LUTSEN MOUNTAINS EXPANSION PLAN

Introduction

## Lutsen Mountains is proposing an expansion of their operations to 550 acres of US Forest Service land that will almost double their number of ski runs, add new parking lots, water impoundments and various skier service buildings intended to support increased ski run availability.

## Concerns rise regarding the impacts to the environment, wildlife and water quality as well as the impact to the quality of life of Cook County residents.

# ENVIRONMENT

## WATER QUALITY

### Runoff from artificial snow has a high potential to impact the Rollins Creek watershed, which is a State designated trout stream. Projected impacts include increased sediment transport, increased turbidity and decreases in the Creek’s oxygen carrying capacity.

### Runoff entering Lake Superior will have a detrimental impact on aquatic life and water quality, especially in times of high sediment loads from surface erosion and runoff from Rollins Creek.

## LAND

### Removal of vegetation to create new ski runs will remove all soil and vegetative capacity to retain hydrology and will directly result in surface erosion. This runoff will be exacerbated by the complete reliance of Lutsen Mountain’s artificial snow-making operations and an apparent inability to regulate the amount of water those operations introduce to the environment.

### The combination of impervious surface, artificial snow run-off and geology will continue to result in “slumps: on the existing ski hill property and can be expected on the proposed -acre expansion.

### Development will result in the loss or alteration of several old-growth northern white cedar tracts and in impacts to a variety of wetland resources on Federal property.

### Increased run-off will challenge downslope features and hydric carrying capacity of the Superior National Golf Course drainages and waterways.

### The entire ridge above Lake Superior is a relatively young ecosystem created by glaciation and is continuing to shift and correct itself. Any project of this scope is sure to impact this process.

### Impervious surfaces due to new parking lots and buildings will initiate a chain of events that will eliminate natural groundwater recharge and infiltration.

## WILDLIFE

### The expansion is proposed in an existing Lynx management area and will impact Little Brown bat habitat, as well as, a wide variety of continuous forest-dependent game and nongame fauna and avi-fauna species.

# ASTHETICS

## NOISE POLLUTION

### Noise levels from snow guns have been steadily increasing to 24 hours a day over the last decade. Operations conducted on the lake front portion of the proposed expansion will result in pronounced audible pollution along the Highway 61 corridor.

## LIGHT POLLUTION

### Increasing light from snow making equipment, added parking lots and buildings is in direct opposition to the Dark Skies Initiative and disruptive to surrounding land owners.

## VISUAL

### Runs are proposed to be built on one of the last unspoiled vistas in the area and will be visible from surrounding areas.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC

## HOUSING SHORTAGE

### Cook County already is experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing for local and subsidized industry workers. Lutsen Mountains maintains that this expansion will add 200 new jobs at their facility, and 500 total in Cook County. This projected growth cannot be accommodated by housing, transportation, health services and County infrastructure. Lutsen Mountains has no solution for this offshoot of their proposed expansion.

## STAFFING

### The lack of employees has forced many businesses in Cook County to rely on subsidized workers from foreign countries. Work visa are increasingly limited, suggesting the proposed expansion is not sustainable with projected employment needs.

### The vast majority of the 500 projected jobs will be entry level service jobs which LMC pays less than living wages to start.

## STRESS ON LOCAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

### 500 entry level jobs will have a severe impact on Cook County’s medical, law enforcement, social services, schools and local governments’ ability to humanely treat the influx of necessary workers.

### SIZE OF EXPANSION

### The sheer size of this expansion is incongruous with the quality of life that folks seek in the wilds of northern Minnesota. It will bring many more workers than we can house, more tourists than we can offer support for and disrupt our life style of dark skies, quiet nights and lush, protected forests.

### LMC LACK OF STEWARDSHIP

###  The past history of LMC blatantly defying the DNR 12.6-million-gallon permit for pulling water from the Poplar River and taking increasing amounts without approval. When LMC took over the resort in 2000 the water withdrawal from the Poplar River jumped to 60 million gallons in 2001 and increased annually to a little more than 100 million in 2010 while still operating under the original 12.6-million-gallon permit.

1. LMC activity is the main reason that the Poplar River needed remediation. In recent years millions of tax dollars were spent cleaning up Poplar River, a situation created by LMC expanding in that area now LMC is proposing an expansion that will impact Rollins Creek in much the same manner.

### 3.6 million tax dollars were used for building the 4.8 million dollar pipeline to take water from Lake Superior for increased artificial snow making, and the proposed expansion will double that amount, to the detriment of Lake Superior.

### LMC claimed there were no fish in the Poplar River, yet the DNR refutes that saying, “We have found adult fish and found young-of-year fish. That section of the river is a trout stream.”

### LMC has ongoing, unabated erosion and sediment control problems.

# Conclusion

## Lutsen Mountains expansion plans are not in keeping with the flavor of northern Minnesota, nor the residents that live here full time.

## It will have severe and long-lasting impact on lands held for all the people. Once the Moose Mountain landscape is altered for a speculative ski operation, it will be unable to recover from expansion impacts.

1. Cook County’s quality of life is defined by its abundant natural resources. If these are lost or minimized by development our quality of life will be irreversibly impacted. Once lost they will never be sufficiently returned and the land will be permanently scarred. The conservation efforts by the DNR, BWSR and MPCA are over ruled by our politicians who do not care about the science, the resource, or the environmental legacy Cook County currently represents. We are renting this land from the children of the future and need to be responsible to preserve the county’s natural resources for future generations.