Alta Ski Area Proposal 2020

A proposal to exchange private lands outside of the ski area and address backcountry parking issues in the Town of Alta.

Alta Ski Area has put this proposal together in harmony with the Mountain Accord’s purpose of preserving the legacy of the Wasatch through responsible stewardship of the natural resources, providing quality recreation experiences, development and implementation of a environmentally-sustainable transportation system and supporting a vibrant economy. This proposal addresses a purpose of the Mountain Accord and interests expressed form the Central Wasatch Commission by moving private lands outside of Alta Ski Area’s area boundary into public ownership, as well as, providing a short term relief to a backcountry user parking issue in Alta until longer term transportation solutions can be developed and implemented.

Alta Ski Area has private lands outside of the ski area boundary on the North side of Little Cottonwood Canyon, as well as, in Big Cottonwood Canyon it would be willing to exchange for lands within the ski area boundary, in conjunction with replacing parking spots within the ski area boundary that are being used by backcountry users. Currently, there is very little public parking in the Town of Alta for backcountry users. During the past two seasons, over 200 parking spots in Alta Ski Area’s parking lots have been used by backcountry users on days when Alta has turned skiers away due to the lack of parking. Alta Ski Area estimates it has lost more than $250,000 in revenue over the past two seasons due to the use of its parking by backcountry users.

To address Alta Ski Area’s concerns regarding parking for backcountry users and to move private lands located outside the ski area boundary which are used by the backcountry community to public ownership, Alta Ski Area proposes the following:

* Modify existing parking areas within Alta Ski Area’s special use permit to add 220 parking spots to replace parking spaces being regularly used by backcountry users. These parking spaces can be added by squaring up the Wildcat, Flagstaff and Grizzly parking areas which are located on Forest Service land within Alta’s Special Use permit. The Flagstaff modifications are located adjacent to a proposed transportation hub site location along State Road 210 across from the Town of Alta’s proposed Community Center. These modifications will provide some relief for the parking issues in the Town of Alta until longer term transportation solutions can be developed and implemented.
* Alta Ski Area owns a 40 acre parcel located in Big Cottonwood Canyon’s Mineral Fork, adjacent to the Mount Olympus Wilderness Area and only ½ mile away from Lake Blanche. Alta Ski Area proposes to exchange this parcel for mineral survey fractions owned by the Forest Service that are interspersed in the private lands owned by Alta Ski Area within Alta’s and Solitude’s ski area boundaries under the Small Tract Act of 1983. Mineral survey fractions are small parcels owned by the Forest Service interspersed in private lands which cannot be efficiently administered, accessed or used because of their size, shape and location. Alta Ski Area has identified 34 mineral fractions within Alta’s private lands in Grizzly Gulch and Honeycomb Canyon, that qualify for exchange under the Small Tract Act of 1983.
* Alta Ski Area owns 186 acres of land on the North side of Little Cottonwood Canyon and in Silver Fork that it is willing to exchange on a FMV basis for privately owned lands within its ski area boundary. Alta Ski Area has identified 15 acres owned by Salt Lake City that meet this criteria for which Alta has interest in exchanging for. This exchange would provide backcountry users access from the Town of Alta to the North ridgeline without needing to cross privately owned lands.

Alta Ski Area, the Forest Service and Salt Lake Department of Public Utilities are long-term partners in providing outdoor recreation on public lands while minimizing and mitigating the impact upon watershed and natural resources. This proposal appropriately reflects this ongoing partnership and furthers the purposes of the Mountain Accord while preserving access for dispersed recreation users.