

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/16/2018 8:51:23 PM

First name: Anne

Last name: Esson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The proposal to expand the existing Golden Peak training area by 42 acres atop Golden Peak creating an international, year-round training center may well produce more Olympians from our Valley, but at draconian costs to the community, the environment, and especially to our wildlife, already in drastic decline. The use may also be consistent with the ski area agreement with USFS, but at what cost to the role of FS as protectors of natural resources on federal lands for present and future generations. Gifford Pinchot would be rolling over in his grave!

For the community, we will face even more horrendous back-up's and traffic on ski days in the Village, often now dead-locked at peak pick-up & drop off times. Town taxpayers will have on-going additional expense for safety and facilitation of access & egress. And clearing 80% of the trees atop Golden Peak will cost the peak its "gold," and Vail the air-clearing function of all those trees.

The additional snow-making called for to cover all the additional terrain for longer periods will use more precious water and likely lead to increased soil saturation, and particularly as trees and vegetation are stripped off, much more debris and other pollution entering streamsheds and ultimately Gore Creek, already an "impaired stream."

But it is our wildlife, especially our elk and deer herds that will bear the impact of this industrialization of Golden Peak the most. The 4 biologists presenting at the Town Wildlife Forum last Jan. 18th all spoke in agreement on the already steep decline in herd numbers since the '90's due to the effects of year-round recreational activities and development. Average Elk numbers in 3 base years of the mid-90's were 1771 in Game Management Area 45, which includes the ski area. The average population for 3 years 2012, 2013, and 2014 was 604 elk. Calf numbers per 100 cows have also plummeted raising questions already about the sustainability of this herd. (See letter and State of Wildlife Report to Town of Vail's Pete Wadden by Bill Andree, Mar. 6, 2017.)

Mr. Andree said, though CPW lacked similar detail studies on deer, harvest numbers reflect similar dire counts on deer in GMU 45 and 36.

As Vail has no bio-diversity study on birds and other forest creatures, I can only speculate on the impacts on forest birds, including Dusky Grouse, and other creatures from the stripping of the forest from Golden Peak to be followed by intensified all-season activity on the whole front side of the peak. The impacts to the environment will go well beyond the actual training area as you well know. Wildlife studies tell us, for instance, that motorized vehicles (think service trucks and snowmobiles) impact elk and deer 1500 meters away. And there are ripples of all this disturbance even farther away.

Please, act like the foresters and environmental guardians I believe you to be and the public expects, and just say no to this proposal as an abuse of the environment and inappropriate burden for the community.