

May 28, 2020

Re: Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion

To whom it may concern,

Were the Lutsen Mountains (LM) request to expand their operations onto Federal (and Tribal) lands not so over-the-top in its sense of privilege, it would be laughable. In fact, I came up with a rhetorical query for the LM business approach: you own a local “store” whose business and industry are in decline. Do you A) modernize and update your business, improve your infrastructure, and adjust your operations to reflect current times? or; B) buy more cash registers? In the case of Lutsen mountains, it is obvious that “B...*buying more cash registers* is their business model.

I am vehemently opposed to the LM expansion request for many reasons, but for the sake of brevity, my comments are focused on two personally relevant topics: environmental and aesthetic impacts.

#### Environmental Impacts

More rhetorical posturing: What do you get when you combine fragile glacial outwash sands, clay and cobble, removal of soil-stabilizing vegetation, the introduction of acres of impervious surfaces, the introduction of millions of gallons of water to make artificial snow and a complete lack of environmental accountability? You get Lutsen Mountains and its landscape-scale slumping, erosion and sediment transport, ongoing construction on fragile steep slopes and bluff resources, and both seasonal and long-term impacts to the Poplar River and Lake Superior. The worst part of that though, is the comprehensive lack of recognition by LM that “they” are the cause of these impacts.

Think it can’t happen on Federal land holdings? Look at the precedent they have established within the same geologic landscape.

#### Aesthetic Impacts

I have lived at the western end of Moose Mountain since 2003. In that time, I have watched and listened as LM has increased its visual and acoustic impact on my life. They have moved onto Moose Mountain now; their snow guns are significantly louder; their lighting more intrusive (good-bye dark skies) and it is hard to feel the calm and rejuvenating embrace of winter when an industrial snow-making operation is pulsing round-the-clock, effectively in my back yard. If LM is allowed to move further down Moose Mountain, they will ruin my right to a hard-earned and aesthetically centered existence. My “sense of place” will be lost.

One of the most alluring and popular year-round hikes along the Superior Hiking Trail is the Oberg Loop, a 2.2-mile jaunt up and around Mount Oberg’s granitic knob. In the fall, hundreds

of hikers each day venture up the trail. In the winter, it is a snowshoeing destination. The Loop's participants are able to partake in what is now, a step back in time; a landscape unstained by development and commercialization. For all intents and purposes, that vista is the same vista that was viewed 200 years ago. It affords a rare, North Shore perspective. Imagine that same vista with the visual blight of lift towers and field roads and more concerning, snow making. I would suggest that most people who have experienced the "unstained" visual and acoustic landscape from atop Mt. Oberg, will lament its loss immensely. On second thought, I won't suggest it, I will guarantee that lament.

Lutsen Mountains has hundreds of acres of its own land, and they have consistently demonstrated poor environmental stewardship and a lack of environmental intuition. Theirs is a self-serving business model; a speculative approach for buy-out from others in the industry (their "Field of Dreams" template?...*if you build it, they will buy...*).

Let's not kid ourselves. This isn't Snowmass, CO and its 4,500 feet of vertical runs, with 200" of natural snowfall, it is Lutsen Mountains and 800-feet of vertical runs and environmentally disruptive build-outs and man-made snow. They have their playground. It is on their property and within their corporate ownership. That should be enough for everyone.

I implore you to deny this foray into self-serving, ski-hill expansion. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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