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QUESTA RANGER DISTRICT

Melissa M Forsythe

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MAY 10 2022

District Range	Range Staff
Assist. FWO	Rec. Staff
Wildlife Staff	BMA File
Resource Ass't	Customer Svs. Rep.

Mr James D Duran, Forest Supervisor
c/o Paul Schilke, Winter Sports Coordinator
PO Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

Dear Mr. Duran,

I am writing you to comment on the proposed work at Taos Ski Valley. I live in Taos and am a skier and enjoy skiing at TSV. Besides the world class skiing, one of the things I enjoy the most about TSV is the atmosphere of being in your hometown ski area with personal service from people who seem to care. The summer activities, such as mountain biking are great for attracting people year-round. I've been disturbed, however, the past couple of years about the ticket prices rising so sharply as if TSV is in competition with ski area prices in the big Colorado resorts. At first the reason the prices went up so much was attributed to the Covid pandemic and allowing fewer skiers. This past season the prices went up again, even without Covid measures in place.

TSV has been popular with people around the world as well as people like me who live in Taos. Recent development of the ski valley and the airport seem to be only to attract people from elsewhere with no regard for keeping the ski valley attractive to local residents. The ticket costs are pricing locals and many families out of being able to ski here.

I am opposed to most of these proposed "improvements" to TSV. I think most are unnecessary and will raise the ski ticket prices even more. Most of these proposals will involve destruction of more forest and most likely will affect the water in the ski valley. More development will mean more people and a more crowded resort. What about the B Corp status of TSV, of which they are so proud? It doesn't seem like most of these proposals are within the guidelines of this status.

One thing that could help and be a positive change is the gondola between the 2 base areas. The road is hazardous in the winter and doesn't need any more traffic. The idea of expanding recreational offerings within the SUP area is not necessary, but the gondola would keep most of the traffic off that road and deal with overcrowding at the base of lift 1. Tree clearing should be kept to a minimum.

The other thing that may be helpful is replacing Lift 2, but only if it's a safety issue. One of the wonderful things about TSV is that the lifts are rarely crowded except at the base of Lift 1. I don't think any lifts need to be replaced just to transport more people and have more skiers on the slopes.

The proposal to replace Lift 8 seems unnecessary because there are rarely any people there, much less crowds. This would cause more destruction of the forest for no reason.

When the resort was bought by Bacon all new snow-making equipment was put in place. We don't need to spend even more money replacing it again. Also why build a new booster station if the existing ones can be upgraded with minor work? With water being such an issue we don't need to be trying to pump and use more water. Also wherever a new tank was placed it would be an eyesore.

I am opposed to building more restaurants on the mountain. This would be very expensive, and of course the expenses are always passed on to the skiers, would cause much more destruction of the forest and take away parts of the ski slopes. The concern about providing more inside dining areas could be solved by reopening the Phoenix. That was the most popular place to eat lunch besides the base area. With the Phoenix and the Bavarian at the base of 4 there are plenty of places to eat lunch when away from the base of Lift 1. The Whistlestop is a very convenient place for a short stop and never seems overcrowded. For stopping in the middle of the mountain the Whistlestop is convenient and easy to get in and out of. Most skiers, when away from the base area don't want to spend a lot of time inside eating lunch. If they do, the base of Lift 4 has a good variety with 2 restaurants as well as all the places to eat at the base of Lift 1.


TSV is getting more and more crowded. Nordic and Snowshoe trails would make it even more crowded. One of the great things about Taos and the adjacent Carson National Forest is that there are numerous trails for snow shoeing and Nordic skiing. There is also the Enchanted Forest Nordic Center for people who want to cross country ski at a resort. This proposal is another unnecessary addition to TSV that will just make it more crowded, cause more destruction of the forest and cost more money .

Another hiking trail near Lift 4 would just involve more expense and more clearing of the forest. The newly routed hiking trail to Williams Lake is very nice and completely adequate for hikers. We do not need to cut new trails in that area as there is so much development already with the ski area.

So even though many of these improvements sound good on paper, they would all essentially be destructive to the forest and possibly to the water sources in the ski valley. This is a small area in a dead end canyon and to keep expanding is just making it crowded and unsafe in case of fire or any other emergency. Also I question where the funding is coming from for all of these proposals. If most of the costs will be passed on to the skiers TSV will turn away more and more skiers because it's so expensive. Please keep in mind how much people love TSV the way it is and want to keep it a world class ski resort as well as protect the forest around it and encourage people from Taos as well as other parts of the world to ski here.

Thank you for considering my comments and concerns.

Sincerely,



Melissa M Forsythe