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Comments: United States Forest Service,

The proposed Mission Ridge Expansion Project is requesting access to private property via a granting of rights-of-way across National Forest Land to build a new road. Forest Service Policy FSM2700 indicates that access should be granted when there is currently no access to the private property and when it is not possible to gain access across non-federal land. There are currently roads that access the proposed development property, therefore there is no trigger condition to instigate the USFS in granting access.

The plan also lacks adequate Safety Zones for emergency response. The plans may satisfy the initial calculation of required size for a safety zone which assumes flat ground, no wind, and radiant heat only. It is important to emphasize that emergency planning is required to consider worst case situations. For a minimal fire response crew (one engine) to be safe in the Mission Ridge Parking lot, with an upslope wind of 10 mph and 100 foot flame lengths, USFS standards require a Safety Zone over twice the size of the existing parking lot. Additionally any fire response will have to drive over 5 miles on a narrow canyon road with slope angles exceeding 20% most of the way to escape. The Squilchuck drainage has already been designated a high fire risk area. The Forest Service should take into account the role it will play permitting infrastructure that will someday place firefighters in a potentially compromised safety situation.

On page 11 of the EA, under "Regulatory Framework: Management Direction and Guidance", The Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) states: "New recreation sites should be constructed where demand is high and overuse problems are occurring at existing sites." Simply put, these stipulations are not met. One of the main allures of the Mission Ridge Ski area and adjacent area is the lack of people and overuse, especially when compared to the other ski areas and backcountry areas in the state. The Special Use Permit issued to the Mission Ridge Resort in 1984, which does not expire until 2038, is for non-exclusive use of the land by the ski area and specifically requires that the land remain open to the public for all lawful purposes. Many lawful backcountry users cherish the Stemilt Basin, which will be rendered useless once a development of residential and retail space is completed. The proposed development will create a crowded backcountry year round and long ski lift lines, making it completely contradictory to the guidance of the FLRMP.