

Master Development Plan

The Little Ski Hill and
Bear Basin Nordic Area

Payette Lakes Ski Club

The Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic Master Development Plan

Introduction and Background

This Master Development Plan describes activities, improvements, and expansion opportunities for The Little Ski Hill alpine and Bear Basin Nordic areas, including year round activities. Both areas are located on National Forest System land managed by the USDA Forest Service. The Payette Lakes Ski Club (PLSC) operates The Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic under a Special-Use-Permit administered by the Payette National Forest. See Figure 1. (Area Location Map) Permit terms require completion of a Master Development Plan.

The PLSC is a not for profit organization, governed by an all volunteer Board of Directors. The club has provided McCall and the surrounding communities with alpine and Nordic skiing for more than seventy years. The mission of the PLSC is to provide affordable skiing opportunities to school age children and local families. The Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic areas are supported by lift tickets, trail fees, grants and fund-raising projects. This plan outlines a strategy for the PLSC, in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service, to continue to maintain and develop Nordic and alpine facilities and programs. The proposed actions are listed in Phases (I, II, III) to provide a long term vision for the areas. However, a five year scope of implementation would realistically include only Phases I and II.

The Little Ski Hill (LSH) has been an integral part of the McCall skiing experience since 1937. The first lift was a sled-like contraption on a cable system, which carried skiers to the top of the hill. The Little Ski Hill offered alpine skiing and some cross-country ski trails. The ski area became very popular with residents of McCall and many in the community skied at the Hill. Soon a racing team was formed, made up mostly of youngsters 12 and under, called the Mighty Mites—a program that is still going strong. As a result of the popularity of the Little Hill and its youth ski programs, numerous local skiers have been members of Olympic, National and Collegiate teams and represented the town of McCall.

In 1953, a platter lift was installed, which was replaced with the current T-bar lift in 1970. In 1973, lights were installed making night skiing possible. The existing lodge building replaced one that burned down in 1954.

The PLSC maintains over 25 km of groomed cross-country ski trails and 10 km of snowshoe trails at beautiful Bear Basin Nordic (BBN). The club also maintains a warming yurt at the trailhead. Visitor use of the area has grown each year and trail pass fees provide significant revenue for PLSC programs. As the popularity of Nordic skiing and snowshoeing continue to grow, the PLSC and the Payette National Forest are in a unique position to accommodate this demand with an exceptional venue in the Bear Basin area. Proximity to the population base of McCall and surrounding areas, the varied terrain, vegetative types, views, abundant snowfall, and undeveloped character of the Bear Basin area make it an ideal location for non-motorized winter activities.

Present Status

Alpine. The PLSC is currently authorized to use 76 acres of National Forest System (NFS) land under terms of a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the purposes of constructing, operating and maintaining a winter sports resort. Operation and maintenance of the government owned 3538 square foot ski lodge and Nordic center are permitted under terms of the Granger-Thye Act of 1959. Existing facilities at the Hill include a historic ski lodge and Nordic touring center, a surface ski lift (t-bar) and accompanying lift shacks, and a modest maintenance shed. Known locally and historically as the “The Little Ski Hill.”, the alpine facility has played a unique and vital role for more than 70 years.

Current t-bar uphill skier/boarder capacity per hour equals approximately 900 skiers. However, a comfortable capacity for day-use visitors is closer to 100 people. The lodge itself has a building occupancy limit of 82 people on the upper level, and 72 people in the lower level. These limits were established prior to construction of the existing upper level outdoor deck. However, the lodge comfortably accommodates about 50 people primarily using the upper level indoor tables and seating. Overall, the number of ski hill visitors is constrained by limited parking and lodge facilities, plus the potential for longer lift lines and crowds on a relatively few ski runs. Peak use of the lodge and ski runs is approximately 200 people, such as during McCall Ski Racing Team events.

The 2-story ski lodge is in need of many improvements to continue to serving the skiing public. The touring center has recently been renovated and is currently being utilized as a school for promising winter athletes. The surface lift, while being outfitted with a new cable over the summer of 2007, requires considerable and ongoing maintenance. The t-bar is in the twilight of its long and memorable service. Existing equipment includes a 1997 Snowcat groomer, a 1997 MP Bombardier Groomer, three snowmobiles, and numerous items to run the area.

Existing terrain at the alpine ski area is 50% beginner, 40% intermediate, and 10% expert. The alpine hill also includes a terrain park with multiple features (rails, jumps, etc.) and provides the only night skiing and snowboarding in central Idaho. Present utilization of this terrain includes the general skiing and boarding public (all ages and abilities), the After School Program (ASP), and the McCall Ski Racing Team (MSRT). See Figure 2. (LSH Trail Map)

The ASP is a long-standing and successful effort to both introduce children to winter sport and

provide a healthy, outdoor activity during the severe winter months. The program includes lessons, lockers at the ski lodge, and transportation from school to the hill. During the 2009/10 Season, the ASP served over 70 alpine skiers and 15 snowboarders ages 5-12. The ability range went from 25 “first timers”, to aspiring ski racers who had the opportunity to both train and race. The same was true for snowboarders—from beginners to those with advanced terrain park skills. The ASP also offers an adventure course combining snowshoeing, Nordic skiing and winter survival.

The MSRT is a non-profit organization established in 1947, which provides quality ski training and race experience to all ages of skiers. While the focus is on younger skiers (currently 68 athletes between the ages of 6 and 18), MSRT also provides Masters Race training (currently 8 athletes between the ages of 42 and 70). MSRT coaching and training facilitates racer development from beginner to elite alpine levels including past Olympic, National, and Jr. National/Olympic team members. MSRT utilizes the alpine hill both for training and hosting ski races as well as the touring center.

Summer. The Little Ski Hill is currently underutilized in the summer. There are several opportunities to improve both the facilities and the land around the lodge to accommodate non-winter activities. For example, the proposed amphitheater would create an attractive and much needed outdoor space for special events (e.g., concerts, lectures, corporate retreats, weddings, family reunions, outdoor education), by grading and landscaping the “face” of the hill opposite lodge.

Although summer use of Little Bear Basin is not authorized under the current special use authorization, PLSC may propose operation to the Forest Service in the future. Mountain bike trails are another desirable summer option. The construction and popularity of new mountain bike trails at LBB creates potential to connect LBB to new trails constructed at LSH. There are many current opportunities to increase summer usage of PLSC run facilities. Most of these opportunities will come with significant improvement needs.

Nordic. After the loss of Nordic trails to private development in 2005, the PLSC established the Bear Basin Nordic trails on thirty acres of private and Forest Service land. The area includes over 25 km of ski trails plus about 5 km of snowshoe trails. It is located north of Highway 55, approximately one half mile east of the Little Ski Hill lodge. See Figure 3. (BBN Trail Map) The popularity of this Nordic trail system has exceeded all expectations and confirms the need for expanding the trail system and amenities in the future.

The McCall Nordic Ski Team (MNST) and the Payette Lakes Sports Club use Bear Basin Nordic extensively. MNST is a non-profit ski organization which provides quality Nordic ski training and race experience for school aged children. MNST coaching and training facilitates racer development from beginner to elite Nordic levels including past Olympic, National, and Jr. National/Olympic team members. MNST utilizes the Nordic trails both at LSH and LBB for training and hosting ski races. Payette Lakes Sports Club is a popular, year-round Nordic teaching and training program, geared

especially toward younger skiers. The team includes 7 year old instructors to Junior Olympians, and participates in local, regional and national races.

The Payette Lakes Ski Marathon is sponsored annually by PLSC. Many local and visiting skiers compete in the 15K-30K marathon event. Entries in the Payette Lakes Marathon have grown rapidly each year.

Goals

The PLSC would like to improve and expand the alpine operations, as well as Nordic trails and facilities on public land. The PLSC is committed to working with the Forest Service and the local community in reaching the goals listed in the proposed action.

The Alpine and Nordic trails, facilities and programs maintained by the PLSC are clearly a valuable and important community amenity. The PLSC is interested in developing year round programs along with its winter programs. Bike trails at both the Little Hill and Little Bear Basin and programs to encourage their use, along with summer camps for area youth, would add a strong component to the overall activities of the PLSC and are activities PLSC will consider pursuing in the future.

Proposed Action

Table 1. Alpine Proposed Action Overview

Phase I Lifts	Phase I Terrain	Phase I Facilities
<i>Maintenance</i> Add Soft Start Replace T's Replace lights on lift towers		<i>Maintenance</i> Kitchen renovation Repaint lodge Replace flooring Replace old windows
<i>New Construction</i> New lift maintenance shack New bull wheel cover	<i>New Construction</i> Amphitheater project Dirt Jumps on Outback run Tree thinning for glade skiing Additional base lighting	<i>New Construction</i> Information/history kiosk
Phase II Lifts	Phase II Terrain	Phase II Facilities

<i>New Construction</i> Install magic carpet/handle tow	<i>New Construction</i> Additional lighting Race Run, Outback Re-condition old ski jumps	<i>New Construction</i> New Groomer Shed Vault toilet at base of lift
Phase III Lifts	Phase III Terrain	Phase III Facilities
<i>New Construction</i> Replace t-bar with new surface or chair lift	<i>New Construction</i> Bike trails and features Snowmaking Summer yurt at top of hill Temporary overflow parking	<i>New Construction</i> Vault toilet at top of lift Major lodge remodel

Table 2. Nordic Proposed Action Overview
All phases are New Construction

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Start /finish area for races Power and water to yurt	Biathlon Range Storage Shed	Stadium start Lighted trails Yurt lodging

Proposed Action Project Descriptions

Alpine. See Figure 4. (LSH Project Overview)

Phase I Lifts:

Maintenance and Equipment upgrades

- Add soft start to lift. This is a device that allows for a gradual increase to full speed of the lift. This will help reduce problems with riders on the lift as well as fatigue on T's.
- **Replace T's.** Find T's that have spring boxes and rope to attach T's. These T's are easier for riders to control and less overall maintenance required.
- Replace aging lights on lift towers and redirect some lights to increase lighted area.

New Construction

- Replace the maintenance shack at the base of the lift. Replace with 15'x30' structure that is used for storage of lift maintenance equipment and work area to maintain lift equipment and rebuild T's.
- New cover for upper bull wheel. Currently there are a few pieces of plywood above the bull wheel that keeps snow and debris from accumulating on the wheel. New cover would be a small pitched roof resting on top of gantry that would allow snow to shed off to the sides.

Phase II Lifts:

New Construction

- Install handle tow/magic carpet. The lift would be installed in the area between the original lodge site and the "Lodge Face" run. The length of the lift would be roughly 200' +/- to allow access to easy terrain for riders who have never skied or snowboarded before.

Phase III Lifts:

New Construction

- Replace T-bar with new surface lift or chairlift. Either choice will be dependent upon funding for a used lift or the re-engineering required for lift installation. The current lift line will be used as the location for the new lift.

Phase I Terrain:

New Construction

- Amphitheater Project: this project would improve and protect the riparian area and create a large meadow area for summer events. Seasonal flooding and erosion would be reduced, and the lower lodge entry area improved. The plan would restore the natural profile and vegetation of the creek, and include a scenic bridge crossing; the surrounding area would be graded and landscaped with a combination of native and hardy meadow grasses. A section of dirt road leading from Highway 55 to Fishlake Road would be graded and seeded below the "Lodge" run and would no longer be used for vehicle access. Concerts and other events would use a temporary stage on the western edge of the project area. In addition, the area below the parking lot would be filled and seeded for use as tent camping during summer events.
- Build dirt jumps on "Outback" run on the south side of T-bar. Two jumps will be constructed to allow for jumps to be easily maintained with less snow in the winter. These jumps could also double as terrain features for mountain bikes in the summer. The jumps will be constructed

Proposed Action Description, continued

- Tree removal: Treed area to the west of "Race Run" would be thinned out to add glade skiing terrain and area for mountain bike trails/features. The area around the "A jump" needs to be thinned to allow for a wider landing area on the jump. The area to the east of the jump can be thinned for additional glade skiing. The area between "Outback" and T-bar needs to be thinned for additional glade skiing
- Additional Lighting in base area. Lighting to be installed to illuminate proposed "Amphitheater Project" and the area where proposed handle tow/magic carpet is to be installed. Estimated 3-5 additional light poles with buried power run to each.

Phase II Terrain:

New Construction

- Additional lighting "Outback" and "Race Run." To light the remaining section of "Outback" would require 6 to 8 new poles to light the south side with some poles having multiple lights. On "Race Run" PLSC would like to install a night lighting system which could be certified for night time competition. This would require double the lights for recreational skiing. Requiring a total of twelve new poles installed on both sides of the run.
- Re-condition ski jumps. This would include building new dirt jumps in the location of the old jumps. Additional dirt work may be required on the in run to the "A jump" to get the desired speed without having to re-build the jump tower.

Phase III Terrain:

- Work with USFS to build new trails on LSH that could be accessed and compliment current trails at Bear Basin Nordic. Terrain is available to make man-made features such as wooden jumps, ramps, banked turns, wall rides etc
- Develop area on top of the ski hill for summer use, and add yurt for winter use. The area at the highest point on the mountain between the top of the T-bar and the cul-de-sac on Kings Pines Estates would be leveled out and made easily accessible from the Kings Pines Road. A grassy area would be developed for event usage such as wedding ceremonies. The yurt from LBB would be moved over this area to act as a warming hut in the winter.
- New jump tower for "A jump" In some ways this would be a symbolic endeavor to pay homage to the beginnings of Little Ski Hill. In other ways it would open opportunities by bringing ski jumping back to our community. The tower would be constructed to accommodate Galande jumping and big air contests at a minimum, and potentially, maintained as a legitimate Nordic ski jump.
- Ropes course/zip lines. These features could be used as team building tools and amenities for

future summer programs offered by TESC.

- Develop snowmaking capabilities using Kings Pine (a neighboring development with strong local roots) as a possible water source. Add pipes and hydrants to bring the water onto NFS lands.
 - Install five permanent guns on Run #1 (Race Hill)
 - Install four permanent guns on Face
 - Install two permanent guns on Run #2
 - Purchase four portable guns

Phase I Facilities:

New Construction

- Information/history kiosk outside of lodge. This would be a simple information kiosk with pictures and explanation of the history of the Little Ski Hill.

Maintenance and Equipment Upgrades

- Kitchen renovation: The current island will be re-configured: the goal is to create a kitchen with a dishwasher and a hood for the stove. This would allow for an unlimited menu option, rather than our current limitations on food preparation.
- Re-paint exterior/interior.
- New flooring in upper and lower lodge; new carpet.
- Finish replacing old single paned windows on north side of lodge.

Phase II Facilities:

New Construction

New Groomer Shed: Build maintenance building at Little Ski Hill on flat area below the current parking lot or located in SW corner of property off new paved road, out of the way of the ski area, with good road access for repair work and/or getting supplies to the building. Size the structure big enough to store and work on snow cat and snowmobiles. Siding would match current lodge in color. The following is a possible blue print for what a building might be like:

Size: 28' wide by 35' long (groomer is 18' wide by 25' long). Shed roofs on each side, out 12', running along entire length of building.

Doors: One to accommodate the groomer 22' wide, either over head or swing open; 3 entry doors: 1 on each side to accommodate people.

Floor: Concrete, with a drain in the middle and a painted finish; road bed material, sand, under the shed roofs.

Electricity: Over head lights throughout. 220 volt plugs on 2 interior walls. Interior plugs every 6' or 8', as required by code. Exterior flood lights on all sides controlled by interior switches. Exterior plugs on all 4 sides. Heat: Radiant heat in the floor. Exterior: metal siding

Miscellaneous: Shelves, part bins, bench, flammable storage cabinet, fuel tank for groomer, cage in the shed roof areas for storage, port-a-potty, parking area, telephone service,

Vault Toilets at base of ski lift. This would allow lift operators and visitors a place to use restrooms without having to return to the main lodge.

Phase III Facilities:

- Major remodel or re-build of main lodge.

Nordic. (Bear Basin Nordic)

Phase 1:

New Construction

- Develop a start and finish area for Nordic races: located in the “Meadows”, this consists of two wood poles (20’ length by 10” diameter) secured in the ground. The poles would frame either side of the start/finish zone and a cable between them would hang race banners. See Figure 5. (BBN Project Map)
- Run water and power to current yurt location. This would allow for some basic amenities such as food service. Electric service would connect at the junction of North Club Hill road and BBN access road.

Phase II :

New Construction

- Develop biathlon shooting range and sanctioned biathlon course. PLSC has a biathlon range located near the LSH lodge. The loss of ski trails in the area has rendered the old range useless. McCall has a long tradition of biathlon. The sport has huge international participation and is intriguing to young skiers. It would be a community benefit to include a 10-point biathlon firing range within the Bear Basin trail network. The benefit is twofold: to encourage local youth to participate in this Olympic sport, and to attract national teams to train in McCall.

Including left and right side safety margins, a 10-point range requires a 40 meter wide and 60 meter long footprint. The best layout for the range would include a natural hill (approx. 15 meter elevation gain) as a backstop, and be shooting north to avoid the sun rising or setting over the targets. Both the firing line and the target line are typically raised one meter in elevation above the terrain between them. The range would be offset from the tourist trails, requiring approximately 100 meters for the approach and another 100 meters for the exit of the range. The total estimate of new trail needed for the range is 240 meters. Distancing the range from adjacent residential property or a lodge is advisable. The proposed location is north east of the yurt, accessed via the Crestview ski trail. No ski trails would need to be closed. See Figure 5. (BBN Project Map)

Biathlon ranges require equipment storage. A 12' by 18' structure without heat or electricity will suffice. A

range building is not essential, but it greatly adds to accommodating the sport. It would be located at entrance to the biathlon range.

Nordic. Phase III:

- Stadium start/finish incorporated into biathlon range.
- Lighted trails 2-5k with temporary solar powered lights that can be removed for the summer season.
- Pursue the possibility of providing a system of lodging yurts that would sleep four to six people and have basic amenities for cooking and sleeping. These would be located off the main trails in scenic locations with porta-potties and grey water systems.

PLSC Business Plan

In the past five years, PLSC has overcome challenges in the form of relocating the Nordic trail system and competing for its place in youth athletic programs. In these five years, PLSC has risen to the challenge and is performing better than it has, possibly, in its history. The new Nordic trails are increasing in popularity every season and have become a substantial income generator for PLSC. In the 2009-2010, Bear Basin Nordic

had the first groomed trails in the state that season. That was not the only first for PLSC; the 09-10 season also brought the earliest terrain park to the area as well. The Little Ski Hill is once again a thriving facility for the area youth to learn and improve their skiing and snowboarding abilities. The 09-10 season saw over 90 area children involved in our after school program that has grown to include skiing, snowboarding and adventure program that includes snowshoe, Nordic and winter survival skills. There are, however, improvements needed to continue our success.

PLSC has already embarked on and completed many projects including the new trails at Bear Basin Nordic, new lighting on the ski hill and improvements to the ski lift. The past few years have seen the implementation of paid and volunteer staff operation of the facilities. This has led to increased focus on improving current programs, and creation of new programs. Currently PLSC is in a position to improve income-generating areas such as increased skier visits at both LBB and LSH, and increased summer income through rentals of the lodge and hosting events.

This MDP will also become an important part of the business plan for the Payette Lakes Ski Club. It will be a road map for the future, and guide the Board's budget and fundraising. As each successive phase is completed the operations at Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic will generate more funds and user days. This "boot strap" approach has proven very effective in the last five years.

To sum up the business model there are three legs for growth and stability. The first is a "build it and they will come" attitude. There is a need and positive community support for the programs offered by the Payette Lakes Ski Club. If the PLSC puts forward quality programs and facilities, the people will come. Secondly, the Club will need to build on the programs by having a mix of volunteers and paid staff. This continuity and energy is essential to competing for the free time of the community. The last part is strong

planning, which is outlined in the MDP, coupled with long-term effective financial strategies that guarantee the long-term success of the Payette Lakes Ski Club.

Summary and Conclusion

Projects proposed in this MDP are designed to maintain and improve winter guest services at The Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic, plus create opportunities for new year-round activities. Upgrades and new facilities, such as the terrain park, new lighting and lodge upgrades will benefit youth in the After School Program and day-use skiers. Nordic improvements at Bear Basin Nordic are needed to accommodate the increased desire for Nordic facilities in the local area, as more local residents and visitors pursue this activity. Local youth will have the opportunity to learn an Olympic sport at the biathlon range.

The MDP will help focus marketing to attract regional and national Nordic and alpine ski competitions, including Olympic qualifiers, to the area.

Overall, the Master Development plan outlines a strategy designed to continue, and build on, the legacy of the PLSC: providing unique skiing opportunities for the youth, families and visitors of our community for the foreseeable future.