

Frequently Asked Questions

Big White Project – Master Plan for Expansion and Master Development Agreement Replacement

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Policy and Process

1. What policy guides the proposal and planning processes to expand an All-Seasons Resort on Crown Land?
 - The disposition of Crown land for the use, operation and development of an All-Seasons Resort is guided by the All-Seasons Resort Policy and the All-Seasons Resort Guidelines. The All-Seasons Resort Guidelines are used in conjunction with the All-Seasons Resort Policy in order to foster well-balanced, environmentally sensitive mountain resorts.
 - Key principles of the All-Seasons Resort Policy:
 - **Balanced Resort Capacity** – Amount of base development determined by recreational capacity of terrain
 - **Provincial Control of Recreational Assets** – Day lodges, lifts, runs, parking lots remain on Crown land
 - **Controlled Phased Development** – Illustrated in the Master Plan and enforceable through the Master Development Agreement

- **Perform and Reward** – Recreational infrastructure built prior to or concurrent with residential development
- To learn more about the All-Seasons Resort Policy and the All-Seasons Resort Guidelines please go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development>

2. What is the role of Mountain Resorts Branch?

- Mountain Resorts Branch is an agency within the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and is responsible for the administration of Regional Destination Mountain Resorts on Crown land (including Big White) under the All-Seasons Resort Policy.
- Mountain Resorts Branch provides coordinated, one-window services:
 - Leads Master Plan reviews for the expansion of existing resorts.
 - Responsible for issuing land and timber tenures within Controlled Recreation Areas (defined resort areas).
 - Responsible for monitoring and compliance of contractual commitments.
 - Responds to resort clients' operational and business needs.
- Some of Mountain Resorts Branch's key business functions include:
 - **Delegated authorities** under the *Land Act*, *Forest Act*, *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Resort Timber Administration Act* and the *Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act*.
 - **Consideration and/or Approval** of new resort and ski area Master Development and Operating Agreements.
 - **Coordinating consultation** with government agencies, stakeholders, First Nations and the public on all resort/ski area Crown land applications and Master Plan reviews.
 - **Collection of revenues**, to the Province, from resort and ski areas on Crown land.

3. What does the project review process under the All-Seasons Resort Policy consist of?

- Big White's draft Resort Master Plan for expansion and an application to replace the existing Master Development Agreement with a new 60-year Master Development Agreement have been accepted for review ('the Project'). The Project review will include a Technical Review Team, comprised of local and provincial government contacts, as well as engagement with stakeholders, First Nations, and the public. The Project review will assess the environmental, social, economic, cultural heritage and health implications of the project.

- During the Project review, the proponent is required to respond to and address any issues, interests and concerns that are identified. This might involve updates/amendments to the draft Master Plan including various mitigation strategies and/or identification of commitments/conditions of tenure that could form part of the contractual language in the Master Development Agreement.
- Mountain Resorts Branch will reach out to the Technical Review Team, First Nations and stakeholders as required throughout the review process to work through issues resolution, mitigation and accommodation.
- Mountain Resorts Branch will advise the Technical Review Team, First Nations, stakeholders and the public of the outcome of the Project review, share the final Resort Master Plan and demonstrate how issues raised during the review have been addressed.
- Following completion of the Project review, Mountain Resorts Branch will make a decision regarding the Project. Details for the decision will be given.
- For a visual presentation of the Project review process please refer to the [All-Seasons Resort Process Flowchart](#).

4. Is the Big White Project a Reviewable Project under the *Environmental Assessment Act*?

- Tourist Destination Resort Projects are typically reviewable if they meet or exceed certain project design or effects thresholds defined in the [Reviewable Projects Regulation](#).
- Thresholds in the *Reviewable Projects Regulation* include Bed Units, Protected Areas, Linear Disturbance, Area of Disturbance, Workforce, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. At Big White’s request, the Environmental Assessment Office has reviewed the project components against these thresholds, and, in their opinion, the Project as proposed does not appear to be reviewable.

Resort Master Plan

5. What is a Resort Master Plan?

- The Resort Master Plan describes the development concepts over time, conveying to the reader what the resort is envisioned to look like through the phases and at build out. It is a detailed plan that sets out the phased and orderly development of recreational infrastructure and real estate and provides the technical and management information necessary to support the sustainable development of the resort. The Resort Master Plan is the reference point from which the Master Development Agreement and all other approvals are based.
- Key components of a Resort Master Plan include mountain and base area plans; environmental inventory, impact assessment and proposed mitigations; analysis

of known First Nations' interests; mitigations for overlapping land interests; utility servicing plans and local governance model.

- Big White has an existing, approved [Master Plan \(1999\)](#) and [Master Plan addendum \(2018\)](#). Following the Project review, if approved, the Resort Master Plan for expansion will replace the 1999 & 2018 Master Plans.

6. Where can I review Big White's draft Resort Master Plan and provide my comments about the proposal?

- To access a PDF of Big White's draft Resort Master Plan and the project review information please go to:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development/proposed-approved-resort-master-plans/list-of-proposed-plans/big-white-project-review>.
- A three-dimensional digital representation of Big White's Resort Master Plan can be viewed at:
<https://xdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Styler/index.html?appid=db312421f4fa4c34ad97b97a5ef28730>.
- Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, hard copies of the draft Resort Master Plan for expansion will not be made available.
- Public comments were accepted between December 1, 2020 and February 26, 2021. The public engagement period is now closed.
- If you have questions related to the project or the process please feel free to contact Tori Meeks, Senior Manager, Major Projects at 250-371-3943, Tori.Meeks@gov.bc.ca or Amber McAfee, Land Officer at 250-312-6659, Amber.McAfee@gov.bc.ca.

Master Development Agreement

7. What is the Master Development Agreement?

- The Master Development Agreement is a 60-year contractual agreement between the Province and the resort. The Master Development Agreement sets out the conditions under which the resort will be built over time. It includes tenure conditions and proponent commitments to ensure responsible resort development and has provisions for land tenuring, pricing, and events of default as well as obligations of the developer.
- The Master Development Agreement establishes a licence of occupation over the entire Controlled Recreation Area for the purpose of the operation of the resort, including the right to use, operate, maintain, repair and replace access routes and recreational improvements, as well as to manage, control and regulate access for the purpose of conducting business. It is the administrative

instrument for the issuance of tenures within a resort's Controlled Recreation Area (described below; see question #10). Tenures will be issued based on the phasing identified in the Resort Master Plan.

- Big White has an existing, approved Master Development Agreement (currently a 50-year term) that was issued in 1989 and is good through to November 1, 2039. Following the Project review, if approved, the existing Master Development Agreement will be replaced with a new All-Seasons Resort Master Development Agreement that will expire 60 years from the date of approval and sign off by the Province.

8. Why has Big White applied to replace their Master Development Agreement?

- **Business Certainty & Investor Confidence** – Big White is currently in year 31 of a 50-year Master Development Agreement. A new agreement brings longer term tenure of 60 years.
- **Improved Business Feasibility and Resiliency** – Facilitates investment in all-seasons recreation opportunities and use of existing facilities year-round.
- **Enhanced Legal Language & Mechanisms** – Provide the legal mechanism for the right of the developer to control access within the Controlled Recreation Area, authorize Independent Operators and build access routes/trails as per the approved Master Plan.
- **Expedited Authorizations** – Up front consultation on the replacement of the Master Development Agreement and Master Plan (agencies, stakeholders, public and First Nations) results in faster turn-around times for applications that are consistent with the approved Master Plan and Master Development Agreement.
- **Address First Nation Consultation and Interests** – The goal of engagement and consultation is to address interests, mitigate impacts and reach agreement with First Nations. In cooperation with the agreement holder, the Province seeks to accommodate the potential impact to their interests.

9. What is the timeline from submission of a draft Master Plan to issuance of a Master Development Agreement?

- The timeline for Project review will vary and is dependent on a number of factors, but generally can take 1-4 years.

Controlled Recreation Area

10. What is the Controlled Recreation Area, and is it accessible to the public?

- A Controlled Recreation Area is the Crown land within an outer most boundary of the resort as identified in the Master Development Agreement (Schedule A).

The Controlled Recreation Area encompasses the recreation infrastructure on the mountain and in the base area.

- A resort developer operating under the authority of an approved Master Development Agreement with the Province is granted a licence of occupation for the purpose of the operation of the resort, including the right to use, operate, maintain, repair and replace access routes and recreational improvements, as well as to manage, control and regulate access for the purpose of conducting business.
- Within the Controlled Recreation Area, the developer is responsible for minimizing risks to public safety and the environment.
- For more information about public access and Controlled Recreation Areas please go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development/public-access-and-controlled-recreation-areas>.

11. The public already uses the proposed expansion to Big White’s Controlled Recreation Area for motorized and non-motorized recreation. Will public access still be permitted if the expansion is approved?

- Big White views its role as a host and staging area for public recreation activities on the surrounding lands and will look to work with the various user groups through the Master Plan review process to ensure that connections from the resort to Crown lands and connections through the resort to adjacent lands are maintained and improved.
- It is the goal of the resort owners and management that tourism expansion and public recreation coexist and mutually benefit all parties. Through the public referrals process Big White is looking to understand how the public is currently using the land and how it can support these recreation activities while meeting its responsibilities and objectives.

Ecological Reserve, Watershed and Wildlife

12. Will the Resort Master Plan and proposed expansion affect the Big White Ecological Reserve?

- No, the proposed Controlled Recreation Area expansion detailed in the draft Resort Master Plan respects the actual boundary and footprint of the ecological reserve.

13. Why is the Province proposing an adjustment to the Big White Ecological Reserve?

- The Big White Ecological Reserve, which was established in 1972, is located immediately adjacent to the north boundary of the existing Big White Ski Resort Controlled Recreation Area, which was founded in 1963.

- When the ecological reserve was established, an error was made that resulted in the inclusion of a small area of ski resort facilities (approximately 3.5 ha); this error was discovered when more accurate digital mapping was completed.
- BC Parks is currently working with Mountain Resorts Branch and Big White Ski Resort to rectify the boundary error; this is considered an administrative housekeeping adjustment.
- The [proposal](#) to adjust the boundary of Big White Ecological Reserve has not yet received government approval. BC Parks and Mountain Resorts Branch are working together through this Project review to inform the public, stakeholders and Indigenous governments about the proposed boundary change through the consultation process being undertaken for Big White Ski Resort.

14. How will the increased demand for water resulting from the expansion be met? Will the Kettle River watershed be impacted?

- Future water supply needs are currently being taken into consideration and reviewed in context of the existing water licence approvals for Big White. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

15. How will Big White mitigate the impacts of increased visitation and expanded resort development on wildlife?

- Mountain Resorts Branch is still in the initial information gathering stage of the major project review for the Big White Master Plan. The project review process includes engagement with a Technical Review Team consisting of subject matter experts from provincial and local government agencies, including an ecosystem specialist and an ecosystem biologist who will provide their professional opinions to inform the Province's decision.
- Should the updated Master Plan and proposed expansion be approved, additional studies will likely be required for individual project components to determine site-specific impacts and mitigation measures.
- For more information about wildlife and habitat in the Big White area, as well as mitigation measures that have been proposed to reduce impacts, please refer to the [Environmental Review](#) prepared for Big White by Cascade Environmental Resource Group Ltd.

Resort Concept

16. What is the timeframe for development of the various improvements and recreational infrastructure identified in the Master Plan?

- Big White is looking to develop strong four-season recreation amenities which will allow them to become less reliant on winter season visitation and cater to a

broader guest marketplace, but there is no set order or timeline for the implementation of the elements in Phase 1, or any subsequent phases.

- The Master Plan presents the resort concept in a final, buildout condition, which may take decades to realize or may never be fully realized. New development and expansion at Big White will only be initiated when market conditions, ongoing increases in resort utilization, and resort trends all indicate that there is a business case for doing so.
- The Master Plan does not commit the resort to build but reserves a place for it to build the identified concepts should they make sense. Any changes to the approved Master Plan concept would be subject to review by Mountain Resorts Branch.

17. If the Master Plan update were to be approved, when would the development of the proposed new residential areas begin, and who would have ownership of these properties?

- As per the All-Seasons Resort Policy, Big White can purchase Crown land for real estate development on a phased basis; the amount of land that can be purchased in each phase depends on the quantity, quality and type of recreation improvements constructed on Crown land within the Controlled Recreation Area.
- There is no set order or timeline for the implementation of the elements in each phase. New development and expansion at Big White will only be initiated when market conditions, ongoing increases in resort utilization, and resort trends all indicate that there is a business case for doing so.
- Only Big White or a related party can purchase Crown land within the Controlled Recreation Area, but fee simple land may be sold (with restrictive covenants) at the resort's discretion.

18. Are there plans to make the Big White village more pedestrian and bike-friendly?

- Big White plans to expand and enhance its current village trail system, transforming it into an accessible, all-season, multi-purpose trail system that will enable guests to travel throughout the resort without relying on their vehicles. The intent is to link the existing and future village amenities, staging areas, and residential developments, and in turn motivate a shift in transportation modes from personal vehicle to a pedestrian-centric design and foster an intimate village ambience with human-scaled built spaces.
- The Multi-Purpose Trail Network will also act as the foundation for a range of all-season activities including Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, and fat tire biking in the winter and hiking, sightseeing, and trail running in the summer. Please see Sec. 4.3.13 in the Master Plan for more details.

19. Does Big White plan to host future national and international sporting events?

- Big White will continue to host national and international level events such as the boarder and ski cross competitions, and the Big White Invitational Slopestyle mountain bike event that have been hosted in past years. The Resort will continue to develop its capacity and programs that encourage future events and will work closely with local clubs and leaders in these sports to ensure they are a success.

20. What are the plans for the "Chateau Blanc" hotel development?

- The Chateau Blanc project belongs to a private company; private interests are outside the scope of this Master Plan review.

Climate Change and Cumulative Effects

21. Has there been any consideration given to how Big White will be impacted by climate change over time?

- Big White has carried out preliminary climate change analysis to understand how changing temperature and snowfall regimes will impact its existing and proposed operations. While climate change is unavoidable, the impacts to winter season experiences will be minimized through the development of north facing ski slopes, advanced ski run design, and snowmaking. Further, a core piece of the Master Plan is to shift Big White into a four-season resort, with summer and shoulder season activities taking on an increasingly prominent role. Section 3.2.6 of the Master Plan contains more details on the climate change analysis.

22. Have the cumulative effects of this project been considered relative to other current and proposed land uses in the region?

- The Mountain Resorts Branch has included our Provincial cumulative effects subject matter experts in the Technical Review Team, and we will be looking at the potential impact and cumulative effects of the proposed project through this review.
- More information on the Province's Cumulative Effects Framework can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/cumulative-effects-framework>.

Roads and Access

23. Will upgrades be required for Highway 33 and Big White Road as the resort expands? How will these improvements be funded?

- As the resort develops and visitation increases, the use of the transportation corridors will also increase. Although the capacity of these corridors and the

requirements for future upgrades have not been determined at this time, they will be considered as the need arises. The sources of funding for future traffic impact studies and/or road upgrades will depend on the scope, purpose and location(s) of the improvements being considered.

- Representatives from the Ministry Transportation and Infrastructure have been engaged in this Master Plan review and are participating on the technical review team, which consists of subject matter experts from local and provincial agencies. Their comments and input will be incorporated into the project review and decision-making process.

24. Are there any plans for the construction of a secondary road to provide access/egress in case of an emergency such as wildfire?

- An alternate/emergency access route is not part of this Master Plan update, but Big White has an approved Resort Wildfire Protection Plan to mitigate some of the risk posed by wildfire. This plan addresses the need and strategic locations of various fuel reduction treatments. Fuel reduction treatments involve the understory thinning of dead or flammable trees, also the removal of ladder fuels (branches) to reduce the risk of crown fires. Forest floor fuels are also removed during these treatments.
- To date, three major landscape level fuel reduction treatments are nearing completion or are underway at Big White. Once completed these treatments will drastically reduce the risk of wildfires to the resort infrastructure and residences. These fuel breaks will bring a dangerous crown fire back down to the ground level thus decreasing its intensity. These landscape level fuel breaks create a much more defensible space for fire crews/aircraft to suppress a wildfire before ever reaching the resort.
- Two fuel reduction treatments are consistent with the Resort Wildfire Protection Plan are nearing completion and were funded by Forest Enhancement Society of BC. They are strategically located along the Big White Road, as well as to the east of the resort to protect from a wildfire approaching from the east. Another fuel reduction treatment is underway and funded by the provincial governments Wildfire Risk Reduction program. This treatment is designed to protect the resort from a wildfire approaching from the west/south west.

25. Will the existing Forest Service Roads be maintained for public access to recreation opportunities?

- If existing resource roads pre-date the Controlled Recreation Area they may be identified as prior rights in the Master Development Agreement. In these cases, ongoing road maintenance is performed by the permit holder (road permit roads) or the Province (Forest Service Roads) for so long as necessary.
- Although existing resource roads may currently be in use by the public for recreational purposes, they are not public transportation corridors and there is

no guarantee that public access will be maintained into the future. However, through the public referrals process, Big White is looking to understand how the public is currently using the land and how it can support these recreation activities while meeting its responsibilities and objectives.

26. Will Big White look into ways to reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions as visitation increases?

- While the Master Plan does not go into this level of detailed planning, Big White will explore a variety of transportation technologies as part of its efforts to reduce traffic congestion and personal vehicle use, including electric vehicle technology and greater coach bus connections to Kelowna and the surrounding region.

Employment and Housing

27. Will the proposal generate year-round employment opportunities?

- Big White will increasingly look to support a year-round resident population, which will in turn lead to year-round employment opportunities. In addition to all-seasons recreational employment, jobs will be created to provide fundamental residential requirements such as a grocery store, liquor store, post office, medical centre, school, chapel, bank, community services centre, library, theatre, hardware, retail stores, and a year-round ice rink. However, these services will only be established when market conditions, ongoing increases in resort utilization, and resort trends all indicate that there is a business case for doing so.

28. Has the growing need for affordable housing options, including employee accommodations, been accounted for in the Master Plan?

- The Resort Master Plan speaks specifically to the need to incorporate affordable resident and employee housing as well as plan for potential future development of senior/retired employee housing. These are critical components to the resort planning process and are required for a sustainable resort community.
- The Province, under our contractual agreement with the resort, also requires the employee housing be appropriately phased and balanced with employment, with approximately 10 per cent of housing dedicated to employee housing in each phase.

Local Governance and Community Infrastructure

29. Will this Project review consider the local governance needs of the community at Big White?

- The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary is currently responsible for local governance, the Official Community Plan, zoning and bylaws at Big White, as well as services including the fire hall, waste transfer station, noise control, and some street lighting.
- The Resort Master Plan speaks to the current local governance model for the resort and the need to work with the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to ensure the Official Community Plan and zoning bylaws are amended and consistent with the Resort Master Plan to allow for the proposed future development.
- Mountain Resorts Branch will work with the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to coordinate and align the Project review and the Official Community Plan/zoning amendment process where possible.
- Mountain Resorts Branch's Project review is separate from the process being undertaken by the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to complete a Community Issues Assessment (and any subsequent studies). Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, through their consultant, Urban Systems, reached out to the public through a survey hosted on their [Join the Conversation](https://jointheconversation.rdkb.com/big-white-community-survey) website. The survey was open from **December 21, 2020 to January 31, 2021** at <https://jointheconversation.rdkb.com/big-white-community-survey>.
- **Please note:** The Community Issues Assessment will not be exploring options for local governance, but rather, the intent at this time is to gain a better understanding of the key issues in the community. More information about the Big White Community Issues Assessment will be provided when it is available.

30. Will there be any changes to how existing parcels are currently zoned, and does the Master Plan take into consideration the allocation of land for community amenities and/or services?

- The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary is the current authority for local governance, including zoning and zoning amendments. Any changes to the current zoning designations will be subject to the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary's zoning amendment application process.
- The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary currently has a Community Issues Assessment underway, and the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary is working with Big White to make sure the needs of the community are met. The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary is a key member of the technical review team and is participating in this Project Review. Please refer to Question #29,

above, for more information regarding local governance and the Community Issues Assessment.

31. Are the future requirements for services such as snow removal considered in the Master Plan?

- The Master Plan presents a future concept of the resort in a final, buildout condition, which may take decades to realize or may never be fully realized.
- Although expanded community maintenance services (e.g. snow removal) will be needed as the resort grows, the Master Plan does not go into the level of detail necessary to inform comprehensive long-term planning of this nature.

32. How will the infrastructure for solid waste and sewage expand to accommodate increased visitation?

- **Solid Waste Management:** Big White has undertaken a series of waste reduction initiatives as part of their larger effort to reduce the environmental impact of their operations. These are taking place across their food and beverage operations, accommodation, and events, and include a shift away from single use plastics, local sourcing of food and goods, and environmentally sensitive cleaning practices. As the resort grows and develops, it is recognized that waste disposal infrastructure will need to expand, and the plan for this will be developed over time in partnership with Big White, Mountain Resorts Branch and the local government.
- **Sewage Management:** Big White has wastewater treatment capacity for 18,370 bed units with approvals in place to expand its capacity to over 30,000 bed units, while meeting its permitted daily discharge rates. Big White intends to relocate its current treatment facility to a site on Horsefly road, remediating and reclaiming the current wastewater treatment ponds in the process. Expansion of the sewage treatment facilities at Big White will be driven by demand and adhere to Provincial health guidelines. Please see pg. 4-159 of the Master Plan for more details.