

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/6/2020 8:35:23 PM

First name: Matt

Last name: Young

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Sir/Madams,

I have lived in Durango my entire life and am currently a non-traditional student at Fort Lewis College, where I am majoring in environmental science. I am also an avid hiker, backpacker, and outdoor enthusiast. I'm writing to express my great concern over the speedy analysis of the proposed Ice Creek Pod expansion at Purgatory Mountain Resort. It doesn't appear that the Forest Service has taken adequate consideration of the many impacts this development will have on wildlife in the area, especially endangered and vulnerable species such as the Canadian lynx and the Colorado River cutthroat trout.

The loss of habitat, habitat compression, and fragmentation are the primary dangers to continued lynx survival, and are also the number one cause of the mass extinction which the planet is currently facing. Large amounts of evidence show that the Ice Creek area is highly-used lynx habitat, from radio collar data to lynx sightings and tracks. Therefore, the development of Ice Creek is a direct threat to lynx. Chipping away at healthy habitat will affect many other species such as our struggling elk herds and the Colorado River cutthroat trout. Ignoring these grim realities in favor of expanding ski terrain is scientifically and morally unjustified.

The Forest Service has invested vast amounts of money and time in restoring the Canadian lynx. Allowing the destruction of prime lynx habitat is entirely counter to this goal. It would be sensible and prudent to significantly slow the approval and environmental assessment process to allow Fish and Wildlife time to assess lynx activity and habitat in the Purgatory area fully. More time must also be spent seeking alternatives to the Ice Creek expansion, in which beginner and intermediate terrain can be created on slopes that are already in use.

Thank you for your consideration and opportunity to comment.