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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear U.S. Forest Service,

I'm writing to voice my disapproval of the proposed Mission Ridge expansion project. While the project has been positioned to enhance the overall skiing at Mission Ridge, I believe that it does little to improve the skiing conditions for locals. Instead, this represents a real estate investment, focused on short-term returns, drawn-up at the expense of a pristine nature area in our valley.

I grew up on Wenatchee Heights and lived in Wenatchee most of my life. As a child, I've spent countless hours hiking (up to Clara & Marion Lakes), horseback riding, trail running, mountain biking (at Squilchuck and Devil's Gulch), fishing (Beehive Reservoir), and skiing in the area surrounding Mission Ridge. It's this access to untouched and accessible (as well as uncrowded) wilderness that makes the Wenatchee Valley special. Local outdoors enthusiasts are not the only ones who enjoy this area. It's also home to bears, elk, deer, fish and countless other animals. This is the reason I want my kids to grow up here. All these nature activities (and the residing wildlife) are at-risk for the local community as nearly 900 homes (not including the hotel and lodging for workers) will be built. The footprint proposed by this project is absolutely absurd.

While the devastation to the surrounding nature area is the main driver behind me writing this letter, there are countless other considerations that make this project nonsensical:

- Little to No Added Value for Locals - Chair 8 summit is approximately the same elevation as the existing lodge. What?! This underscores the true motivator of this project: money. Anyone who's skied Mission Ridge knows that the base has been increasingly under threat in recent years (a trend expected to continue with warming temperatures). Yes, snow making is a potential short-term solution. However, there's little to no snow in this area of the mountain during most of the winter months.

- Increased Fire Risk - There's one-way in and one-way out of Mission Ridge. This poses significant challenges for our first responders. With more out-of-towners and overnight lodging, higher fire risk is probable, especially during summer time. It takes only one carelessly tossed cigarette or camp fire to create an inferno in this area. During summer times, the brush is lick and dry. If a fire breaks out in this area, the residents of Wenatchee have a serious problem.

- Infrastructure will be Strained - With the countless houses and condos, there will be increased traffic up Squilchuck. Also, where is the water going to come from for this project (not just the irrigation pumped from the Ridge's reservoir)?

The people who profit from this project is Mr. Scrivanich and his investors. If approved, Wenatchee has put a price tag on its priceless commodity: nature and the abundance of outdoor opportunities in the area. I strongly urge you and any other decision makers to reconsider this real estate project. There have been several projects in the past (including proposed land swaps) that have been stopped by the Forest Service. On behalf of the residents and wildlife who live and play in this area of town, I'm hoping we can count on you to block this deal.

Sincerely,

Brennen Balcom