

June 10 2025

Kim Pierson, Forest Supervisor  
c/o Jay Pence, Teton Basic District Ranger  
1405 Hollipark Drive  
Idaho Falls, ID 83401

**Subject: Public Comment on the Proposed Expansion of Grand Targhee Mountain Resort**

Dear Mr. Pierson,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed expansion of Grand Targhee Mountain Resort. As local residents of over thirty years—and, we hope, many more to come—we have a deep, personal connection to the region. We regularly hike, climb, and ski in Grand Teton National Park and the Jedediah Smith Wilderness, and we are deeply concerned about the long-term environmental and social consequences of this proposed development.

While we understand that economic growth is important, we believe the proposed expansion would cause irreversible harm to the unique ecosystems and character of the area. Our concerns include:

**Environmental Impacts**

The proposed expansion would threaten fragile alpine and forest ecosystems. Increased human activity—through the creation of new ski runs, lifts, roads, and other infrastructure, as well as avalanche control measures—would result in habitat fragmentation and the displacement of sensitive wildlife species, including grizzly bears, wolverines, moose, elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep.

**Wilderness Character and Recreation Values**

The development of South Bowl and construction of "on-mountain guest services facilities" at the summit of Fred's Mountain would significantly degrade the natural views enjoyed from within both the Park and Wilderness. The intrusion of mechanical infrastructure, noise, explosives, and larger crowds would diminish the region's "*opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation*," which are core values protected by the Wilderness Act.

**Climate Change and Sustainability**

Ski resorts are inherently vulnerable to the growing impacts of climate change. As snowpack becomes less reliable and temperatures continue to rise, expanding skiable terrain at high environmental cost is both shortsighted and risky. Resources

would be better spent on diversifying sustainable, year-round tourism options rather than doubling down on a snow-dependent model with a precarious future.

### **Traffic and Congestion**

The expansion would place further strain on already inadequate infrastructure, particularly along Ski Hill Road and Highway 33. Traffic congestion during peak seasons would increase safety concerns and degrade the quality of life for local residents and visitors alike. The surrounding road network is simply not equipped to absorb the volume of visitors a significantly larger resort would bring.

### **Impacts on Local Communities**

While economic gains may result from expansion, they are often accompanied by complex challenges: rising property values, workforce housing shortages, increased gentrification, and changes to the character of small-town life. These pressures can displace long-time residents and alter the cultural fabric of Teton Valley in ways that may be difficult to reverse.

### **Alternative Approaches**

We urge you and the project developers to consider more responsible alternatives. Improving existing infrastructure, investing in sustainability initiatives, and enhancing current resort offerings—without expanding into pristine areas—would allow for growth that respects the environment and the people who call this place home.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully request that you reconsider the proposed expansion of Grand Targhee Mountain Resort. The long-term health of our wildlands, wildlife, and community should be the guiding priorities in this decision-making process.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

### **Amy and Forrest McCarthy**

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