

USFS, resorts want to regulate uphill skiers

By Kathryn Reed

The U.S. Forest Service is looking at solidifying policy for the 122 ski resorts in the country that are on federal land when it comes to allowing people to access the mountain without paying to go uphill.

Walking, hiking, and skiing uphill (usually done with skins) are activities that are gaining in popularity. Many times people want to access backcountry terrain. Other times people just want to play for free.

“We’ve seen a significant increase in uphill skier traffic over the past few seasons, so with safety in mind we recently launched a new uphill use policy,” Jeff Monson, spokesman for Sugar Bowl ski resort, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “While we won’t be charging a fee, we do expect all uphill skiers to adhere to these rules, respecting the fact that there’s nearly constant work being conducted out on the mountain. By obtaining our new uphill season pass, signing the waiver and ultimately familiarizing themselves with the rules and regulations of uphill use, skiers are more educated on the hazards involved, and the level safety is improved as a result.”



While Squaw doesn't allow

access except via a lift,
one reason people like the
choice is to avoid lift
lines. Photo/LTN file

Heavenly Mountain resort doesn't allow people to be on the mountain when chairlifts are spinning unless they have a lift ticket.

"We have no plans to charge for uphill access to Heavenly. As a company, we have instituted policies to ensure the safety of our guests who choose to access the mountain under their own will," Sally Gunter, with Heavenly, told *Lake Tahoe News*. Here is the resort's policy.

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows do not permit any uphill travel during winter operations except via the lifts.

Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Service officials said the intention of the national directive is to strike a balance between the resorts and those who want to use the resort without taking a chairlift.

Proposed changes "would preclude authorization of an entrance fee at ski areas, and would allow authorization of fees for facilities and services the holders provide, such as lifts, parking lots, and slopes and trails that have been cleared, graded, groomed or covered with manmade snow. Additionally, this paragraph would encourage authorized officers to ensure that some portions of the permit area remain open to the public without charge, so that the holder's charges do not constitute de facto entrance fees."

Comments on the policy are being taken until Dec. 2. It's part of revising the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act. Clarifications are being made to the 2011 legislation. More information is available online.

In part wording is being changed "to clarify that ski area

permit holders may be allowed to charge fees for use of improvements and services in which they have made capital investments, such as ski trails or other facilities they constructed, groom, or otherwise maintain, and to clarify that ski area permit holders may not be allowed to charge for use of non-motorized or motorized trails that are constructed and maintained by the Forest Service.”

While Sierra-at-Tahoe intends to follow whatever rules come from Washington, the South Shore resort does not promote uphill skiing.

“We do not encourage uphill skiing and recommend that guests who want to uphill ski, safely explore other areas of the Tahoe basin,” Steven Hemphill, Sierra’s spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.