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First name: Jake

Last name: Risch

Organization: Friends of Tuckerman Ravine

Title: President

Comments: Dear Ms. Burnett,

The Friends of Tuckerman Ravine support the proposed Peabody West Integrated Resource Project. Backcountry skiing and riding is a growing segment of winter recreation in the White Mountain National Forest. The efforts of the Granite Backcountry Alliance (GBA) and other like-minded groups have expanded opportunities for backcountry skiing and snowboarding across the north east. Within the Presidential Range we are already seeing this user group expand out from the historic spring ski season in Tuckerman Ravine. Users are exploring farther into the range, earlier in the season, in increased numbers. This trend is exposing more of the public to higher consequence terrain and weather in the presidential range.

We support efforts to increase access lower consequence terrain for backcountry skiers and snowboarders across the WMNF---specifically when it can be done with the sustainable, low impact approach modeled by the GBA Baldface and Maple Villa projects. These projects provide the public lower risk options in elevated weather and avalanche danger. With this in mind, we support the creation of skiable glades on Pine Mountain. Additionally, we would support and join an effort from GBA to expand skiable terrain accessed from the Gulf of Slides Trail, Sherburne Ski Trail, and Tuckerman Ravine Trail through the development of sustainable glades in lower elevation hardwood stands. Having more low angle ski/snowboard terrain options empowers users to reduce their risk on elevated danger days.

Expanded skier traffic in Tuckerman Ravine outside of the traditional season is creating a safety hazard with two-way traffic on the Tuckerman Ravine trail. Before the cutler river drainage is filled in with snow, some early season skiers choose to ski down the narrow Tuckerman Ravine trail setting up potential collisions with uphill hikers. To mitigate this hazard, if it can be accomplished without significant impact to habitat, FOTR proposes limited gladeing on the south side of the Cutler River between Tuckerman Ravine and the Little Headwall to create a winter only downhill ski/snowboard exit route from Tuckerman Ravine.

FOTR also supports officially recognizing and maintaining the historic Grahm Trail as a winter only route. This trail provides a critical safety link between the Cutler River drainage and the Gulf of the Slides. This link provides a safe route---that avoids exposure to avalanche and alpine hazards---for users basing out of Hermit Lake and rescuers to access the GOS.

We support the efforts to realign the facilities at Hermit Lake Shelter with the current user profile. Attached to this letter are individual comments from past Hermit Lake caretakers who are Board Members or advisors of FOTR. We support replacing the Adirondack Shelters with tent platforms. We are aware of a proposal from the AMC to include a four sided enclosed cabin instead of the Mahoosuc shelter. The Mahoosuc shelter would be an upgrade over the current shelter configuration. We would also support the AMC's enclosed heated cabin as long as it is modest and self-service without cooking infrastructure. Our concerns include laying out the campsite to minimize social trails and environmental impact and maintaining adequate capacity to meet the historic year-round demand.

We fully support the proposal to replace the existing flush toilet system with a composting toilet.

In Summary, FOTR supports the proposal as is. We have included additional ideas to increase the utility, sustainability, and public safety of the proposed project.

Thank You for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Jake Risch
President