GRAND TARGHEE 2018 MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROJECTS #58258

PLAN WHICH HAS BEEN FORMALLY PROPOSED IN SEPTEMBER OF 2020

I would like to address the following issues that I see with this proposed expansion.

Instead on building new structures on top of, in the middle of and at the base of Targhee, I believe they should improve the current infrastructure that is currently available on the mountain. There are not enough locker rooms, cafeterias for the folks who have to brown bag it in order to be able to ski. These improvements would lend to long term viability to improve the lodging and base area. We do not want to continue to make skiing exclusively a rich man’s sport. These are **our** public lands.

To address the viability of Targhee for the future one only has to go up on any weekend day during the winter season or for that matter, the summer season to see that parking is inadequate on any given day. Add to that any day with fresh snow and there simply is not enough parking to accommodate the people coming to ski. Encouraging more people to use public transportation, especially by creating parking in all three towns in Idaho and Alta would be a huge environmental benefit. The service needs to expand and be more dependable to encourage people to use it.

It would seem that even during the Covid pandemic, Targhee did a great job of maximizing their available camping facilities and they certainly sold a LOT of tickets to haul bikers up the mountain. Perhaps a banner summer for a pandemic. They have turned the resort into a mountain bike mecca which is great if you mountain bike but for all the new trails that have been built they have excluded the common hiker and folks that simply don’t have the money to bike or are not able to. The expansion does not include hiking only trails but multiuse trails. It certainly doesn’t feel like “public lands” that are for everyone.

The lift lines are Targhee are uncomfortable but no comparison to other ski areas where lift lines can take 30 minutes to load people on the lift. After the initial upload of people to the mountain, there is never a significant lift line unless the other lifts aren’t working. Do we need more lifts to serve the public? I believe if Targhee expanded to the already approved lifts that it has in it’s current plan, it would all but alleviated the jam at the base by providing another lift to load first ride users in the mornings.

Addressing safety issues on Peaked Mountain would be interesting. We all know that Targhee has many days that offer very poor visibility. Opening other lifts and runs on the South side of Peaked only exacerbates the problem of low visibility, people getting lost and possibly missing the rope boundaries only to put them in grave danger from avalanches and cliff bands. This would leave Teton Canyon vulnerable as well. Avalanches are frequent on Peaked Mountain and I don’t believe the public has any idea how to cope with this issue. I, for one, would not be happy if my child missed a turn and ended up in Mill Creek or all the way down in Teton Canyon.

Targhee has often prided itself on being “green” and rightfully so. I don’t see how this expansion of restaurants, lifts, and grooming on the mountain would be beneficial to the environment. Where will the water come from? The sewer and wastewater from these facilities would be horrendous to manage. There will be more light pollution, more logging, more visual impacts for the entire valley to contend with and more impact to wildlife in the expansion zone which are all significant factors to consider.

Not only does this just affect Targhee but it would affect Teton Valley as a whole. We simply do not have the infrastructure in roads, restaurants and lodging to accommodate more tourists in the valley without it significantly affecting our quality of life. We did not move here to become another big ski resort community. We moved here because we love the small home town feeling of knowing our neighbors and community. We respect our environment and we like the diversity this community offers.

Our roads, law enforcement, hospital and schools are not able to contend with more people. Idaho has only allocated a small amount of funding to accommodate roads and we are already behind years in the current workload of upgrading and maintaining what we have. Law enforcement would be maxed out, the hospital would not be adequate and the schools would not be able to accommodate many more families that would move here. All of this would be problematic with the current property tax funding that is allowed by the State of Idaho which funds all of these services. When any one of these entities is only able to increase their budget by a maximum of 3% and possible less if the state legislature has any say) we could not ever be able to fund increases in any of these services.

And last and perhaps one of the biggest challenges is the fact that Targhee can barely accommodate their current workforce. Their seasonal employees barely make a sustainable wage and there is simply a lack of affordable housing. Does Targhee plan on building affordable housing for all their employees on their ever precious real estate at the base of the ski area?? I think not.

We are all members of this community and I have applauded Targhee with all the ways they have maximize their current resources and as we all know, there is currently a boom in the valley as is. I don’t see how we can afford to increase the stress on the environment and resources without doing irreversible harm to ourselves, the planet and our immediate environment.

Please consider all of these points when considering this proposal. EIS statements should be done, strategic planning with the two counties involved and surveys should be enacted before moving forward with any of these proposals.