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Title:
Comments: Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project

The proposed expansion of Lutsen Mountain ski area onto adjacent National Forest is over-development and generally a bad idea. The problems would be many:

* net loss of valuable forest;
* the forest contain communities ranked by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as being of outstanding statewide biodiversity significance;
* portions of Moose and Eagle Mountains contain important white cedar forests -- a declining ecosystem;
* the addition of glade skiing between the cleared runs will results in loss of understory shrubs and trees over a very wide area;
* the declining and much admired paper birch forest would be further adversely impacted by the stress of opening and thinning of the forest;

* the ski area would be a large, unnatural break in these beautiful mountains, and detract from the Forest Plan goal of a scenic landscape;
* a temporary 142-acre clearcut for forest management would be condemned, 142 acres of permanent clearing with development is unacceptable;
* special use permits should not be granted when there may be alternatives on private land -- added facilities such as restaurants, ski shops, rental facilities, and parking could be provided in town with a shuttle to the existing parking lot;
* the clearings and development will result in runoff into Lake Superior below;

* the clearings, understory removal, roads, and significant increase in human presence will greatly impact wildlife by loss of habitat and direct disturbance;
* the threatened Canada lynx will be adversely impact by the tremendous human intrusion into forest;
* the hills along the North Shore of Lake Superior already have an abundance of recreation impacts, the added cumulative effects of the proposed expansion of Lutsen Ski Area need to be analyzed in detail and are significant;
* the expansion will greatly increase vehicle miles driven and resulting greenhouse gas emission exacerbating climate change warming and increase accidents with loss of human and animals lives (and injury) along the highways providing access to the North Shore;
* energy intensive snow-making and operation of lifts and facilities will result in more fossil fuel emissions from production of the added electricity and contribute to negative climate change; and

* in an area that is warming from climate change it doesn't make sense to invest in intensive snow sports.

I request the U.S. Forest Service analyze all the points I make above in detail. I think it should result in an obvious disapproval of the ski area expansion.
Thank you for your time and consideration.
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