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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Golden Peak expansion

Max,

Zack MacMillan here, crewmember Eagle engine 609, now Minturn engine 606. I am writing to express my complete opposition for the expansion on Golden Peak. I have posted the article from the Vail Daily to multiple public forums from Summit county to Crested Butte, finding an overwhelming majority of public disagreement with the expansion, all of whom are stakeholders in our public lands, fought to be set aside for us by great men with valuable vision.

I have been living in Vail since 2010, watching every empty space consumed by construction. It has become increasingly unattractive as it expands, particularly to the outdoor recreators who care for the land. Our motto in the Forest Service is "caring for the land and serving the people", something I have taken great pride in. I have been proud to call myself a forester, a public servant; proud to call the White River National Forest my home. As of late, it seems evident to me that this is no longer a pertinent motto, as we have allowed expansion wherever money and political influence lies, with complete disdain for habitat; ie: lynx habitat, elk migration corridors, and as evidenced last week, wolverine habitat. Are we to change our own values, sacrifice our integrity, and erase habitat for future generations in the name of a sport...a training ground for the wealthy?

From one firefighter to another, our forests are becoming increasingly less sustainable without allowance for natural fire cycles, largely in part to prevention, protecting the overwhelming and multiplying structures erected on our forests; for some reason we refer to them as "values". This prevention has allowed for long term carbon deposits, much more than nature should naturally allow for, which we both know burns hotter and faster. Prevention, paired with warmer winters, has also allowed for undisturbed food sources for invasive insects plaguing our timber nationwide. Fire activity is increasing as our climate changes, particularly to areas of long term prevention such as Vail mountain.

I've been fortunate enough to have a view of those Golden Peak sunsets come fall time, when that iconic aspen grove lights up. I can't imagine its absence, particularly in the name of a bigger training ground for humans on two petroleum sticks, with no real benefit to the majority of public land stakeholders.

The Vail Resort experience in and of itself has decreased as volume has increased in the same space, with no cap on amount of skiers per day, and it's all for money, yet the employees are still underpaid, hardpressed for housing, and reserve parking is essentially nonexistent for a labor force that has been pushed further away from Vail with each passing year, meaning longer commutes each day, and now we're talking about an expansion on our lands with no benefit to a majority.

"To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." -US Forest Service mission statement. I walk into work each and every day knowing what our mission is and proud to help accomplish it, whenever and wherever I can. I am proud to wear

that uniform, but we absolutely cannot turn a blind eye to what our mission means and what we stand for, or we do our founders and our nation, generations past, present, a future, a great disservice. In a world where integrity is very much for sale, we cannot afford to abandon our values.

I am unable to attend tonights hearing, but I wish for you to read my letter of opposition to those in attendance. I am writing this as a community member, a public stakeholder, and proud forester.

Thank you for your time,  
Zack MacMillan