

Carson National Forest
208 Cruz Alto Rd.
Taos, NM 87571

Attention: Paul Schilke
paul.schilke@usda.gov
928-339-5052

Re: Taos Ski Valley, Scoping

May 2, 2022

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Scoping Comments on the Taos Ski Valley (TSV) proposed projects.

I'm a long term resident of Taos and Santa Fe Counties, and a retired Wildlife Biologist. I spend considerable time recreating on the Carson National Forest (CNF) year round. TSV was one of the reasons I moved to Taos in the 1970s, and I still spend a lot of time hiking and skiing in that area. Wildlife and solitude are very important to me.

The situation for wildlife in the TSV area, both on CNF land and adjacent private lands has become dire. Over the years the CNF has repeatedly approved destructive expansion projects on TSV, apparently without any consideration for wildlife or their habitat. Currently, there is another massive development in Spruce-fir occurring adjacent to TSV in addition to the proposed expansion on TSV. Note that the presence of this adjacent development is because of TSV. TSV and the adjacent land has become a sacrifice zone and the extensive damage to Spruce-fir and wildlife habitat is now beyond repair.

A) It seems clear that:

1) When the Special Use Permit (SUP) was granted by the Carson National Forest (CNF), it was for an alpine ski area, not a massive year round development on and adjacent to the permit area, with the intention of bringing in many thousands of people. The continued expansion has been piecemeal over many years. There has been no real or honest assessment of the impacts to the area in the piecemeal Environmental Assessments (EAs) developed by the CNF. In fact they have included mis-information (also known as lies) and complete avoidance of facts. It is long past time for a thorough honest assessment of the full impacts to this area, including honest cumulative impacts. A full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed.

2) TSV and the adjacent area have become a large sacrifice zone for wildlife, their habitat, water quality, water quantity, and solitude.

B) Solutions to understanding and mitigating the damage:

Cancelling the SUP and restoring the area to a healthy forest are probably not viable options at this late stage. There are however, two things that can be done to understand and mitigate the problems.

- 1) To understand the impacts that have been done to our National Forest lands, a full thorough EIS is needed covering the entire TSV area - past, present and foreseeable future - and including the massive development adjacent to TSV caused by TSV.

- 2) TSV donate to the CNF or NM Dept. of Game and Fish an area of high elevation, high quality, old growth spruce-fir forest and alpine tundra land, which includes good occupied habitat for the appropriate species including but not limited to: marten, boreal owl, ptarmigan, snowshoe hare, and red-back voles. The habitat should also be suitable for lynx and probably bighorn sheep. The donated land will need to be significantly greater in size than the TSV permit area to compensate for the massive private land development caused by TSV. The donation will need to include restrictions/covenants that specify the land is to be managed for wildlife, and that cattle grazing and logging is prohibited.

There needs to be a complete moratorium on further development and CNF approvals until the above two mitigation measures are met.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Jon Klingel