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Title: Conservation Committee Chairman

Comments: On behalf of 5RTU and its members, I am submitting the below comments in response to the proposed Purgatory Resort Ice Creek Pod Project, to install a lift and develop additional low-intermediate terrain in the Ice Creek area of Purgatory Resort.

5RTU appreciates the importance of Purgatory Resort to our community throughout La Plata County, and recognizes the stewardship they have demonstrated by operating multiple ski lifts adjacent to the East Fork of Hermosa Creek. For the proposed project, 5RTU acknowledges that the development would take place entirely within Purgatory's existing Special Use Permit area. Additionally, we see nothing that appears to violate the provisions of the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection law.

However, the proximity of the proposed Ice Creek project to the East Fork of Hermosa, and subsequently its connectivity to the protected Hermosa Creek watershed, present several key concerns. 5RTU's primary concern regarding adverse impacts to the East Fork and the CO River cutthroat trout population that inhabit the creek is increased siltation. This potential siltation and subsequent degradation to the East Fork's water quality could result from the proposal's associated development activities such as road improvements, grading, and vegetation removal.

5RTU would also like to call attention to the current forest plan that lists Hermosa Creek and its tributaries as 'suitable' for Wild and Scenic designation, and to remind the Forest Service of its statutory obligation to protect the 'Outstandingly Remarkable Values' (ORVs) as cited in the aforementioned forest plan. Additionally, 5RTU feels strongly that the investment in both time and funds on the part of our organization, national and state Trout Unlimited, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the United States Forest Service (USFS), and other partners in restoring and rehabilitating the cutthroat fishery in the East Fork should be preserved. 5RTU urges the Forest Service to impose measures to prevent adverse impacts to the fishery within the East Fork, as well as the necessary protection of ORV's in the Hermosa Watershed throughout the proposed development activities..

Reconsidering the stewardship Purgatory Resort has demonstrated in operating lifts proximal to the East Fork of Hermosa Creek, 5RTU feels that if Purgatory can successfully mitigate siltation of the East Fork during the development activities cited in the project plan, significant adverse impacts to the fisheries in and around the East Fork can be avoided.