

Kim Pierson, Forest Supervisor CTNF
1405 Hollipark Dr.
Idaho Falls, ID 83401

June 19, 2025

Re: Grand Targhee draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms Pierson,

As a resident of Teton County Idaho and an avid recreationalist and naturalist, I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the Grand Targhee draft Environmental Statement (DEIS). I am a season pass holder at Grand Targhee Resort (GTR) and enjoy skiing, hiking and mountain biking at the developed area. I also enjoy the benefits of living within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between the needs of the ski area to continue to be economically viable, the natural environment, and the impact to Teton County ID.

Grand Targhee resort is an important aspect of the local economy providing employment opportunities, recreational opportunities, programs for local youth, and brings clients to local businesses. It is important that it remains economically healthy. I would also like it to keep its current niche as an intimate, low-density ski area with phenomenal terrain.

I would prefer to see Alternative 3 selected to allow the area to experience expansion in amenities and ski runs while not expanding outside of the current SUP where, in my opinion, the environmental impacts exceed the benefits of the expansion.

Specific Comments in regards to recommending Alternative 3:

1. Expansion into the Mono Trees would result in a significant impact to wildlife, in particular Canada lynx and Goshawks. It would also result in the removal of thousands of trees, many of which are old growth Fir and Spruce. Whitebark Pine are present in the area which are considered "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. While erosion would need to be controlled, this extensive tree removal could put downstream water bodies at risk if not done properly.

The ski runs through dense forest would also be visually unpleasing to residents of Teton Valley ID and Alta, Wy.

It is unclear to me whether the added terrain would have good skiing since the base would be lower in elevation than even Sacajawea where snow conditions can be poor in low snow years. With climate change, expanding to lower elevations is risky, could involve the need for additional snowmaking, and is not worth the investment.

2. Expansion into South Bowl within Teton Canyon would also result in a significant impact on wildlife, in particular Bighorn Sheep and Grizzly Bears. It would also result in an impact to Whitebark Pine. The National Park Service, Wyoming Game and Fish, and the Teton Sheep and Working Group have spent years convincing backcountry skiers to avoid sensitive Bighorn Sheep habitat. This proposed development would overlap with the Bighorn Sheep habitat which is counter to protecting the Bighorn Sheep.

The DEIS states that avalanche control would be important for the safety of skiers in South Bowl. Avalanche control would be disruptive not only for Bighorn Sheep but also recreators in Teton Canyon. Teton Canyon is a popular destination in all seasons, and a developed South Bowl would adversely affect that experience both visually and from noise pollution.

3. The potential for impact to surface water, and domestic and public water supply downstream of the Targhee Expansion is not adequately described. While the Hydrologic Impact Report summarizes potential impacts and mitigation requirements, without the detailed plans for this mitigation, and a more in-depth analysis of potential impacts, it is unclear whether downstream users (wildlife and human) will be adversely impacted.

The amount of groundwater needed for the new development is unlikely to adversely impact downstream water supply as it is small relative to the overall water supply from the watershed. However, this should be demonstrated through a more rigorous review. This watershed is the only water source for Alta and the City of Driggs.

Other Comments:

1. The increase in visitors will result in socioeconomic impacts to Teton Valley including:
 - Regional growth of residential and commercial development which impact wildlife corridors, water resources, and traffic.

- Create a strain on affordable housing and workforce availability.
- Increased traffic in Teton County ID will produce a strain on the road system.

Teton County Idaho will not receive tax revenue from property and sales at Targhee but will be responsible for housing employees and guests, along with impacts to local infrastructure. Teton County also provides hospital, EMS, and Solid Waste services to those people.

It is critical that a revenue sharing solution is reached prior to additional development, even under Alternative 3. Teton County does not have the money to support the wear and tear to roads, added turn lanes, or lights required to safely handle the amount of added traffic expected from the expansion.

Thank you for the consideration of the above comments.

Sincerely,

Heidi Blischke
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