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James Duran, Forest Supervisor
United States Department of Agriculture
Carson National Forest
P.O. Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

27 March, 2023

Re: Legal No. 18,375. Opportunity to Comment, Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements
Project USDA Forest Service Questa Ranger District Carson National Forest

Dear Sir,

This letter is to submit comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for a recreation enhancement project at Taos Ski Valley (TSV). The project includes major on-mountain construction of a new gondola lift alignment with new towers and upgraded electricity, new lift towers for two additional chair lifts, major water storage and pump facilities, a new mid-mountain restaurant to replace the existing Whistlestop Café, another new restaurant atop the front side ridge where lifts 2 and 7 unload, and new forest trails.

A project of this scope could significantly affect the human environment of the village of Taos Ski Valley, the downstream watershed of the Rio Hondo, the town of Taos, and the County of Taos. The historic Twining Valley where TSV is located is perhaps the most publicly accessible subalpine environment within the Carson National Forest and New Mexico. Besides recreation, this area has ecological value and provides habitat for the ptarmigan, pine martin, river otter and other species of plants and animals. In addition, the proposed recreation enhancements are in close proximity to the culturally significant Blue lake within the Taos Pueblo reservation and two wilderness areas.

For these reasons, an Environmental Impact Statement, as mandated under the National Environmental Policy Act, is warranted. I request an extension of time from 30 days to 90 days to review the construction elements of this proposal, consider the potential impacts and submit comments.

Sincerely,

John M. Castillo

John M. Castillo

Cc: Paul Shilke, Winter Sports Coordinator