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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a Wenatchee resident familiar with this area and a season pass holder at Mission Ridge. I often recreate at Mission Ridge, Lake Clara area, Stemilt Basin, Squilchuck State Park, and the trails in and near these areas. I enjoy downhill skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and mountain biking so I visit these areas during spring, summer, fall and winter.

Overall I am concerned about the size of this development regarding human safety, negative impacts to wildlife and water supply, and recreation. Should all the housing proposed be built and filled, the resulting number of people (3,000-4,000 people) is a small town, not including the day visitors up there skiing or hiking. My specific questions or concerns are listed below.

Safety:

Can the proposed Forest Service access road to the new village support the increased capacity and traffic density? Can another access road be built separate from the proposed route that goes by the ski resort base area? Having only one road for access to the proposed village seems like a major safety concern as that road could become a bottleneck should some disaster occur (e.g., fire, landslide, active shooter, etc.). Doesn't the proposed housing density with only one way in or out violate the life safety requirement for developments? I recreate with my family up there many times throughout the year. I don't think the proposed economic gains are worth the risk to the lives of our children, residents, or visitors.

Fire:

Has the Forest Service considered the increased risks and costs to fire fighting and prevention to support a small town up in a dry forest? More people in the forest equate to more unintentional fires. Small fires may be manageable on site, but a large wildfire in the canyon will trap 1000's of people in a dangerous area. Wouldn't the county and FS be liable for allowing such a large development with only 1 access road in an enclosed area?

Wildlife:

How will this development affect year-round elk habitat and movement? Remember that not everyone who will live at or visit Mission Ridge will ski at the resort. Many people will hike in the summer and snowshoe or XC ski in the winter, and they will go outside of the planned development area. I participated in the recent Stemilt Basin recreation management plan and remember the elk hunters were very concerned about the impact from motorized and non-motorized recreation on elk populations, migration, and habitat. This proposed development will significantly increase the number of people in the forests around Stemilt Basin, Lake Clara, and Squilchuck. How can a development of this size not negatively impact elk, other wildlife and natural resources in our local forests?

Water supply:

How will the increased demand for water from the proposed development affect the local water supply? Will downhill residents with current water rights be effected? How will this development affect our farmers and orchards? With a warming climate and drying forests, can this development get the water they will need in 20+ years? Has the current water supply (aquifer size) been accurately determined? Has the Dept. of Ecology approved the water rights necessary for this large scale development?

Recreation:

I am concerned that this development will bring in so many people recreating on the local trails that the trails will become crowded, over used with no means for maintenance, and the overall quality of life will go down for Wenatchee residents.

Mitigation recommendation - require the Mission Ridge development to contribute money each year to maintenance of trails. Currently hiking trails are barely maintained by the Forest Service with help from volunteers at Washington Trails Association, and mountain biking trails are built and maintained by volunteers with Evergreen Mountain Bikers. The amount of money should be determined by representatives from these organizations.

I am an active backcountry skier and enjoy skiing in Stemilt Basin, which borders the ski resort boundary. Part of Stemilt was recently designated as a non-motorized area for recreationalists. Mission Ridge currently has an uphill route to access Stemilt for backcountry skiers to the east of chair 4, however this route may be lost with the proposed development. What is the point of having protected areas for recreation if we can't access the area? Mitigation recommendation - require the Mission Ridge development to incorporate an uphill backcountry route for winter recreationalists that would not require purchasing a ski pass. Volunteers with the organization El Sendero are willing to work with Mission Ridge to plan a route.

Thank you