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First name: Alexander

Last name: Levy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: re: Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements Project.

Dear Mr. Duran:

My name is Alexander Levy, I am family member whose home sits on the Rio Hondo and whose orchard is watered from the acequia. I was born here in Arroyo Hondo and was in school with some of the Blakes.

The Blake's commitment to the community and the river included a daily skier cap. The Blake's vision differs from the current Ski Valley owners. ambitions.

For instance, for me, a new restaurant proposed at the top of Lift 7 is particularly concerning. Water supplies are already limited in the valley. Our growing seasons are limited by the amount of water in the ditch.

In addition, moving water to the top of lift 7 will require large amounts of trenching and excavation. These activities will have a large impact on the surrounding environment during the periods of construction.

If you have skied TSV, think how long this proposed Gondola is in order to connect the front side to the back side in order to alleviate traffic concerns. Such a line will take tremendous construction. Please consider, as you know, disturbance of soils along the Lake Fork of the Rio Hondo for installation of the gondola and all its towers would result in impacts to surface waters, therefore requiring diligent analysis and collection of baseline data. The EIS must therefore take a hard look at the Proposed Action's impacts to water resources, mitigation measures, long-term monitoring of water quality and volume, and a No Action Alternative. Any mitigation measures identified in the EIS must include detailed measures to protect the integrity of the Rio Hondo headwaters through all phases of the project. Baseline measurements are needed to protect the integrity of this watershed and its downstream users. Without an established baseline and an EIS, we have no science.

NM is in drought. Contractors working on the Calf Fire stated on Tuesday that if the fire crosses the west side of 518, "all hell will break loose". This is because the moisture content of the fuels on the ground are dried to a level beyond being baked in a kiln. Imagine baking a stick in a kiln and picking up a stick from the ground around Mora, and having the Mora stick be the more flammable of the two? Water in the valley means reduced fuel for fires.

An EIS would allow us to predict how the ski valley's proposed changes will affect the valley's moisture content and thus predict the Valley's flammability. Fire, such as we are seeing in Mora would greatly affect all of us.

Diligent gathering of data and analysis must be done in order to establish baselines.

We cannot change what we cannot measure. Long term monitoring of volume and water quality must be done so all citizens can understand the impact development will have.

Regarding the proposed Action which seeks to utilize a 65.2 million gallon water tank and booster station near Lift #2. I agree that the EIS must take a hard look at whether this action will result in over-appropriation of the Taos Ski Valley's 200 acre-feet water right and conditions of approval associated with the Taos Ski Valley's water rights permit. If the Ski Valley can draw from the tank at their own discretion, then without monitoring, there is no reason for them not to use the tank's reserve on day's where more water is needed as overflow for more skiers. This allows the cap to be overridden on certain days - as needed.

In addition, a 5 million gallon tank is huge, roughly the size of the Plaza, including portions of those shops. We cannot imagine such a large structure being built in the Town of Taos, nor the County, without undergoing some rigorous review. This is a large construction project and the impact it will have on watershed should be thoroughly studied. An EIS is long overdue for Ski Valley projects in the past, as well as these being considered.

Ski Valley expansion may have negative or beneficial impacts on housing and employment. The Blakes (who I knew growing up) never worked to make Taos Ski Valley a 24/7 resort. During the off season, people and wilderness were allowed to recover. My mechanic and the waitresses at a local Taos restaurant have told me that money comes to the Ski Valley does not leave the Ski Valley. That is the local retail perception. "What benefits the Ski Valley, does not overflow to the Town of Taos."

If that is not true, then an EIS studying the socio-economic impacts could address this perception directly. Otherwise, the Ski Valley is at risk of creating an "Upstairs, Downstairs" climate of inequality.

Last year it was proposed to enhance snow making by injecting clouds with iodide. The proposal was submitted without any consultation from local pueblos. This, I assume was done out of ignorance rather than malevolence on behalf of the applying parties. We do not believe the Ski Valley requested this action. Nonetheless, in contrast, all of us in the community know about Blue Lake and we, along with the Ski Valley should respect the ancient traditions of those who lived here long before we arrived from Spain. An EIS should study ways to protect cultural heritage, including water.

In my review of Ski Valley documents, it appears that the only monitoring being done for water quality is being done by the Ski Valley itself. With the advent of Covid along with the disposal of prescription drugs into local facilities, we need to ensure that the membranes currently being used are able to filter out particulates that were never envisioned during the water treatment facilities original construction. The Rio Hondo flows from the Ski Valley into the Rio Grande. Where the two rivers join, on most days throughout the summer, you will see families playing on the beach or fishing from the shore.

[See photo attached - which includes two cars parked on the beach ]

This is a popular destination for Taos citizens all summer long. People are swimming in the Ski Valley's sewage, all summer long. In many municipalities, sewage is being tested to predict rising cases for Covid. However, no tests (that I know of) are being done to see what happens when humans interact with that treated sewage. What are the impacts of swimming and fishing in the Ski Valley's treated sewage? An EIS would help us understand what these human impacts are.

I also ask that an EIS include an No Action Alternative Analysis.

The Rio Hondo is part of our daily lives. It is where our dog gulps water. Where our orchard drinks. Where our family sits. Where the dipper bird bobs up and down in the evening singing its song. Changes in the water above, affect all of us below - directly and immediately.

Large projects such as is proposed, need an EIS - to supply all affected parties with the information they need. I'm surprised that the Ski Valley isn't requesting an EIS as well.

I have sat in class with the Blakes. I have skied powder on the front side and I have hiked trails on the back side. I'm seeking a win-win and an EIS is a step in that direction.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Alexander Levy