

Acequia de



San Antonio

P.O. Box 339

Valdez, NM 87580

2022 Commissioners

Mayordomo

Elias Espinoza

Assistant Mayordomo

Lloyd Garcia

Secretary

Sylvia Rodriguez

Treasurer

Laura Dumond

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Victor Martinez

Priscilla Rael

March 22, 2023

Paul Schilke

P.O. Box 110

Questa, NM 87556

Subject: Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements - Request for a 60 day Extension of Public Comment Period, Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution Support, and a Public Meeting

Estimado Sr. Schilke:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Acequia de San Antonio in Valdez, N.M.. The Acequia de San Antonio is a traditional acequia association which has been serving the residents of Valdez for over 200 years. Valdez, a rural, historic community, was formally established in 1823 as part of the Arroyo Hondo land grant. Valdez is the first community downstream from Taos Ski Valley and will bear a disproportionate impact of any negative effects from the proposed development in the Ski Valley.

On behalf of our Acequia parciantes, we are requesting a 60 day extension of the public comment period for the recently released *Draft Environmental Assessment* for the *Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements*.

The *Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements* proposes a wide variety of changes to the Ski Valley. Those proposed changes may have many different impacts that affect a variety of resources of interest to the Acequia de San Antonio, especially the Rio Hondo. The

result is a complex matrix of potential impacts to our Acequia and our community. Understanding the impact of the proposed changes requires knowledge of hydrology, environmental science, forestry, climate change, botany, wildlife biology and many other disciplines.

Frankly, the Acequia de San Antonio does not have many resources with which to analyze the proposed, potentially complex, changes. We are struggling to understand not only the content of the proposal and its potential impact on our community but the NEPA process in general. Given additional time the Acequia de San Antonio can organize resources to better allow us to understand the proposed changes and meaningfully participate in the process.

We would also like to request that the Forest Service engage an impartial third-party to support stakeholder engagement and conflict resolution (Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR)) in this NEPA process. We request third-party support for facilitation, mediation, stakeholder engagement and process design to enhance collaboration between the Forest Service, the Acequia de San Antonio and any other Acequia Associations, Land Grant organizations and rural historic communities that may wish to participate.

Finally, the Acequia de San Antonio requests a public meeting with Lead Forester James Duran and his staff to allow the Parciantes of the Acequia de San Antonio to receive a briefing on the proposal, and the NEPA process, with a specific focus on the role of rural, historic communities. In addition to being briefed on those topics, we would like Mr. Duran to hear our immediate concerns about the proposed changes.

We greatly appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Atentamente,

Elias Espinoza, President & Mayordomo

Lloyd Garcia, Deputy Mayordomo

Laura Dumond Kerr, Treasurer

Victor Martinez, Commissioner

Priscilla Rael, Commissioner

Sylvia Rodriguez, Secretary