

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/5/2021 11:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Beginning in 1981 I have roamed extensively in the forests and Hills along Lake Superior's north shore. on foot in the four decades since then - much of it off trail - I have intimately explored Sawtooth Mountain areas from west of Silver Bay to northeast of Hovland. I often see huge old burned out decay-defying cedar stamps, remnants from fires that raged a century ago. I quietly observe the birds nesting in the protection of the high canopy. I study the interaction and interdependence of plants, wildlife, insect, water and soil.

The existence of birds is increasingly rare and sporadic, due largely to destruction of the habitat to which they migrate in winter. The skill hill expansion proposal now seeks to take another chip out of these bird's unique habitat on the nesting end of their yearly cycle. Removing swaths of this rare bird habitat, as well as all the other animal homes on these hills, would vastly and adversely affect all insect and animal populations.

In their fabulous book, "North Shore, a natural history of Minnesota's Superior Coast", writers Chel Anderson and Adelheid Fischer describe the rare uniqueness of Minnesota's north shore mountain highlands. In lieu of actually wandering these areas as I have, I suggest that anyone concerned with or about the ski hill expansion proposal read this book for perspective on the long lasting environmental impact of what this special use permit would be trading off.

I am a musician and relate personally to countless people who regularly visit the Sawtooth Mountain area. The overwhelming majority of these visitors are drawn here by a natural environment that has been preserved far better than most other areas. The proposal in question will leave an environment in chaos, in the heart the north shore highlands. What goes around comes around. If Minnesota can set a precedent that we will not trade off the environmental integrity of these lands, the positive health impact will be felt for generations. A side benefit is that sustainable tourism will continue to increase.

The northern hardwood conifer forests bejeweling these Sawtooth Mountains are a staggeringly beautiful sight, the crown Jewels of the Minnesota's north shore. All natural beauty is part of our environment, albeit increasingly rare. From afar, the detrimental environmental impact of scarifying and defacing the sheer majestic beauty of these hills is obvious to anyone who understands its essence. Leveling swaths of rare mature hardwood forests for wide ski runs, chair lifts, and buildings would desecrate this environmental jewel.

In my forest wanderings when I happen upon trails cut through the forest for hiking, bicycling, and skiing, my reaction is not favorable; I notice the erosion and the effects they have on local animal and bird populations. However, I do not lobby against the special use permits granted for them because these trails get people out to experience our Northwoods jewels intimately. That intimate experience raises human consciousness regarding the interdependence of all living things - including humans - with the environment, which tends to make these folks respect and want to preserve the environment. Thus, destruction of the environment by these smaller trails

is outweighed by an improvement in human consciousness with the potential result of more environmental preservation.

The ski hill proposal is not in the same universe as these smaller trails. Its adverse environmental effects would be massive and contribute to social apathy for erosion and the destruction of environment and wildlife habitat.

These rare Sawtooth Mountain hardwood conifer forests have been entrusted to us. We are custodians of a jewel. It should be considered a jewel that is not for sale. Not for sale, because otherwise all that will be left is pictures. Pictures I will be tempted to hide from my son so he does not see what was taken from him.

Joe Paulik

Grand Marais