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First name: RICHARD
Last name: CAROL STAFFON
Organization:
Title:
Comments: [External Email]Fw: Lutesen Mountains Expansion Project DEIS

[External Email]

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Dear Mr. Jiminez,

I emailed these comments to you yesterday using the address that was in the Duluth paper. It came back today as undeliverable. I hope I have now found the correct address and that these comments will still be received and accepted. Thank you!

...Rich

_____

From: RICHARD AND CAROL STAFFON

Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 3:30 PM

To: commentseastern-superior@usda.gov <commentseastern-superior@usda.gov>

Subject: Lutesen Mountains Expansion Project DEIS

Dear Mr. Jimenez,

Attached are comments from the W. J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

...Rich Staffon, Past President

W. J. McCabe Chapter, IWLA

rcstaffon@msn.com 218-451-1415

W.J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter

Izaak Walton League of America

P. O. Box 3063. [bull] Duluth, MN 55803

December 9, 2021

Michael Jimenez, Project Leader

Lutsen DEIS Project

Superior National Forest

8901 Grand Ave. Place

Duluth, MN 55808

commentseastern-superior@usda.gov

Dear Mr. Jimenez,

These comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lutsen Mountains Expansion Project are provided on behalf of the W. J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America (Ikes). The Ikes seek to be defenders of our soil, air, water, woods and wildlife. The Ikes also strive to make sure we all have access to our public lands, and the fish and wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation that they provide. It is primarily for this reason that we are opposed to the Lutsen Mountain Expansion Project on our land in the Superior National Forest.

We submitted comments during the scoping process in which we raised concerns about the loss of public access and treaty rights, the potential for ski hill expansion to damage the water quality of the Poplar River watershed, the loss of the rare old-growth northern hardwoods-white cedar forest that grows there, and the ability of the local infrastructure to be able to handle a doubling of the facilities and people using Lutsen Mountain. We wonder how much additional housing and infrastructure would be constructed in the Lutsen area should this expansion project be approved? We have reviewed the DEIS and believe these concerns have not been adequately addressed.

In addition, we question the logic that Lutsen Mountains needs to expand in order to survive financially. Lutsen is the premier ski destination in Minnesota. It is the only ski hill in the state that comes close to providing a western

mountains like skiing experience. It seems much more likely that this expansion is driven by a profit motive rather than a survival motive.

We also wonder how this project squares with the Federal goal of reducing climate change impacts. Adding a 1,200-car parking lot and all the cars that will drive there every day of the ski season will certainly add to the problem. At the same time, you will be removing nearly a square mile of mature forest habitat that is doing a good job of sequestering carbon. How will this impact be mitigated?

The DEIS argues that this project will only cause small, incremental damage to climate, habitat and access to public land. This logic is not valid because it is incremental damage from a thousand different angles that is causing most of the environmental decline that we face today.

When Teddy Roosevelt was president, he warned of those who would [ldquo]skin our lands[rdquo] of their natural resources for short-term profit. Since Roosevelt established the Superior National Forest in 1909 it would seem prudent for today[rsquo]s U.S. Forest Service to heed his advice!

Finally, if the U.S. Forest Service goes ahead with this project, we ask that a tract of forest land along the Sawtooth Mountains of the North Shore be acquired that is similar in size and quality to that being taken. This should be required to mitigate the loss of these public lands with their very unique natural resource values.

The high quality of these lands is exemplified by the adjacent Lutsen Scientific and Natural Area that was acquired to protect the old-growth maple and white cedar forest and other unique forest values that occur there. The SNA is used by the Sugar Loaf Cove Interpretive Center for field tours and provides important wildlife habitat. The DEIS should address the important habitat values and public use of the SNA and potential impacts since the SNA would be adjacent to the proposed Lutsen expansion.

The failure of this project to mitigate the loss of a sizable tract of public forest land, with very special forest habitat and recreational values, is our primary concern. For many average Americans the only land we have for outdoor recreation is our state and national public lands. Any loss or degradation of these lands is a significant impact to us. It is a failure of the public trust doctrine that our government agencies are supposed to follow.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

/Julie O[rsquo]Leary/

Julie O[rsquo]Leary, President

W. J. McCabe Chapter, IWLA

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