

USDA Forest Service  
Attn: Michiko Martin, Regional Forester, Objection Reviewing Officer  
333 Broadway Blvd SE  
Albuquerque, NM, 87102

Submitted via <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=61390>

Re: Objection regarding Taos Ski Valley, Gondola And Other Improvements Projects

Objection Reviewing Officer,

The following objection is submitted on behalf of **myself, Brian Long**

This Objection is filed pursuant to, and in compliance with, 36 C.F.R. Part 218, Subparts A and B. I have previously filed timely, specific and substantive written comments in accordance with 36 C.F.R. 218(a). As required by 36 C.F.R. § 218.8(d), Objector provides the following information:

1. The name and contact information for the Objector is listed below.

Brian Long

[REDACTED]

3. Brian Long is the Lead and only Objector for purposes of communication regarding this Objection.

4. The project that is subject to this Objection is “Taos Ski Valley, Gondola And Other Improvements Projects”. The Responsible Official is James Duran, Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest. The National Forest on which the Proposed Project will be Implemented is: Carson National Forest, Questa Ranger District.

5. Objector submitted timely, specific, and substantive comments during the Public Comment Period on Dec. 16, 2024 and during the scoping period on Dec. 16, 2024. All points and issues raised in this objection refer to issues raised in those comments or are related to new information. Attached hereto are prior comments and I incorporate their arguments and information by reference.

6. In the following Statement of Reasons, Objector provides the specific reasons why the decision is being appealed and the specific changes or suggested remedies that are sought, along with the related evidence and rationale on why the decision violates applicable laws and regulations.

OVERVIEW:

One reason I oppose the decision is that I believe that each of the projects should have its own project proposal. I believe each project is significant enough to deserve our full attention. It feels like the ski area's approach is to overwhelm any opposition and railroad their plan through.

I strongly object to the finding of "No significant Impact" by the District Ranger and Carson National Forest Supervisor.

Significant impacts are felt every day when dozens of workers speed up the canyon to their jobs at the Ski Area or the village of Taos Ski Valley. The daily carnage of wildlife is just one of the significant impacts caused by the ongoing destruction of this unique watershed.

I have never seen the local or state police attempt to control this daily wildlife menace, and I have seen no traffic studies.

Almost before I was aware that the Pacific marten existed in northern New Mexico, I found a road-killed one near the Forest service cabin in 1995.

This is just one example of the cumulative effects that pass under the radar as the number and speed of traffic on highway 150 increases year by year. I have not seen any attempt to address this problem.

I bring this up to illustrate the cumulative impacts of ski area development and "improvements", that are not being addressed.

Another significant impact experienced by many of us is the constant noise pollution of never-ending construction projects in the ski area and the village.

One cumulative effect is the deadening of our senses when we blithely come to accept the noise as normal.

It is for these reasons that I oppose any and all new projects at Taos Ski Area.

REMEDY: A complete EIS for each project. No action

## WILDLIFE

In 1997 I began studying the Pacific marten around Taos Ski Valley. Over the next 5 years I conducted many more marten studies in the Upper Rio Hondo and the surrounding region. I have continued this work till the present throughout northern NM and adjacent CO.

I have learned that this secretive and unique species is to a large extent dependent on old growth forest, high snowfall, and all the associated flora and fauna found in these habitats above 7,500 feet. The north-facing aspect of the Taos Ski area, with its old growth spruce-fir is ideal habitat for martens, however the proportion of undisturbed forest islands within the area are diminishing year by year as a result of so-called "improvements", such as trail widening, stump and log clearing, and glading. The complex food web of this kind of forest is disrupted by these activities to the detriment of predators like marten. Because they are at the southern limit of their range in northern New Mexico, they are especially susceptible to factors like

climate change and decreased precipitation. The recent extreme wind event which toppled hundreds of acres of mature spruce fir forest in the ski valley area was made even worse by the removal of the fallen trees, which would have provided good cover for natural forest regeneration, and habitat for small mammals.

Other species that are negatively impacted include Northern goshawk, Canada lynx, Snowshoe hare, and Fremont's squirrel.

The Wildlife Report and Biological assessment are totally insufficient documents, that left out all of these species.

Other species of concern are White-tailed ptarmigan whose alpine tundra habitat could be affected by increased visitation by hikers and their dogs via the proposed new hiking trail, and the Water shrew which inhabits the Rio Hondo.

This is a portion taken from the USFWS Biological assessment:

Project code: 2024-0084603

05/01/2024 19:14:50 UTC

We suggest you contact the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division for information regarding State protected and at-risk species fish, wildlife, and plants.

For further consultation with the Service we recommend submitting inquiries or assessments electronically to our incoming email box at [nmesfo@fws.gov](mailto:nmesfo@fws.gov), where it will be more promptly routed to the appropriate biologist for review.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List

REMEDY: A proper EIS on the cumulative impacts to these species.

Brian Long

