Tania McCormack

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Valdez NM 87580

12-10-2024

Carson National Forest
Forest Supervisor's Office
P.O. Box 1670
Taos, NM 87571

Subject: Objection to Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements (#61390) Final Environmental Assessment

Dear Forest Supervisor,

I am writing to formally submit my objection to the final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Taos Ski Valley Gondola and associated improvements. While I understand the potential benefits of enhancing recreational facilities, I believe that the proposed project raises significant environmental and social concerns that warrant serious reconsideration.

1. Environmental Impact: The EA appears to inadequately address the potential environmental consequences of building the gondola, including habitat disruption for local wildlife, particularly during the nesting seasons for birds and other species like the trout population of the Rio Hondo which I mentioned in my original comments (and was not addressed). Comprehensive studies that consider the cumulative impacts on the ecosystem should be prioritized. Most importantly there is no analysis of the Kachina Basin development plans by Taos Ski Valley Inc. which construction of the gondola will beget.
2. Water Resources: Given the region's susceptibility to drought, I am concerned about the project's impact on local water resources. The EA should assess how construction and increased tourism might affect water quality and availability for surrounding communities and ecosystems.
3. Cultural and Historical Considerations: The area surrounding Taos Ski Valley holds significant cultural and historical value for Hispanic and Indigenous communities. I urge the Forest Service to engage in thorough consultations to ensure all concerns and perspectives are fully incorporated into the decision-making process.
4. Increased Traffic and Overcrowding: The gondola and other improvements are likely to increase visitor numbers, leading to heightened traffic congestion along the single lane canyon road and potentially overwhelming local infrastructure. This could negatively affect both the visitor experience and the quality of life for residents of the ski valley and the larger county (including my town: Valdez).
5. Sustainability and Climate Change: The proposed projects don’t seem to realistically grasp the impact of climate change on future ski seasons and future flows on the Rio Hondo.

I respectfully request that the Forest Service take these concerns into serious consideration. I recommend further studies: a complete EIS, and community engagement to address these critical issues before proceeding with the project, or a moratorium on these projects.

Thank you for considering my objection. I look forward to your response and hope that you will prioritize the preservation of our natural resources and community wellbeing.

Sincerely,
Tania McCormack