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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms. Powell and Mr. West:

I object to the construction of the Sandia Peak Ski Area Mountain Coaster project proposed in 2017 for a number of reasons; some concerns are in the form of questions.

The Sandia Peak Ski Area is within a National Forest where many people enjoy the serenity of nature. A noisy thrill ride does not belong here.

All construction projects risk starting fires. Where is the "extra" water coming from to build and maintain fire prevention and control for the coaster? It should be a model of Best Practices because of its location. What specific considerations are the Cibola National Forest (CNF) decision-makers allowing for a project such as this to go forward during an extreme drought?

This project will generate more trash and consume more water because of added numbers of visitors. Where is the "extra" water coming from?

New Mexico Highway 536 (NM-536), the two-lane road leading up the east side of the mountain is dangerous enough with a mix of wildlife on the road on blind curves, sightseers following traffic laws, and reckless drivers speeding up and down the mountain. I have been passed each time I drive up and down the mountain by motorcyclists illegally passing on curves and racing. I have yet to see any law enforcement officers ticketing these reckless drivers. Additionally, on July 20, 2019, after a wildflower hike up Tree Springs trail, we could not drive down NM-536. All traffic was stopped due to a motorcycle fatality. We were told that the investigation could take hours, so we followed a line of many cars driving bumper-to-bumper down the dirt and mostly unimproved New Mexico Highway 165 (NM-165) to Placitas. Is the Sandia Peak Ski Area contributing significant additional funding to pay salaries of additional law enforcement officers to keep speeds down and reduce accidents?

Any reduction in forested area from new development is too much. The Cibola National Forest (CNF) must analyze impacts to the non-human populations in this area with an Environmental Assessment (EA) and then follow up with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (See 36 CFR 220.6). "Extraordinary circumstances" exist at the Sandia Peak Ski Area. The EA followed by an EIS will take years because of biological populations' ecological niches and ephemeral or migrating wildlife (e.g. bears, mountain lions, birds, etc.) What rare plant species are in this area? What rare insects, birds, mammals, or reptiles travel through the currently reasonably quiet area when no humans are present? Where are the EA and EIS reports done in the past for this site? There were none initially, because the La Madera (The Wood) Ski Area opened to skiers in 1936 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted in 1970. Citizen scientists and university students can assist with EA and EIS preparation.

The Golden Eagle mountain bike trail will be negatively impacted by the noisy mountain coaster and trail rerouting, ridership will suffer because of the noise. This trail is also used as a hiking trail in summer because ample switchbacks make it easier to climb and reduce erosional runoff from more severe thunderstorms. The Scoping document does not show any additional structures for lightning safety at the top of the terminal for people who will require shelter during lightning storms that regularly occur.

What additional forest and meadow regeneration (i.e. native tree, grass, forb, and shrub planting) will be required by the Sandia Ski Area for this project? Reduction in forest cover should be mitigated by vegetation regeneration. Once again, where is the "extra" water coming from?

We have a responsibility to protect the Cibola National Forest for future generations. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Diane Stevenson
Citizen Ecologist