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Village of Taos Ski Valley
Taos, New Mexico 87525

May 6, 2022

James Duran, Forest Supervisor
c/o Paul Schilke, Winter Sports Coordinator
P.O. Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

RE: *Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements Project*

Dear Forest Supervisor Duran:

Thank you for your efforts overseeing the public questions and comments process for the proposal to improve existing facilities and infrastructure, install new infrastructure, and develop new recreational amenities at Taos Ski Valley.

As a large landowner (RideNorthside.com) in the Village of Taos Ski Valley, I whole heartedly support Taos Ski Valley's plans to address existing capacity and circulation constraints, deficiencies associated with on mountain facilities, inefficiencies with the snowmaking system, additional means of fire suppression, and its planned expansion of existing recreation opportunities.

With respect to the specific projects proposed, following are my comments:

Base-to-Base Gondola

The Kachina Basin base area is a very popular destination for both Winter and Summer activities and is becoming more and more of a draw, given the "back to the outdoors" movement since the onset of Covid and the increased popularity of Taos Ski Valley to the local Taos County and State of New Mexico citizenry.

There are environmental benefits associated with reducing vehicular traffic from Twining Road and access points to Kachina by providing a Gondola. Gondola access will reduce the carbon footprint associated with vehicular traffic and reduce the large amount of dust which is created and settles into the nearby ecosystems.

Safety would also be increased by the reduction of traffic, as the access road to Kachina Basin is often very treacherous in the Winter. Vehicular accidents increase the risk of oil and fuel spills along the roadway, which could also contaminate adjacent ecosystems.

Gondola access would reduce the amount of maintenance needed on the roadway, which would also benefit the environment by reducing runoff of roadway silt into adjacent waterways.

Additionally, Tree clearing would be required within the gondola corridor to allow for passage of the gondola cabins. This tree clearing will add an additional wildfire fire break and will create understory growth which will attract wildlife grazing due to the increase of forage material.

Fortunately, the proposed base-to-base gondola would be located within the existing SUP area and adjacent non-NFS lands.

Water Tank and Booster Station

The proposed 5mm gallon water tank and booster station will be a public benefit for increased snow making, thereby storing more water on the mountain and increasing flow to the downstream Taos acequia's during the Spring and Summer months.

A typical house fire can use up to 250,000 gallons of water, according to the VTSV Fire Department reports, so in the event of a residential or base area fire during the peak Winter or Summer visitor times, Village of Taos Ski Valley operations would be potentially jeopardized.

There is a great need to expand existing water storage capacity in the Village of Taos Ski Valley.

Nordic and Snowshoe Trails

The proposed cross country course will increase public enjoyment and recreation and will link Amizette with the Core Village during both the Winter and Summer months. A Nordic Trail will add access for firefighting and will create a fire break which will potentially slow the spread of a wildfire.

Restaurant Expansion

There is currently a lack of indoor on-mountain restaurant seating and on-mountain guest service space. This will be a wonderful public benefit and will increase access to restrooms, which will protect the forest adjacent to the ski trails from increased human nitrogen waste.

Lift 2 & 8 Replacement

Both Lift 2 and Lift 8 are nearing the end of their operational life and the resulting added safety and operational efficiencies would be very desirable.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed infrastructure improvements within the Taos Ski Valley.

Sincerely,

Bob

Robert F. Corroon Jr.