



Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club
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William A. Dunkelberger, Supervisor
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, NV 89431

via: comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-carson@fs.fed.us

re: Sierra Club comments on Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe Atoma Area Expansion draft EIS

Dear Spvr. Dunkelberger,

On behalf of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club and our 6,500 members in Nevada and the Eastern Sierra, many of whom recreate in the proposed expansion area in both the summer and winter, I am pleased to provide these comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (dEIS) for the Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe Atoma Area Expansion proposal.

We strongly appreciate and support the proposed Forest Plan Amendment in both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 that would restrict any future development of commercial uses on 3,446 acres of the acquired Galena lands transferred to the USFS in 1994. Protecting these lands for dispersed recreation, free of commercial development, has been the goal of the Sierra Club and many other community organizations and citizens, since the original Galena Resort was proposed in the early 1980's.

We support Alternative 3, the Forest Service preferred alternative, because of the addition of the restroom facility on the Atoma site, as well as the two-lift configuration of chair-lifts, both of which will enhance the recreation experience of young ski learners and reduce impacts of the skier bridge and the stacked chair lift on the scenic quality of the Mt. Rose Highway and area. Our research shows that the additions of the restroom and the chair that just services the Atoma area will greatly reduce the need for repeated long flat approaches and crossings of the skier bridge (see attachment) for Atoma skiers.

We thank the Forest Service and the Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe for including provisions in the dEIS which would continue traditional dispersed winter and summer public uses of the Atoma (SUP) area, including the use of the skier bridge, some reserved parking spaces, and public access to this popular area. This recognition and accommodation of continuing dispersed recreation uses greatly improves the proposed expansion and helps to mitigate the loss of the Atoma area to dispersed public recreational uses during the winter.

In addition, we appreciate the modifications (Section 1.4.1) made to the original design, including adding a net under the chairlift which crosses the Mt. Rose Highway, eliminating the proposed tree removal for glading, and changing the snowmaking impoundment to a water tank. All of these changes improve public safety for recreationists, for those traveling the Mt. Rose Highway, and residents who live below the ski area who would have been subject to flooding from dam failure of the proposed water impoundment for snow making water. And, we support the management requirements common to all action alternatives in Appendix A.

We agree with the US Forest Service that the skier bridge over the Mt. Rose Highway is the essential element of the proposed Special Use Permit (SUP) expansion and should be built before any construction disturbances would be allowed in the Atoma area.

There is a question of whether the chair lift over the skier bridge would also have a net, similar to that shown in Figure 10 for Alternative 2. Figure 12 does not show such a net for Alternative 3. Please clarify in the final EIS.

We do have a concern about public safety due to the proximity of the Connector Trail to the Mt. Rose Highway. How does the Forest Service and Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe plan to prevent Atoma skiers from crossing the highway as a shortcut to get to the main base lodge, especially in low snow years where snow berms are not present?

Also, Figure 16, "the 1994 Galena Resort Land Exchange," is not accurate as it does not show that the 131 acres of the Chutes is part of the Galena Resort Land Exchange, as well as currently in the SUP area. Please correct this error in the final EIS.

Although it has taken over four years to develop the dEIS, we believe that the Forest Service and Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe have both done a very good job of addressing community concerns, public safety, and public access issues about the proposed expansion of the SUP to the Atoma area.

Thank you for considering our comments. We look forward to your responses to our questions.

Sincerely,

David von Seggern /s/

David von Seggern, Chair
Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club

Rose Strickland /s/

Rose Strickland, Chair
Public Lands Committee

(attachment)

**Mt. Rose/Atoma Expansion DEIS-lift comparing chairlift ride distance and ski bridge crossings
Between Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 in the Draft EIS**

Return to Wizard lift after X number of runs on Atoma runs	3500 ALT. 2			3000 1650 ALT. 3			Difference between Alt3 vrs Alt2 in total length of chair lift rides (ft)	Difference between Alt3 vrs Alt2 in number of times skiers must ski to and cross over hwy bridge	
	ALT 2. single 3500' lift	Number of times skiers must ski to and cross over hwy bridge	Total distance of chairlift ride to access Atoma (ft)	ALT 3. Atoma Lift A 3000'	ALT 3. Return to Wizard Lift Lift B 1650'	Number of times skiers must ski to and cross over hwy bridge			Total distance of chairlift ride to ski on Atoma trails (ft)
1	1	1	3,500	1	1	1	4,650	1,150	0
2	2	2	7,000	2	1	1	7,650	650	-1
3	3	3	10,500	3	1	1	10,650	150	-2
4	4	4	14,000	4	1	1	13,650	-350	-3
5	5	5	17,500	5	1	1	16,650	-850	-4
6	6	6	21,000	6	1	1	19,650	-1,350	-5
7	7	7	24,500	7	1	1	22,650	-1,850	-6
8	8	8	28,000	8	1	1	25,650	-2,350	-7
10	10	10	35,000	10	1	1	31,650	-3,350	-9

Negative value means Alt 3 has shorter lift ride distance

Negative value is number of fewer hwy bridge crossings for Alt 3