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Organization:

Title:

Comments: September 21, 2018

Mr. Scott Fitzwilliams, White River National Forest Supervisor
c/o Monte Lutterman, Mountain Sports Ranger via email, mlutterman@fs.fed.us
620 Main Street, Carbondale, CO 81623-0309

Re: NOPA Snowmass Snowmaking and Elk Camp Meadows Project

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliams,

I offer these comments on behalf off the Snowmass Capitol Creek Caucus regarding the Environmental Assessment of the Snowmass Snowmaking and Elk Camp Meadows Project.

The Snowmass and Capitol Creek Caucus is a steward and advocate for both Capitol and parts of Snowmass Creek and their watersheds. We feel the maintenance of sustainable healthy flows and water quality for both Creeks is imperative to our Caucus residents.

During this drought summer both Creeks were dry or experienced extremely low flow. From the Capitol Snowmass Creek confluence, about four stream miles were dry or flow that would not support trout in Snowmass Creek Likewise, Capitol Creek was mostly dry for about six miles above the confluence. As you can imagine, we are extremely concerned about enough water to support healthy creek biota. Also, remember winter flows are always lower in the summer.

As you are aware, water from Snowmass Creek supplies Snowmass Water and Sanitation District's Ziegler Reservoir from Snowmass Creek. The Aspen Skiing Company purchases water from the District for the Snowmass Ski Area snowmaking.

The former agreements, permits and water right cases governing how and when water can be diverted from the Creek and stored for snowmaking are numerous. They represent years of study and negotiation by the federal and state governments, Sanitation District, the Aspen Skiing Company, Pitkin County and the Snowmass Capitol Creek Caucus in order to balance the health of Snowmass Creek, especially in the winter, with the water needs of Snowmass Village and the Snowmass Ski Area. Specifically, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) holds an instream flow right on Snowmass Creek intended to provide minimum flows necessary to protect trout habitat and stream health. Special conditions and restrictions pertain with this instream right with the Army Corp of Engineers 404 permit governing withdrawals for snowmaking and withdrawals in low flow water years.

The proposed project contemplates the depletion of an additional 6.2 acre feet of Snowmass Creek water. We need assurance that this amount will not be exceeded and in compliance with additional diversions from Snowmass Creek after December 31 or in conflict with the instream flow rights.

Sincerely,

David Chase
Chair, Snowmass Capitol Creek Caucus

