



"High Mountain
Heli-Skiing"
<heli-ski@wyoming.com>

To: <ceq_nepa@fs.fed.us>
cc:
Subject: Nepa Task Force Comments

CQ554

09/23/02 05:38 PM
Please respond to
heli-ski

Dear sirs,

I would like to submit the following general comments regarding our ongoing experience with NEPA for your study. I have also petitioned our Wyoming Congressional District that urgent changes are needed to NEPA and the ESA. The following letter has been posted on our web site for our clientele that relates our experience with NEPA. It is totally absurd that a business of 26 years be subjected to this level of analysis and expense to renew our special use permit. We are all for protecting the environment but any changes to NEPA that will eliminate the gridlock on our National Forests are urgently needed now.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jon Shick, High Mountain Heli-Skiing
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HMH Permit Renewal Status
as of June 1, 2002
Environmental Impact Statement Required

In a meeting on May 29, 2002, Forest Service Officials determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would now be the appropriate level of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) analysis required to reissue High Mountain Heli-Skiing's (HMH) 5-year special use permit.

Although scoping had just been completed for an EA (Environmental Analysis), the decision to change the level of analysis was deemed to be necessary in light of some of the comments received and the anticipated appeals by local special interest groups. Scoping is the process by which the Forest Service as the lead agency solicits input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of the issues and impacts to be addressed in the analysis and the methods by which they will be evaluated.

There has been very little opposition to our permit being reissued, except from our local special interest groups. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) and Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance (JHCA) have made their goals clear - put heli-skiing out of business for good. This past spring the GYC and JHCA sued the Forest Service, naming HMH in their suit. They were seeking an injunction to stop heli-skiing, claiming the appropriate NEPA analysis had not been completed before issuing us a temporary one-year permit to operate last winter. The case has been dropped temporarily, as it is a mute point, now that our season has ended and the analysis is well underway.

Make no mistake, the agenda of these special interest groups would be to shut down all FS permittees and eliminate multiple use on our public lands. They use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to create gridlock within the Forest Service and hold the FS and Permitted Outfitters hostage. For the price of a postage stamp, they

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can demand all these studies be done and they know that it is the permittee that will have to pay for them. If they can't put us out of business legally they will try to put us out of business financially. Simply put, it is economic blackmail.

What we think will happen? The EIS will clearly show no significant impact. I'm sure these special interest groups think that we are out there chasing lynx around on skis. But, as an experienced heli-skier, you'll agree how absurd it is to spend this much time and money to study a bunch of animals that simply aren't there. Once the Record of Decision is released they will file their appeals. When they don't get their way they will sue.

The effect would be to stall the process until we are into our ski season and then seek another injunction to stop heli-skiing. If it comes to it, there is no precedent for a judge to allow our business of 26 years to close while this process proceeds. Please do not let any of this affect your plans to visit us this winter. Should this process be delayed, the FS has indicated that they will issue another temporary permit for us to operate this ski season. Stay in touch, be informed and participate. We thank you in advance for your continued support and look forward to skiing with you again next winter.