To whom it may concern,

I would like to write this letter in an effort to share how I feel regarding the possible Targhee expansion. I am against the expansion for reasons that go further and deeper than simply myself.

I was born and raised in Alta as the 5th generation on my family's ranch. I grew up learning how to ski at Targhee, where my father was an instructor for years during the winters in the farming off season. My grandfather was one of the instrumental persons involved in bringing Targhee to life. From its conception to its days in my childhood, Targhee was a family friendly mountain and a part of the community. But within my lifetime, its motives have changed. As all things do, the price increased necessarily, but eventually was increased so much that my family was unable to purchase passes. We then went to purchasing day passes, but even these became exorbitant in price. Meanwhile, Ski Hill Road that we live on became a busy, impassable highway as more and more people visited Targhee. And it was then that we discovered what the current Targhee had become. Targhee is not a community and family centered resort anymore, but instead an entity removed that seeks to exploit for its own personal profit. No more do the families who live full time in the valley benefit from the resort. Those who benefit are the resort itself and non-locals who come for the destination skiing. This new Targhee will continue to grow and in turn hurt the community and the members who work so hard to call this place home.

Not only will the potential resort expansion harm the community, but it will forever harm what makes this valley special. We all enjoy calling this place home because of the beauty around us. That beauty offers so much in the way of scenic views, wildlife, and wild forest, and these are to be enjoyed. These resources are, however, fragile, and with more development, their grandeur is whittled down to a skeleton of what it once was. And the scars are permanent. It will be difficult to see Teton Canyon’s public lands, a place where I grew up, turned from wilderness into a resort that will damage the beauty and the wild that makes the Tetons what they are. In addition to stripping the public resource of its beauty, it will become a privatized area that only the few can enjoy, as opposed to the community as a whole. In one of the proposed development areas, I proposed to my wife, and to see the quiet solitude and tranquility of that area destroyed and inaccessible would break my heart.

If we are to preserve the valley and its resources for our enjoyment and future generations, we need to stop viewing it as a cash cow to be exploited for profit. As community members, we have a solemn responsibility to preserve, protect, and be good stewards over this valley. This responsibility is given to us all. I'm not saying to not touch the wilderness. Get out and enjoy it. But that privilege should not be something to profit the few and should not be something that only a select group can enjoy.

Preserving the grandeur of Teton Canyon and the surrounding forests as they are for the benefit of the current and future valley is of the utmost importance. It is in the silence and wild of the forest that many of us feel at home. To many, including me, Teton Canyon is a place between heaven and earth, and will cease to be when it is stripped of its beauty if developed. And when it is gone, it is gone forever.

In closing, we must understand that our actions in response to the stewardship that we have over our valley and mountains is a reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and our community. Acting selfishly and without thought for the whole or the future brings sadness, regret, and discord. Let us therefore remember the beauty and the wild that is no one’s to exploit, but that makes our mountains and our valley special.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gabe Wilson