

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/7/2020 5:17:02 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project

Dear Supervisor Constance Cummins,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit scoping comments regarding the Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project.

The proposed Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project threatens the future of backcountry skiing opportunities on the North Shore. Moose Mountain holds the most unbroken ski-able vertical feet in Northern Minnesota and is a valuable resource for backcountry skiers like me. Vertical feet of skiable pitch is a finite resource in this region, and needs to be shared. Given that half of Moose is already owned by LMC, the public lands on Moose Mountain should be left for everybody else to enjoy.

Rather than granting LMC a Special Use Permit, the Superior National Forest should consider the development of a backcountry ski area on Moose Mountain. As a backcountry skier and former resident of, and repeated visitor to Minnesota, I support Superior Highland Backcountry's vision for a Backcountry Ski Area on Moose Mountain and believe this would be a better use of these public lands. An expansion of the same old type of ski area is likely not going to bring any new visitors to our region. No matter how much Lutsen expands, the fact remains that there is only 700' of vertical terrain. While this is impressive for Minnesota, it can't compete with the draw of Western resorts for the destination skier. However, diversifying the variety of winter sports available in northern Minnesota will draw new visitors. Backcountry skiing is the fastest-growing segment of the ski industry, and adding a backcountry ski area to the mix of winter opportunities already available in Lutsen will entice more people to visit the area and strengthen the economy.

Furthermore in my time exploring the wilderness areas of Northern Minnesota, it is exactly the rugged wilderness that has drawn me to the area, not the more developed areas along the coast and central areas of Northern Minnesota.

The Environmental Impact Statement for this project should include an alternative that analyzes a backcountry ski area, as proposed by Superior Highland Backcountry.

Sincerely,

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