



Summer Trails Master Plan Revision

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1. Introduction/General Description

The following is an amendment to the Steamboat Ski Area Master Plan Amendment dated July 2004, specifically to section E.2 Summer Recreation Opportunities – Existing and Proposed, *Mountain Biking* and *Hiking* sections on pages 126 & 127 respectively.

One of Steamboat Ski & Resort's most significant opportunities to increase summer business is through enhancing and expanding its summer trail system for mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding. Through this amendment, the Steamboat Ski Area proposes to offer a wider variety of options for these uses.

1.1 Background/History

Steamboat Ski & Resort's original trail system was first developed in 1982 and new trails have been constructed periodically since that time. Approximately 50 miles of trails have been constructed to offer mountain bike enthusiasts a resort experience for both up-hill and downhill traffic. Guests may bring their Mountain bikes up the Gondola for access to the trail system. Guest may also rent bikes in the base area at Ski Area operated facilities or other local shops. Bikers and hikers to the area may access the trails from the gondola base area, the base of Thunderhead Lift or by riding the gondola. Other occasional uses include horseback riders and hunters who may use the trail system to access the trails on the National Forest within or outside the ski area permit boundary. The ski area trail system connects to Forest Service System Trail #1032 (Mountain View Trail) which connects to several other trails on the National Forest that lead to Rabbit Ears Pass, Buffalo Pass, and Fish Creek Falls including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST/Wyoming Trail #1101).

The Steamboat Springs Running Series, Town Challenge mountain bike races, and other periodic events utilize the trail system.

1.2 Statement of Goals and Objectives

The desired future condition is to continue the development of Steamboat Ski & Resort as a "premier, four-season resort" and to "manage the Steamboat Ski Resort's summer mountain biking and hiking programs and outdoor activities for increased use and enjoyment as a summer tourist destination". In order to accomplish this, there is a need to analyze, review, and predict trends of a variety of requested uses, and balance this against a business plan, and the Steamboat Summer demographic"

The Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation will plan, develop, and maintain the enhanced and expanded trail system, and access to these trail systems, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service.

Overall, while many resorts limit their summer business to Downhill/Freeride only, the Steamboat Ski Area is taking a multifaceted approach. Downhill/Freeride is a fast growing activity that provides for downhill directional only travel with jumps, rolls, and features that provide a fluid and flowing ride and utilizes specialized equipment and safety gear specific to the sport. Cross Country mountain biking provides for both uphill and downhill travel and usually as much slower speeds. Cross Country and hiking trails are designed, built, and utilized much

differently than Downhill/Freeride and thus each have different safety goals and initiatives in how they are managed. The proposed Master Trail Plan includes creating new trails, changing certain elements of existing trails, and enhancing current trails with naturally appearing elevated obstacles and features. We have identified four specific types of users of the proposed new trails system as follows:

- The first group includes mountain bikers and hikers either new to the sport or less experienced, who use the gondola to access our intermediate bike trails or want to hike down to the base area on a hiking trail. These are the majority of current Steamboat Ski Area guests currently identified within its business models and are largely comprised of destination guest visitors from Regional, National, and International origins.
- The second group includes the downhill directional (gravity), or “Free Ride” mountain biking riders who seek a variety of downhill only directional trails to test and improve their riding skills. The ultimate goal of the proposed expansion is to offer a full range of mountain bike trails for the novice off-road gravity biker to advance and expert gravity riders seeking challenging and exciting terrain.
- The third group includes mountain bike riders, and hikers that have the desire, physical ability, and stamina to ride and hike in a high alpine environment in either uphill or downhill directions, and are able to safely mix with other uses. This group enjoys expanded opportunities to access areas outside the ski area boundary into the Routt National Forest as well and specifically enjoys the trails up to and above the gondola.
- The fourth group includes, horseback riding, which was not addressed in the Steamboat Ski Area Master Plan Amendment dated July 2004, but is included in the revision as it is recognized that there are in fact some limited uses.
 - Multi-directional trails would be accessible to horseback riding
 - It is recommended that sole access for horseback riding is at the base of Thunderhead lift (top of Burgess Creek road). Access is good at this location, however parking for horse carrying vehicles and trailers is not currently adequate and thus use is limited.

1.3 Purpose and Proposal

The purpose of this Master Plan update is to meet the needs of the community and visiting guests for these and other recreational activities at the ski area in the summer months. The proposed trail system will utilize and evolve existing trails combined with the development of new trails for this purpose. As demand changes, both quantity and types of uses, there is a need to update the plan to meet these changing demands.

In recent years, Downhill/Freeride bike parks have gained in popularity. The bikes used in Downhill/Freeride parks have suspension systems that are designed to absorb much bigger terrain features and obstacles than the mountain bikes tailored to cross country travel.

Hiking has remained a popular use of the Ski Area trails system and horseback riding while limited, does exist.

Through the development of new Downhill/Freeride trails and new Multidirectional trails, this plan provides diversified opportunities for the Free ride biking community, while continuing to offer uphill and cross-country mountain bike opportunities, hiking, and horseback riding. It gives novice riders an enjoyable experience and challenges the more expert rider.

The development of Use Zones (described below in Design and Management criteria section) reduces user conflict between groups and continues to give hikers and horseback riders the necessary access to the Forest and areas beyond.

The design of new trails will allow construction that reduces maintenance and erosion and avoids conflict with winter operations. It will reroute existing, poorly designed trail sections that have current maintenance, erosion, or safety concerns. It will reduce renegade trail construction by providing the opportunity that those riders are seeking with properly maintained trails and features.

The ski area will work with the Forest Service to develop specific design and construction standards for the trail system utilizing existing Forest Service and International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) standards along with incorporating Best Management Practices (BMP's) based on the experience from current trail building designs and trends. These standards will serve as guidelines for all trails.

The opportunity to develop events for mountain biking and hiking/running is greatly enhanced and provides revenue opportunities for not only the Ski Area but also all commerce in the surrounding areas including hotels, food & beverage, and retail.

Proper construction and maintenance provides safe access to and from this trail system that discourages and/or avoids private property trespass and identifies through signage and improvements the parking areas at the bottom of Thunderhead and throughout the base area. Additionally, it removes the use of Burgess Creek road as an integral part of the trail system by returning Creekside to a Multi Use trail. Efforts will be undertaken to manage risk through education of proper use of zones. Significant use of signage and staffing (patrol, trail maintenance, ambassadors, volunteers) will be utilized to direct users on proper trail etiquette and use.

2.0 Site Inventory/Existing Facilities

Steamboats Trail systems include approximately 50 miles of Cross Country mountain biking, and hiking trails.

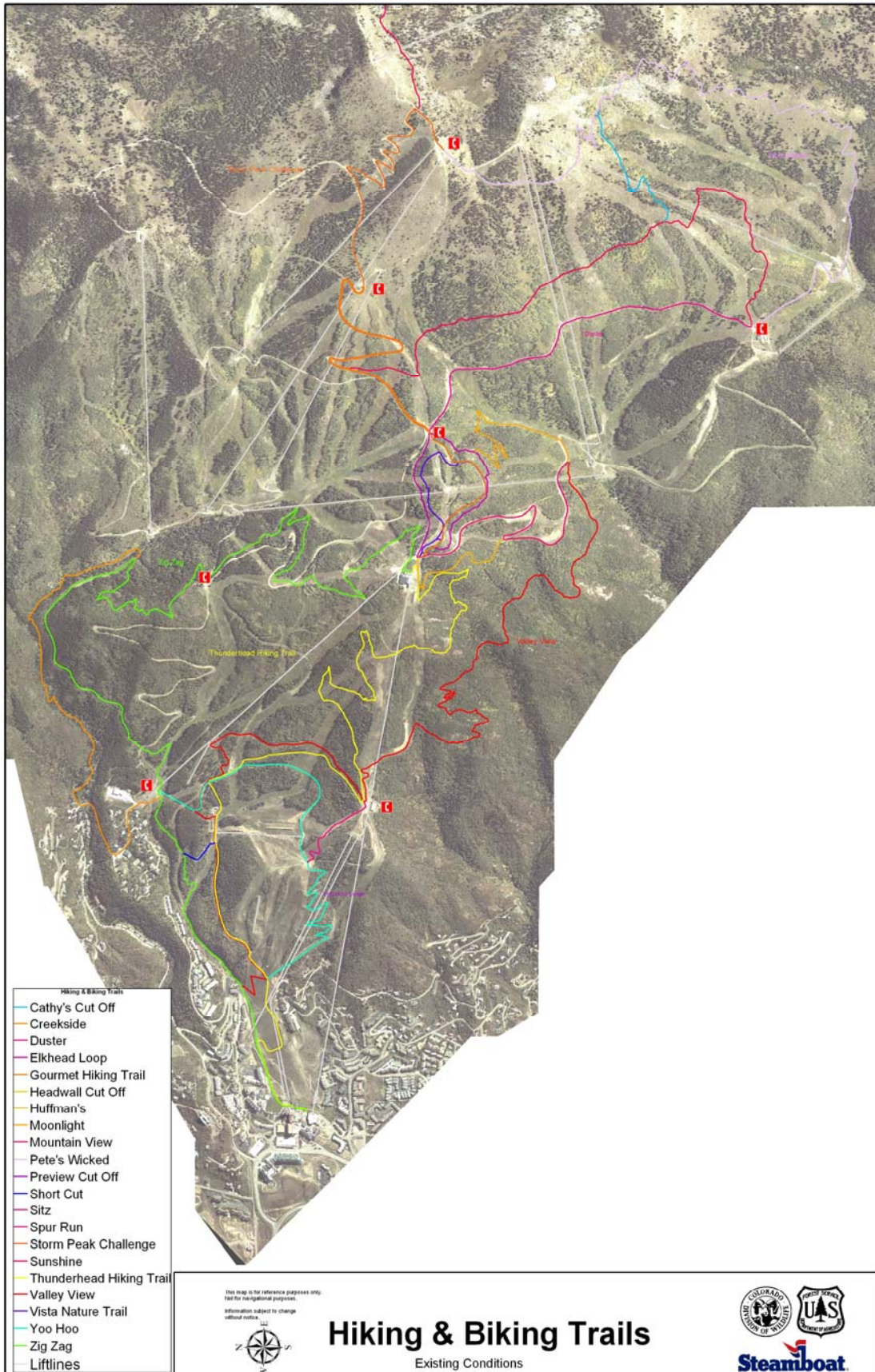
A map of the existing trails and Table 10.2 of the Steamboat Ski Area Master Plan Amendment dated July 2004 identifies existing mountain bike and hiking trails:

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS. (Map 1)

- Short Cut Bike Trail 1.0 miles
- Yoo Hoo Bike Trail 1.7 miles
- Cathy's Cutoff 1.2 miles
- Zig Zag Bike Trail 4.7 miles
- Creek Side Bike Trail 1.7 miles
- Thunderhead Hiking Trail 3.11 miles

- Vista Nature Hiking Trail 1.1 miles
- Moonlight Bike Trail 1.0 mile
- Elkhead Bike Trail .74 miles
- Spur Run Bike Trail .7 miles
- Huffman's Bike Trail 1.0 miles
- Service Road/ Duster Bike Trail 1.67 miles
- Broadway Bike Trail 1.5 miles
- Valley View Bike Trail 3.1 miles
- Sunshine Bike Trail 2.16 miles
- Storm Peak Challenge 2.5 miles
- Zig Zag 4.7 miles

Map 1



2.1 Facilities & Programs

Steamboat utilizes its 8-passenger gondola and Thunderhead restaurant facilities to supplement summer hiking and biking operations. Mountain bike rentals occur in the Ride Sports facility at the base and include retail sales of summer goods. The Lift ticket office sells gondola and bike lift tickets in addition to winter pass products. Steamboat offers private, semi-private, and group mountain bike lessons/guides upon request.

Steamboats Slope maintenance summer trail crew does early season (May/June) and periodic maintenance to the current trails as it becomes necessary. The Mountain bike rental staff at the base manages the safety/first aid programs to the trail system. This staff is managed by the Ski Patrol director and maintains staff qualified to administer such first aid.

2.2 Authorized projects

Hiking Trail improvements would be initially focused on a more scenic hiking route from the bottom of Heavenly Daze to the base. These Hiking trail improvements are already approved under the 2006 Environmental Assessment, section 2.2.5 Summer Trails – ST2 – *Complete Thunderhead hiking trail* on page 17. This trail could either become hiking only, or multi-use depending on final location and design.

Bike trail improvements would initially be performed on the Zig Zag trail to re-route the more challenging sections that exist for more general use by a broader range of skills and to enhance ease of maintenance, and reduce erosion. These Zig Zag trails are already approved under the 2006 Environmental Assessment, section 2.2.5 Summer Trails – ST1 – *Improve Zig Zag mountain bike trail* on page 17. These revisions, in addition to making them easier for the novice riders, will eventually also then place much of this trail within the category described below as 'Freeride' trails.

3.0 Upgrade Trails Plan Proposal

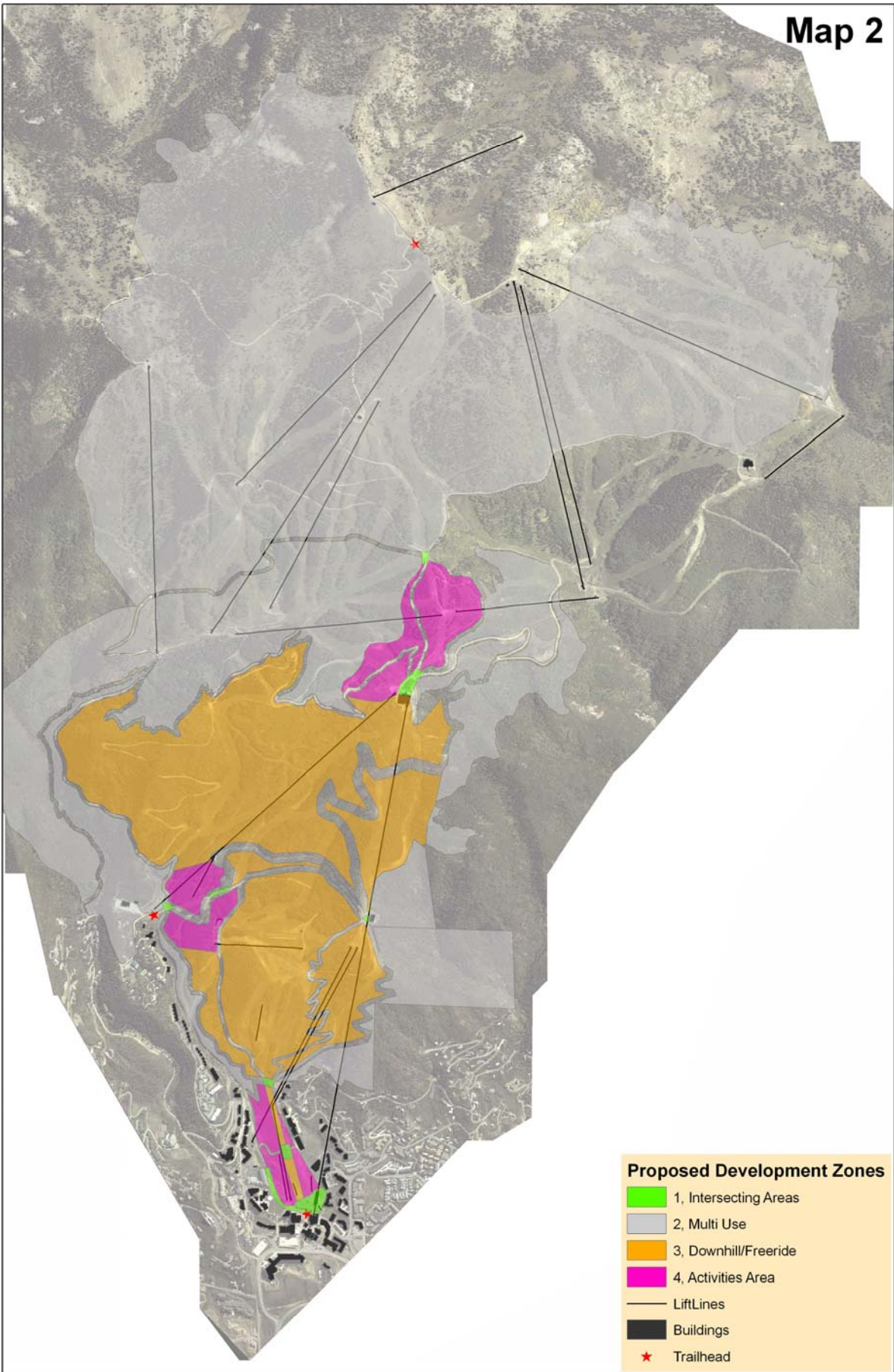
3.1 Design and Management Criteria

It is recognized that with increased usage of the trail system, erosion of the soil and exposure of tree roots and rocks increases. Proper planning, construction, and maintenance of both existing and proposed mountain bike trails will mitigate impact on the system. The single most important criterion is to build the trails to a sustainable standard such as those developed by IMBA. Properly built trails will significantly reduce and mitigate impact on the trails to help assure their long-term sustainability.

The Design and Management Criteria for this new plan is to develop 'zones' by use type which are designed to minimize conflict within each zone. The proposed Development zones include:

- **Multi-Use**
- **Downhill/Freeride**
- **Intersecting Area**
- **Activities Area**

Map 2



Within these zones there are specific trail descriptions as follows:

- **MultiDirection and Use trails**
- **Downhill/Freeride trails**
- **Hiking Only trails**

Multi-Use zones are those where use by cross-country mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding may occur. These **Multi-Use trails** can be best described as single track trails utilizing existing natural obstacles. Featured materials would be rock, dirt and native wood materials. Existing trails and development of new trails in these areas will be designed with these uses in mind and will generally be narrower and more natural trails. The mixed use of these trails will be managed through signage and speed limits put in place for cross-country mountain bikers when riding downhill. High speed Downhill/Freeride type activity will be prohibited.

New multi-direction trails would be enhanced and/or developed to provide access from the valley floor that do not conflict with the Downhill/Freeride trails by building them outside of the Downhill/Freeride zones.

The existing Valley View trail would be rerouted on the lower mountain and share uses with the hiking trail (within the Free Ride trail zones) in order to provide the initial uphill access until new trails can be developed

Downhill/Freeride only zones are for use by a specific type of mountain bike rider who utilizes specialized equipment with full suspension shock absorber systems to manage the varied terrain and features these offer. These **Downhill/Freeride only trails** provide flow and movement through turns, banking, natural and man-made features and when properly designed significantly reduce the need to pedal. They also require only minimal braking, thereby reducing wear and tear and minimizing trail maintenance. These trails may or may not be restricted to those users who utilize and/or rent this specialized equipment. Future development of this zone may include the use of the Christie Peak Express lift for access to these trails.

Activities Area zones are for areas that could include recreational activities such as events, weddings, interpretive programs, disc golf, etc.. There are three identified Activities zones, one at the top of the Gondola, one near the base of Thunderhead lift, and one that encompasses the Headwall area at the base. The current disc golf course in the Activities Area near Thunderhead is temporary only and ultimately would be relocated to the base area at the appropriate time.

Intersecting Area zones are those areas where multiple zones merge and would be managed to minimize the conflicts that could come with those mergers. These are areas where all users would have to abide by the same use etiquette and could involve either dismounting of bikes/horses, slow speed zones, and barriers/fencing to direct the users into and out of the intersections and safely back into the zones they are using beyond those intersections. There are at least two intersection areas that are not yet defined within the Downhill/Free Ride only Zones due to existing **Hiking Only trails**. In general, **Managed intersection** zones were selected because they offer a relatively long sight distance.

Mountain Bike Patrol and Maintenance: Safety is a key consideration in this plan and staff numbers will increase to include a Mountain Bike Patrol and trail maintenance crews. Trail maintenance crews will be solely focused on daily maintenance and be separate from trail

construction crews. Bike patrol will assume sole responsibility for first-aid assistance to bikers, educate users on trail etiquette as well as provide information about the trails. They will operate out of existing patrol facilities located at the Steamboat base area as well as the Thunderhead Patrol facility at the top of the Gondola. Emergency access to trails will be addressed through the use of motorized ATV's as well as currently accepted rescue procedures.

Steamboat Ski & Resort will enlist the aid of a qualified trail design team such as IMBA or Gravity Logic to assist with the development, design, trail layout, and operation of Steamboat's proposed trail system. We will have the Design Team assess the resort to inspect the terrain, existing trail system and facilities. We expect that organizations such as Routt County Riders, the Steamboat Winter Sports Club, the City of Steamboat Springs, and others, as well as outside help from Gravity Logic or like professional organization and IMBA will bring experience and knowledge to the design and construction phase of trail building. Their experience will help to update trail best management practices.

3.2 Implementation/Phasing

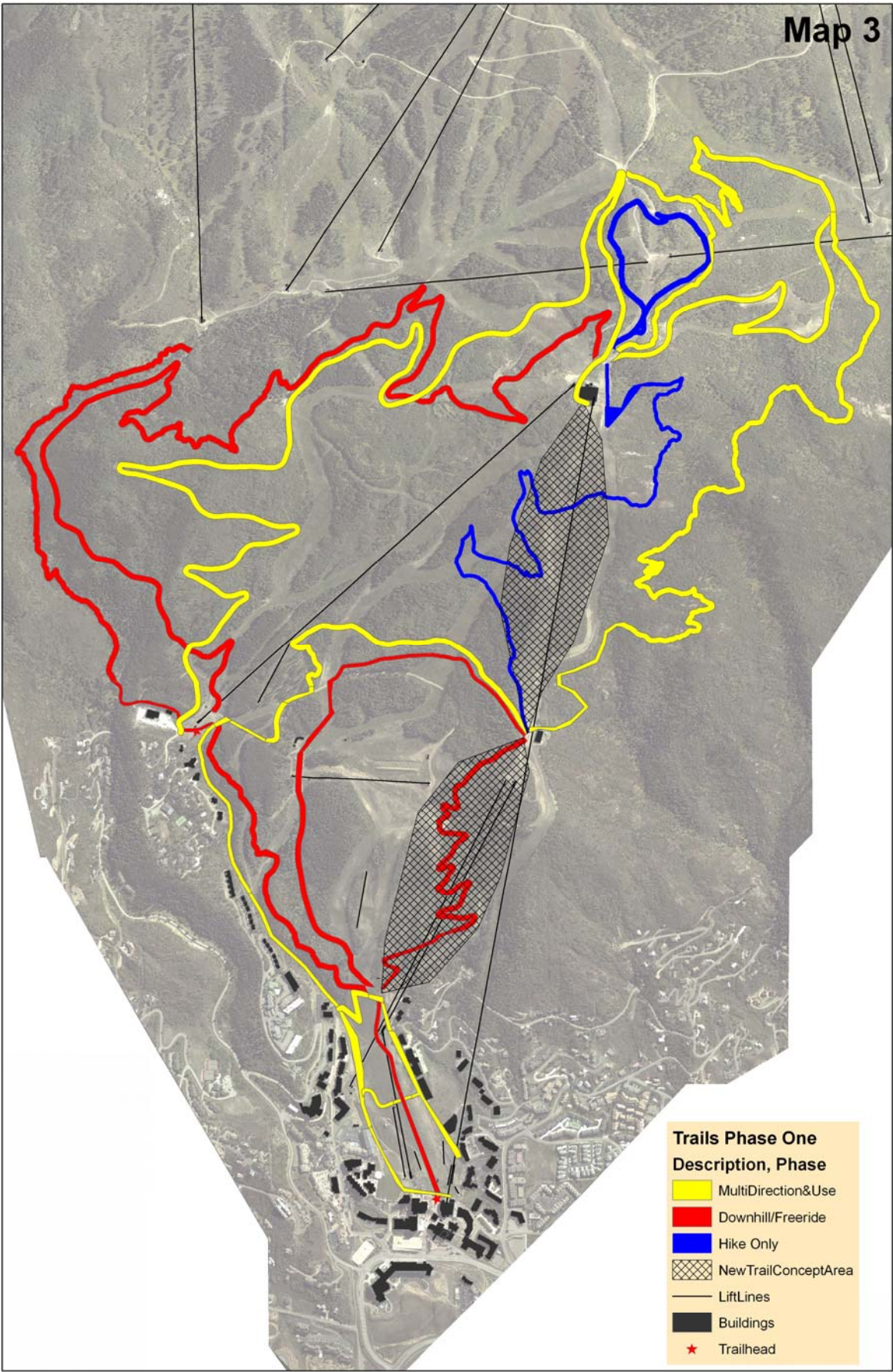
Phase one of the implementation of this plan would have the following components: Complete the authorized Zig Zag trail improvements to create a safer environment and greater flow and rhythm. On the upper section of Zig Zag to the bottom of Thunderhead chair this will involve multiple re-routes of existing steeper sections. A new trail would be constructed from bottom of Thunderhead chair to the top of Headwall run in the area between Shortcut and Right of Way trails. This section allows for the Right of Way trail to become a multiuse trail from the base area to the bottom of Thunderhead. These collective improvements to the Zig Zag route then create a novice **Downhill/Freeride only trail** from the top of the Gondola to the base area.

The Right of Way trail from the base area would then continue up to Thunderhead lift base, utilize the existing Valley View trail between Thunderhead lift base and the Snowmaking control building, then connect to the existing Valley View trail on up to the top of the Gondola. This would become a **MultiDirection and Use trail**.

Why Not service road would become an Uphill only mountain bike trail during this interim period to provide an alternative to the Valley View **MultiDirection and Use trail** until Phase two. Creekside would remain a **Downhill/Freeride only trail** also until Phase two and would include improvements to existing Bridges.

New **Downhill/Freeride only trails** would be developed in the **New Trail Concept Areas** from the top of the Gondola to the Snowmaking Control building, and the YooHoo trail would be enhanced/rerouted from that area down to the base. These would be targeted toward intermediate riders.

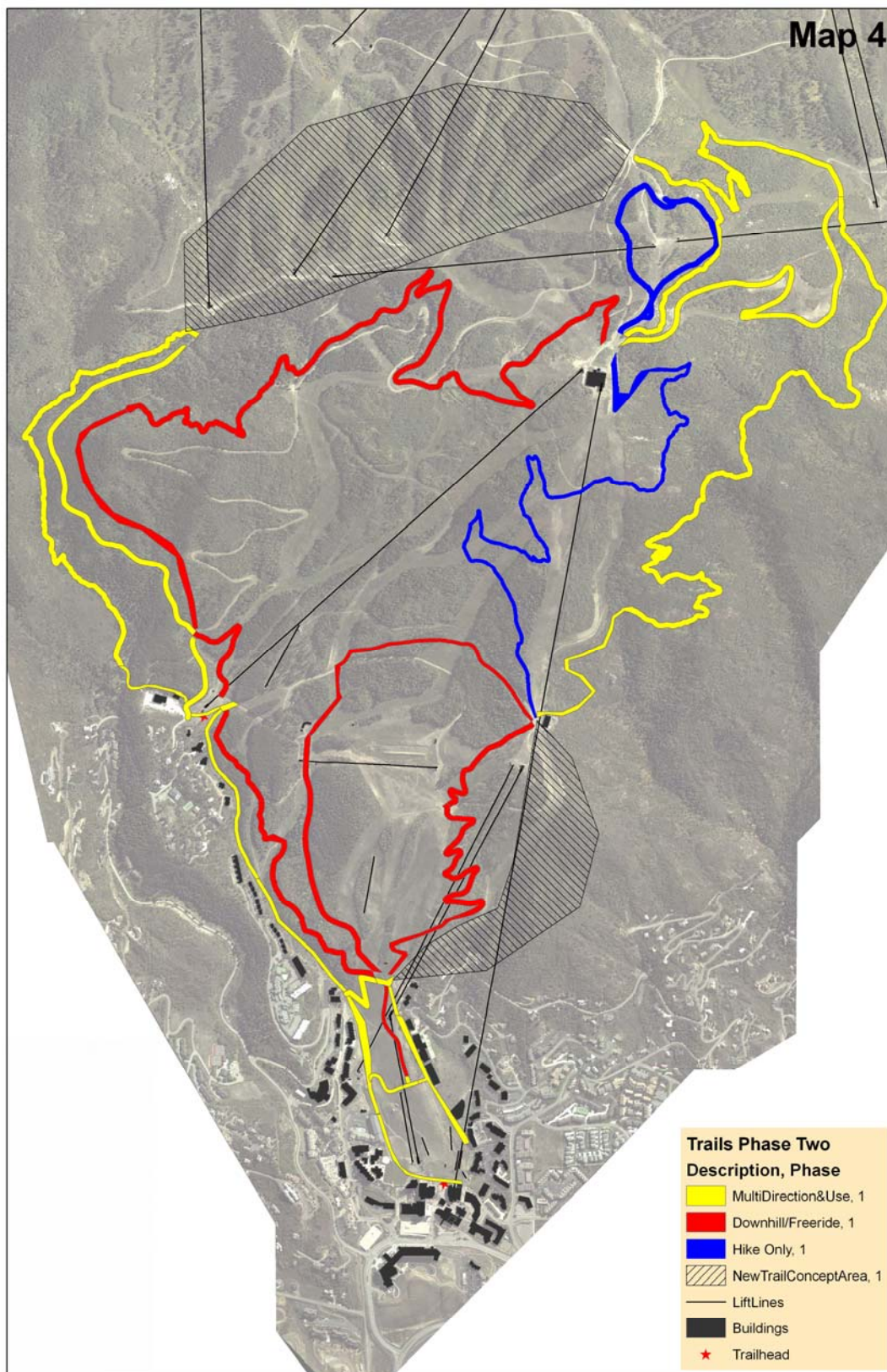
Map 3



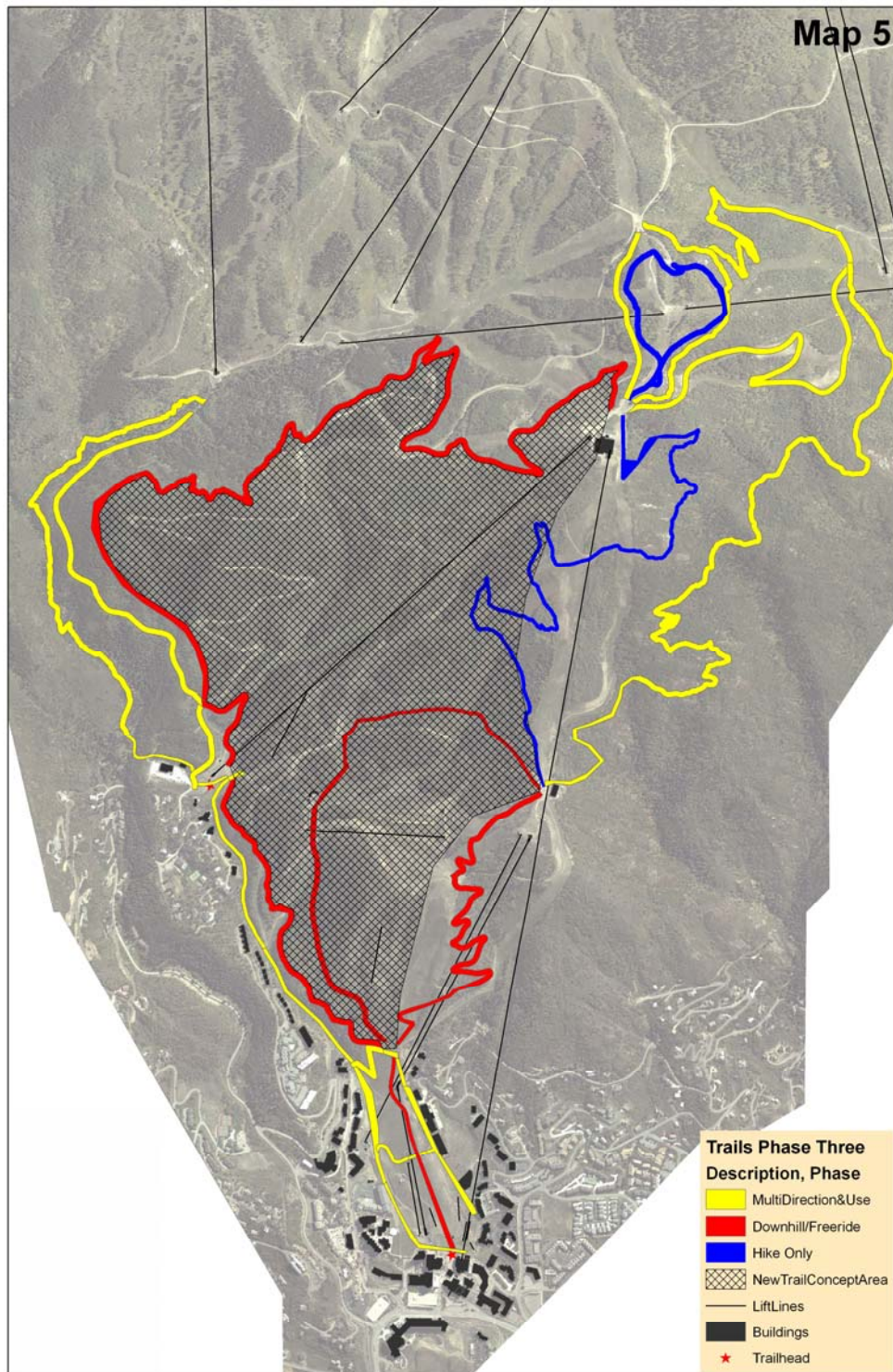
Trails Phase One
Description, Phase

- MultiDirection&Use
- Downhill/Freeride
- Hike Only
- NewTrailConceptArea
- LiftLines
- Buildings
- Trailhead

Phase two (Map 4) of the implementation of this plan would develop new **MultiDirection and Use trails** within two **New Trail Concept Areas**, that are located on the north and south perimeter of the new **Downhill/Freeride Zone**.



A new Zig Zag **Downhill/Freeride only trail** from the saddle of Vagabond trail to the bottom of Thunderhead lift would be developed, and Creekside Trail and the previously existing Zig Zag trail on the BC Ski way would become **MultiDirection and Use trails**. All combined, these Phase two improvements would allow for the removal of the Valley View **MultiDirection and Use trail** between the bottom of Thunderhead and the Snowmaking control building and sets up the ability to develop new **Downhill/Freeride only trails** of all levels within the **New Trail Concept Areas** in **Phase three** (Map 5)



4.0 Summary statement

For the Steamboat Ski Area and the Steamboat Springs community, the proposed mountain bike trail system will attract mountain bikers and hikers from national and international destinations to the vastly improved network of trails at the resort and is part of an overall initiative throughout the community to bring bikers to the Steamboat area. Creating, positioning, and then delivering a world-class mountain biking, hiking, and activities experience will increase the number of summer and fall visitors to the entire valley. Steamboat is counting on the help of the community in this overall plan through volunteerism for patrol, construction, maintenance of trails, and input on this plan.