RICK HALTERMANN

(b) (5)

ALBUQUERQUE NM 870

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MR. PAUL SCHILLE
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST
P.O. BOX 110
QUESTA, NM 87556

87556-011010

March 23, 2023

Carson National Forest
Winter Sports Coordinator Paul Schilke
P.O. Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

Re: Taos Ski Valley Development Plans

Dr. Mr. Schilke,

I'm confused as to why the Forest Service is requesting comments, once again, since no response or updated plans have been publicly offered since a year ago.

Attached is my letter from 4/18/22 for review. To reiterate, with all of the proposed improvements on the table, an Environmental Impact Statement is in order since the original proposal fails to address everything from increased traffic, adequate parking, added water use, corresponding sewage treatment and the simple fact that skiing is no longer affordable to the average local resident. With $190/day lift tickets along with $14/cup of chile stew on the mountain (prices that would certainly increase with the expansion), exactly what percentage of the populace is actually being served? Knowing that that number is small for New Mexicans, how can expansion be justified in terms of *public* land use?

The proposed expansion is just another blatant example of corporate expansion into nature for the purpose of profit. At a time when the predictions and actual catastrophes regarding climate change are dire and on the rise, the carbon footprint created by the proposed expansion is completely contrary to all of the current science and warnings that call for reassessment rather than expansion.

Quoting The U.S. Forest Service's mission statement, "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. For more than 100 years, the Forest Service has brought people and communities together to answer the call of conservation."

If your call is conservation, then the answer is to honor the natural world rather than denigrate what you have been entrusted to protect.

Sincerely,

Rick Haltermann

April 18, 2022

Carson National Forest
Winter Sports Coordinator Paul Schilke
P.O. Box 110
Questa, NM 87556

Re: Taos Ski Valley Development Plans

Dear Mr. Schilke,

I'm writing to comment on the Taos Ski Valley development plans as presented in the Taos News and online. At this point, it would be premature to give any detailed comments until a full Environmental Impact Statement is created. Generally, the plan raises more questions than providing answers. I'll try to be succinct.

1) With the new lifts proposed, there would be increased uphill capacity. This implies more skiers at the area but the plan only addresses "Additional RV parking and hookups." This past winter, overflow parking took place on the shoulder of HWY 150 during weekdays and weekends. The interface of pedestrians with highway traffic is an accident waiting to happen.

2) The proposed gondola looks more like a marketing tool rather than something that is functional for the distribution of skiers. Especially on a powder day when the Kachina Basin is the last to open (often until the afternoon), a gondola to a closed Lift #4 doesn't offer much advantage. On a regular day, how much difference in time would that gondola offer over two high-speed chairlifts (#1 and #2) to get to the same location?

4) Again, with a new gondola, what are the parking plans for those who would normally use Twinning Road? To put it another way, what is the difference in cost between serious road improvements versus the proposed gondola?

5) In a time when the ski industry is on the endangered species list due to climate change and flattening skier numbers since 2010, does expansion to this extent make any sense?

6) I previously lived in Vail, Colorado from 1977 - 2001 and witnessed first hand the disastrous effects of expansion which included increased daily collisions between skiers on the ski hill (one friend died), lack of safe parking, I-70 congestion for coming and going guests, increased housing costs forcing employees to have to commute from as far as two hours away and a general degradation of the mountain lifestyle. It's why I moved to Taos.

Putting more pressure on fragile ecosystems with increased human activity hasn't worked out with ski areas, especially in Colorado, or in our National Parks. In simple terms, the urbanization of nature is a modern trend that offers little in the way of improvement and rarely cooperation.

Related to this is the idea that possible improvements to a ski area benefiting primarily the affluent appear to be out of touch with the reality of climate change, the resulting drought and the fracturing of our communities. Realistically, the time for "business as usual" is long over.

At this moment in the world, bigger no longer seems to be better. Until the issues of safety (on and off the hill), adequate parking, traffic impacts down to the Blinking Light, employee housing, increased water use, additional sewage treatment and potential general environmental degradation due to greater human activity can be addressed, I'm unable to comment any further. Future studies would be very helpful.

One last question, with all of the new lifts, restaurants and other improvements proposed, what percentage of the electricity needed will be supplied by renewable sources?

Sincerely,

Rick Haltermann

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