). The project site is comprised of approximately 8.67 acres and is located in the southwestern side of the developed part of the Town of Mammoth Lakes.³ More specifically and as shown in Figure 1 on page 2, the site is located at the intersection of Meridian Boulevard and Majestic Pines Road. The area is locally referred to as the Juniper Springs area, or more recently the Eagle Base Area. The site is located at the base of the Eagle Express Chairlift (Chair 15), which is located on lands administered by the Inyo National Forest. A portion of the site, approximately 4.1 acres, is located within the Inyo National Forest.

The proposed Eagle Lodge Base Area Development would develop permanent lodge facility on the site. Figure 2 on page 3 provides a conceptual site plan for the project. The project is a mixed-use development with a condominium/hotel and a mix of recreational-related uses, including food service, rental/demo/repair shop, retail, ski school and day care, ticketing/lobby, administrative space, and restrooms. In addition, the lodge would include a convenience market, restaurant, day spa and locker club.

The lodge and associated commercial uses would be located within two buildings. The main building or lodge would front on Majestic Pines Road. The main building, which would include the majority of the visitor accommodations, the day lodge cafeteria and the Ski School/Day Care, would be located on the north side of the site stretching from the eastern boundary to the northwestern corner of the site adjacent to the slopes. A second, smaller building, the Skier Services Building, would be located parallel to Meridian Boulevard. The Skier Services Building would include a convenience market, retail space, and skier ticketing area.

The two buildings would be connected by outdoor plazas. An arrival or lower plaza would be created adjacent to the vehicular access to the south side of the site. The lower plaza

³ *The project site boundary has been revised from the boundary shown in the January and March NOPs and the Initial Study. The site area has been expanded to include the full extent of grading associated with the project. The change in the site area does not alter the conclusions reached in the Initial Study or change to scope of the EA/EIR.*



LEGEND

- Lot Lines
- Development Area
- Area of Proposed Redesignation for Low Density Residential & Resort

USFS LAND	PRIVATE LAND	MCWD	BOUNDARY
LOT 1 = .96 ACRE LOT 6 = 2.29 ACRE LOT 7 = .85 ACRE TOTAL FOREST SERVICE LAND WITHIN BOUNDARY = 4.10 ACRES	LOT 5 = .04 + 2.99 = 3.03 ACRE LOT 87 = .13 + .25 = .38 ACRE JSL = .02 + .06 = .08 ACRE TOTAL PRIVATE LAND WITHIN BOUNDARY = 3.49 ACRES	MCWD WELL = .06 ACRE ROAD = 1.02 ACRE	BOUNDARY ACREAGE = 8.67 ACRES

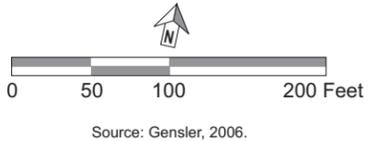


Figure 1
Aerial Showing Development
Relative to Property Lines

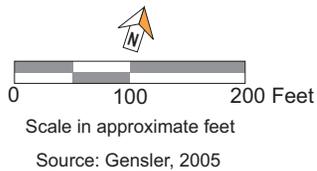
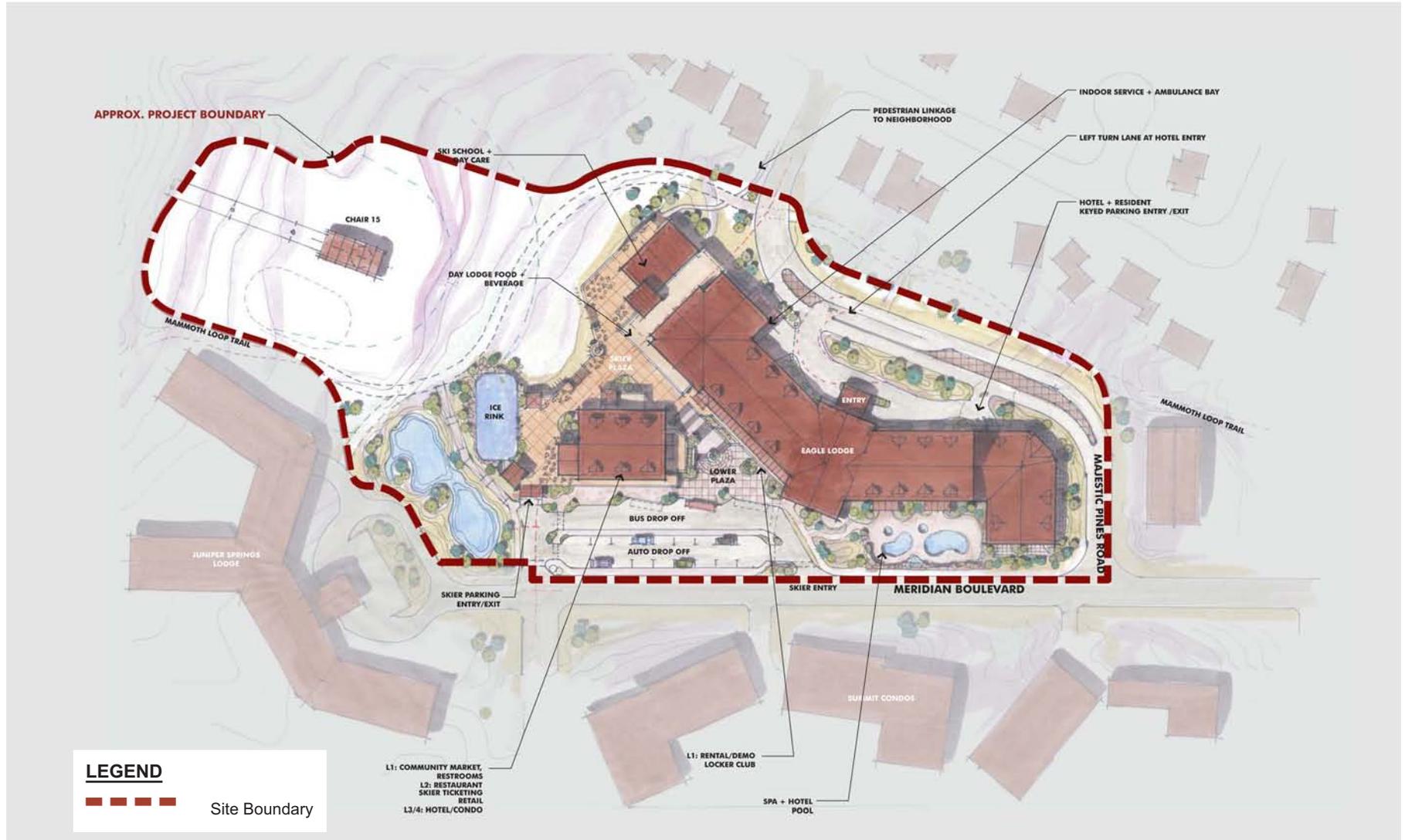


Figure 2
 Conceptual Site Plan

would provide access to the two buildings. Stairs would lead up to the upper plaza, creating an entrance for skiers and visitors not residing at the lodge. The skier or upper plaza would connect the buildings and would connect the open ice rink with the facility. The skier plaza would be located at the bottom of the ski slopes and would be accessed by stairs from the lower plaza or from the adjacent slopes.

Development is anticipated to occur in one phase over a two-year timeframe beginning in Spring 2007 and ending in Spring 2009.

The project site is subject to the existing Juniper Ridge Master Plan (the Master Plan). The project would require amendments to the Master Plan in the areas of parking, height, density, setbacks, and land use. In addition, the project would require a General Plan amendment to redesignate Lot 87 from Low-Density Residential to Resort, with the majority of these lot being utilized for circulation and open space. Development of the project would be subject to further discretionary reviews that would include Use Permit, Tentative Tract Map, and Design Review Approvals. In addition, the project site is located in the boundaries of the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area Master Development Plan (the MMSA Development Plan), and the Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan “The Inyo Forest Plan.”

1.2 OBJECTIVES, PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

MMSA proposes to develop a permanent lodge facility on the site. The project would include a mix of uses, including transient lodging and a mix of ski-related uses, including food service, rental/demo/repair shop, retail, ski school and day care, ticketing/lobby, administrative space, and restrooms. In addition, the lodge would include a convenience market, restaurant, day spa and locker club.

The following describes the key participants and their roles in the development, analysis, and decisions related to the project. Section 1.4 provides a detailed list of the necessary approvals for the project.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, Inyo National Forest

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service), Inyo National Forest is the surface management agency responsible for the public lands within the project area. The Forest Service must amend the existing Special Use Permit for the project. The Forest Service must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to review and comment on matters that address or relate to its areas of legal jurisdiction and/or area of special expertise.

Consistent with requirements of NEPA, this EA also would serve as a decision-making tool to assist the Forest Service.

Forest Service planning regulations regarding Special Use Permits, require the Forest Service to deny proposals that are inconsistent with Forest Plans, are in conflict with management objectives or Federal statutes and regulations, or can be reasonably accommodated on non-National Forest System lands. The primary objective of the National Forest Management Act is to establish land and resources management planning guidelines, goals, and objectives in order to achieve effective and balanced uses while protecting renewable resources on national Forest System lands. The Act requires each individual forest to develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive planning and management plan.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act provides a definition for multiple-use and details the criteria and considerations that should be utilized when considering special uses that require a discretionary approval.

Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) establishes the regulations under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act as implemented by the Forest Service. Title 36 DFR Sections 219.1 through 219.29 provide the guidelines for the development of forest-specific planning documents as required by the National Forest Management Act. A key purpose of the planning documents is to “provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the national Forest System in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner.”

As required by Title 36 CFR 219, a Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Inyo National Forest has been prepared and adopted for implementation. Under the Forest Plan, the site is located within the “Alpine Ski Area” (Management Prescription Area #13). The purpose of this prescription is to maintain and manage downhill ski areas for public use. The management direction relating to recreational land use is as follows:

- Permit further expansion of areas already developed for alpine skiing. Expansion may include runs, lifts, base areas, and access to a degree that is often not compatible with other resource management options.
- Allow limited day use and interpretive developments if compatible with ski area development.

Town of Mammoth Lakes

The Town of Mammoth Lakes (Town) is the lead agency for compliance with CEQA for the project. MMSA has filed the required permit applications with the Town to obtain the necessary amendments and approval for the project on private lands within the project boundary. The Town's objectives for preparing this Draft EIR are to comply with the requirements of CEQA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. Consistent with the requirements of CEQA, the Draft EIR would be used as a decision-making tool to assist the Town in its determination whether to approve, modify or deny the project activities within its jurisdiction.

MMSA (Project Applicant)

MMSA owns the majority of the property on which the lodge would be developed. In addition, MMSA operates the ski facility under a Special Use Permit issued by the USDA Forest Service. The project would provide a permanent lodge at the mountain portal.

Section 15124(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that the Project Description shall contain "A statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project." Section 15125(b) of the CEQA Guidelines further states that, "The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project." Consistent with the Guidelines, the following has been identified as the underlying purpose of the project:

- To allow the development of MMSA's permanent lodge and day skier structured parking, which will replace the existing, temporary facilities and existing day skier surface parking lot.

In order to achieve this purpose, MMSA has developed the following set of objectives after careful consideration of relevant goals, objectives, and policies established by the Town of Mammoth Lakes:

- Create a world-class base area facility that supports numerous forms of outdoor recreation through the provision of lodging and conference facilities that encourages year-round tourist visitation.
- Provide a variety of uses so as to encourage family-oriented recreational opportunities.
- Provide amenities for the surrounding neighborhood so that commercial goods and services are within close proximity so as to reduce trips to other parts of Town.

- Contribute to the Town's trail network through the completion of the Mammoth Loop Trail on the site.
- Create an architectural landmark that blends in with the alpine setting and character of the Mammoth area.
- Respect the natural environment of the area through the use of landscape elements such as large boulders, indigenous species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers that echo the distinct geography of the site.
- Promote environmental sustainability by following the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines in the design and construction implementation processes.
- Further the Town's stated objectives to encourage the pedestrian orientation of the overall resort community by locating increased transient lodging density immediately adjacent to the ski area base lifts.
- Develop high occupancy transient bed base within the resort community, especially developments within 500 feet of a base area chair lifts, to ensure the long term economic sustainability of Town revenue sources.
- Develop a skier day lodge facility of adequate capacity and variety of associated uses to accommodate maximum skier entries at one time as identified in the MMSA Master Development Plan for the Chair 15 Base Area.
- Improve the economic stability of the Town of Mammoth Lakes by developing year-round destination resort amenities with uses including convenience retail, skier services and non-ski season uses such as conference space with associated public parking, food and beverage support, and indoor and outdoor assembly areas that can support community cultural events and group meetings during the non-ski season consistent with the Town's policies in the General Plan Land Use Element.

1.3 JOINT NEPA/CEQA DOCUMENT

a. Conformance with NEPA and CEQA

This Environmental Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Report (EA/Draft EIR) was prepared as a joint federal/state environmental document, as encouraged by NEPA regulations [40 CFR 1506.2(c)] and CEQA regulations (CEQA Guidelines 15226). A third party consultant, PCR Services Corporation, Inc. (PCR), prepared the NEPA/CEQA document under the direction

of the Forest Service and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. The Forest Service and the Town of Mammoth Lakes determined that a joint environmental document to meet the NEPA/CEQA requirements for evaluating the proposed Eagle Lodge Base Area Development Project would be appropriate.

This EA/Draft EIR was prepared to conform to the policy guidance provided in USFS's Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook (FSH 1909.15). This handbook also provides instructions for compliance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's NEPA Policies and Procedures (7 CFR 1b) and the Forest Service Manual (FSM 1950). In addition, Forest Service guidance relative to NEPA is found at 40 CFR 1500, 36 CFR 215, and FSH 1909.15. CEQA guidelines provide some guidance for preparing joint NEPA/CEQA documents (CEQA Guidelines 15220-15228); NEPA does not. This EA/Draft EIR follows CEQA guidance for joint NEPA/CEQA documents.

b. Public Scoping

This Draft EA/EIR was prepared following input from the public, responsible, and affected agencies through the EA/EIR scoping process. In accordance with Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was prepared. Based on the Initial Study, it was determined that an EIR should be prepared to more thoroughly analyze potential impacts that might occur from the project. In addition, the USFS determined that an EA was needed. Therefore, a joint Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Notice of Intent (NOI) was prepared and distributed to responsible agencies, affected agencies, and other interested parties on January 6, 2006. As required by CEQA, the NOP was also submitted to the State Clearinghouse to officially solicit participation in determining the scope of the EIR. In addition, the NOP was posted at the Office of the Mono County Clerk for 30 days. The joint notice was published in the local newspaper and in the Federal Registry. A public scoping meeting was held at Eagle Lodge on January 31, 2006 to further solicit public input. The NOP requested that written comments on the project be received by February 10, 2006. Information requested and input provided regarding the scope of the EA/EIR have been considered and incorporated into this document. A copy of the Initial Study, the NOP/NOI, and comments received in response to the NOP/NOI are provided in Appendix A.

In February 2006 MMSA modified the project by reorienting the main entrance of the lodge to Majestic Pines Road rather than Meridian Boulevard. In response, the Town published a Revised NOP/NOI. The notice was published in the local newspaper, posted at the County Clerk, and mailed to agencies and interested parties. The notice initiated a 30-day comment period that began on March 2, 2006 and ended on April 3, 2006. As with comments received on the original NOP/NOI, information requested and input provided regarding the scope of the EA/EIR have been considered and incorporated into this document. A copy of the Revised

NOP/NOI and comments received in response to the Revised NOP/NOI are also provided in Appendix A.

c. Identified Issues and Concerns

The following environmental issues were identified through a review of the written comments and concerns voiced during formal scoping and preliminary agency review of the project: analysis of the three probable State Route 203 access points; control and quality of stormwater runoff; wastewater demand; water pressure relative to proposed building heights; access to Mammoth Community Water District Well 16; need for storefront type office space for police personnel; traffic, access, and parking; air quality; noise; trash; biological resources; aesthetics (building height); and archaeological resources.

1.4 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The EA/Draft EIR is organized by the sections summarized below:

- **Chapter 1, Introduction**, provides a brief overview of the proposed action and the environmental review process, and outlines the organization of the EA/EIR. This chapter also includes the applicant's objectives for the proposed action.
- **Chapter 2, Proposed Action and Alternatives**, describes the site location, the proposed action and the alternatives considered.
- **Chapter 3, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**, describes for each environmental issue, the existing conditions or setting before project implementation; methods and assumptions used in the impact analysis; thresholds of significance; impacts that would result from the proposed action; and applicable mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts. Existing regulations that serve to minimize or reduce environmental impacts are not considered as mitigation measures. This section also includes an analysis of the alternatives.
- **Chapter 4, Cumulative Impacts**, provides an analysis of cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed project and related projects in the area.
- **Chapter 5, Other Considerations**, provides a discussion of the irreversible environmental changes to the natural environment resulting from the implementation of the proposed action. In addition, this section provides a summary of the proposed

project's potential to lead to population growth and indirect implications of that growth on the Town. This section also contains a summary of the issue areas that were determined in the Initial Study for the project to result in less than significant environmental impacts. Furthermore, the significant unavoidable impacts that would result from project implementation are summarized in this section. Finally, an analysis of potential secondary effects that could result from the implementation of recommended mitigation measures is provided in this section.

- **Section 6, Preparers and Persons Consulted**, lists the individuals involved in preparing this EA/Draft EIR and organizations and persons consulted to ascertain supporting information to support the analyses.
- **Chapter 7, References**, identifies the documents (printed references) used in preparing this document.
- **Appendices**, present data supporting the analyses or contents of this EA/Draft EIR. The appendices include the following:
 - Appendix A: Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent (NOP/NOI), Initial Study, and Comments on the NOP/NOI
 - Appendix B: Traffic Study
 - Appendix C: Air Quality Technical Worksheets
 - Appendix D: Noise Technical Worksheets
 - Appendix E: Floral and Faunal Compendia
 - Appendix F: Cultural Resources Technical Report
 - Appendix G: Detailed Height and Shade/Shadow Analysis
 - Appendix H: Preliminary Hydrogeologic Investigation; Preliminary Drainage Study; Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
 - Appendix I: Site Plan, Height Analysis, Visual Simulations and Shade/Shadow Analysis for Alternate Design Alternative

1.5 NECESSARY APPROVALS

Approvals required for development of the Eagle Lodge facility would include, but not be limited to, the following from the Town of Mammoth Lakes:

- Certification of the EIR
- General Plan Amendment
 - Redesignate Lot 87 from Low-Density Residential to Resort

- Amendment to Juniper Ridge Master Plan
 - Land Use: the majority of the project lies on Juniper Ridge Area 4, which was designated for parking and 35,000 sq. ft of commercial within the adopted master plan. There was also an anticipated base lodge facility on Forest Service land of approximately 80,000 square feet which has been incorporated into the project. The project would require amending the permitted uses of Area 4 to allow for development of the mixed use base lodge facility.
 - Access: the Master Plan indicates that access for Area 4 should be from Meridian Boulevard. The project would require an amendment with regard to access to allow the primary access for the lodge to be from Majestic Pines Road.
 - Height: Area #4 is current designated for a parking structure and commercial uses with a building height of up to 35 feet tall for the parking structure and 45 feet as measured from street grade for commercial buildings. The project proposes an average building height above existing grade of 64 feet for the Skier Services Building. The peak building height of this building would be approximately 71 feet above the Meridian Boulevard street grade (8065 feet above mean sea level). The primary structure, the lodge, would have an average building height of 61 feet. The peak building height of the lodge would be approximately 87 feet above the Majestic Pines Road street grade (8065 feet above mean sea level).
 - Parking: the current Master Plan requires that all off street parking shall be provided for all uses in accordance with the requirements and design standards of Title 17, Zoning Code, of the Town's Municipal Code. The project would require amendment to this language to allow for parking to be determined through a needs based analysis instead of an hours of use analysis. The study would be conducted by a Town selected consultant.
 - Setbacks: the project crosses property lines and therefore, amendments to setback provisions of the currently adopted Juniper Ridge Master Plan will be required.
 - Density: the Master Plan currently permits a total of 289 dwelling unit equivalents.⁴ The project proposes an increase in density of 83 dwelling units for a total of 373 dwelling unit equivalents in a worst-case (213) hotel room development program. The proposed density is less than the maximum density permitted under existing zoning, but greater than the density being evaluated under the 2005 Draft General Plan Update and EIR.

⁴ Studios, 1 bdrms and hotels rooms are equivalent to ½ dwelling unit.

- Use Permit/Tentative Tract Map/Design Review Approvals⁵
- Grading and Building Permits

The Forest Service has determined that an EA is required to analyze the effects of the proposed project on National Forest System Lands. Approvals required for development of the Eagle Lodge facility would include, but not be limited to, the following from the Forest Service:

- Decision Notice
- Finding of No Significant Impact
- Non-significant amendment of the Inyo Forest Plan in order to assign visual quality objectives to the area
- An update of the MMSA Master Development Plan to reflect proposed conditions and the proposed facility
- National Forest Management Act Consistency Determination
- Amendment of the MMSA Special Use Permit to allow for new facilities⁶

⁵ *These applications have not been filed with the Town of Mammoth Lakes and may require additional environmental analysis.*

⁶ *The Forest Service amendment of the MMSA Special Use Permit in turn requires and authorizes the Town of Mammoth Lakes to permit and enforce code compliance on the Federal Land portion of the proposal.*