To Whom it May Concern:

I commented earlier, but it was practically an anxious rambling of a panicked gal before her coffee and after a poor night’s sleep. After more research and reading, I wanted to provide a more thoughtful comment. Please feel free to delete my earlier comment if there is a limit.

First I want to thank you for the work you do and for allowing public comment on this very important decision. This is a decision that has a significant impact on lives, both human and animal, in the beautiful valley we all chose to call home. I think reading the comments really left me with one simple feel and that is this:

I genuinely feel that Teton Valley has something that nowhere else has, something that drew us all here. We have dark skies, picturesque views void of intrusions, and open and wild spaces. This came through in every comment I read. My fear, however, is that this proposal is asking to squander all of that for a quick buck. This proposal, I feel, goes against our values and will have a lasting and severe negative impact on our community. Just as the increase in people at Targhee has impacted the water below, poor decisions and management there will trickle down into the community below.

My family and friends can’t quite get it in their head that I don’t live here because I can’t afford Jackson, I live here because I actually hate Jackson and would never live there. There are a million Jackson-like places. Take your pick of an overpriced, massive ski resort towns with a fleeting and touristic vibe. Towns that flaunt their wealth rather than their community and where the working class can’t afford to live. Targhee and Drictor provide something real: Something less like Disney land where people get mauled by bison because it has that amusement-park vibe. It instead leaves all of us with a respect for, compassion for, and connection to the natural world. A feeling I imagine you want us to experience. This expansion could actually risk all of that, whether or not we want it to. I understand the draw of more lift access, but there really are very few, if any, benefits to expansion and many many costs from parking issues, water contamination, light pollution, overcrowding, littering, etc.

I don’t know the specific instructions for your task. I imagine that it has a lot more to do with assessing environmental impact and not social and cultural. I recognize I mostly addressed the latter, but I think it is an important a consideration as any. I also think that we cannot deny the clear connection between the two. The potential impact this will have on the community below will likely have more far-reaching effects on the wildlife and wilderness than any impact it has at the top of the mountain. Unfortunately, I don’t have the research to comment on the exact environmental impact, although I think I can say with certainty this will have a negative impact on the wildlife. I have yet to see a study where growth of human populations and access has a positive impact on wildlife. This year we have continued to go backwards in protecting our wild places. Let’s not follow that trend.

Please don’t take away what makes Teton Valley the unique and wonderful place it is for the residents here. Thank you again for listening and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katie