

5/21/23

Dear Supervisor Duran,

I am writing you in concern to the proposed Taos Ski Valley Gondola and other improvements #61390.

The most important issue that I have with this entire process thus far is the lack of a proper and thorough EIS (environmental impact statement). The breadth and scope of the proposed developments have a far reaching, and lasting impact on the unique, limited, and special southwestern high country environment that exists in the upper Rio Hondo drainage. Any major new developments on land up there, especially publicly owned, should be thoroughly reviewed and assessed with every available tool to make sure the legacy for future generations is not compromised. Please conduct a proper EIS for these proposals, it is the right thing to do.

The integrity of the Rio Hondo watershed is of utmost importance to everyone, and everything that is a part of it. With the climactic trajectory, according to the best science that is available now, we need to be conservative and thoughtful with our choices for expansion and development in sensitive and vulnerable areas. This spectacular area deserves nothing less of the most respectful review we can give it.

The only way to achieve an honest, accurate, scientific, and unbiased EIS is to have a third party that is not affiliated with TSV on any level conduct the review.

Beyond the lack of a proper EIS, I am very concerned about the proposed gondola. Public access to public lands is a very important part of being a citizen of the United States. There is a genuine concern that the unlawful denial of public parking/access at the Wheeler Peak trailhead could be manifested through that of the gondola providing access instead. This presents many questionable scenarios. Access to the trailhead has always been unquestionable on account of the historic Prescriptive Easement. In spite of the movement of the William's Lake Trail near the trailhead in recent years, access is still legally required through the private land that was cleared and "masticated" to the east of the Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo where the old trail was located on account of the decades of use and the consequent Prescriptive Easement that exists there. Access to the trailhead for Williams Lake is a similar scenario, and thus is an historic legacy that perpetuates. Our public land is the treasure of this country, it is for all people, and not the few.

Do your job. Do it properly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully.

Respectfully,  
Patrick Grace