# Comment on the Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan DEIS

## 1. Alternative 3 Is the Most Reasonable and Balanced Option

Alternative 3 represents a thoughtful compromise that addresses many operational needs of Grand Targhee Resort (GTR) — including lift upgrades, snowmaking, terrain improvements, and expanded year-round recreation — within the existing Special Use Permit (SUP) boundary. This approach acknowledges the resort's need to modernize and remain competitive while avoiding the most controversial and environmentally damaging expansions into the South Bowl and Mono Trees areas.

The Forest Service developed Alternative 3 in response to public and interdisciplinary concerns over wildlife habitat, scenery, and recreational conflicts. It meets a clear public interest threshold: upgrading GTR’s infrastructure for guest experience without expanding its footprint into sensitive and scenic areas of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

## 2. Unjustified Economic Risk to Teton County, Idaho

The expansion scenarios under Alternatives 2, 4, and 5 threaten to shift significant economic and infrastructure burdens onto Teton County, Idaho, which receives none of the direct tax benefits from development in Alta, Wyoming.

Visitation growth would drive:
- Increased demand for public services (e.g., emergency response, road maintenance) that Idaho taxpayers must fund;
- Housing pressure and displacement due to a rise in short-term rentals and seasonal workers;
- Strain on rural infrastructure, particularly traffic through Driggs and along Ski Hill Road;
- A reduction in quality of life and rural character, which is a key reason many residents choose to live here.

The burden falls disproportionately on Idaho communities without offsetting fiscal benefits — an inequity that must be seriously considered.

## 3. Threats to Wildlife Habitat and Ecological Integrity

The proposed expansions into South Bowl and Mono Trees would result in significant habitat loss and fragmentation, undermining the Forest Plan’s objectives for species conservation:

- Mono Trees includes important winter habitat for mule deer and moose, and potential habitat for lynx, goshawk, boreal owl, and other sensitive species;
- South Bowl would disrupt an intact forest block bordering the Jedediah Smith Wilderness;
- Fragmentation from road building, lift construction, and terrain development would isolate wildlife populations and degrade movement corridors.

Alternative 3 avoids these harms by focusing development within the existing ski area.

## 4. Expansion Will Mar Iconic Views from Hiking Trails and Scenic Vistas

The Teton Range offers some of the most spectacular hiking opportunities in the West. Expansion into South Bowl and Mono Trees would permanently scar the landscape visible from:

- Table Mountain;
- Teton Canyon;
- Grand Teton National Park (notably from the summit and Mount Meek Pass);
- The Teton Scenic Byway.

New lift towers and trails would introduce artificial lines into a previously unbroken alpine setting, eroding the sense of wildness and solitude cherished by hikers, artists, and photographers.

## 5. Expansion Is Unnecessary Based on Existing Visitation

GTR’s core argument for expansion — that it needs more terrain to meet future demand — is not supported by data:

- The resort currently operates well below its Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC);
- Ski visitation has remained steady, and the current lift/trail infrastructure is underutilized on most days;
- Alternatives 3 and 4 still provide significant improvements without new SUP areas.

The Forest Service must critically examine the assumption that bigger equals better.

## Conclusion

Alternative 3 strikes the best balance between enhancing Grand Targhee’s offerings and preserving what makes this region special. It supports local recreation and economic benefits without compromising wildlife habitat, scenic integrity, or the well-being of nearby Idaho communities.

I urge the Forest Service to select Alternative 3 and reject the SUP expansions into South Bowl and Mono Trees. We must prioritize stewardship of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and the long-term vitality of the Teton region.
Respectfully,

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