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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing as a land-owner in eastern Bernalillo County and as a long time hiker in the Sandia Mountains.

My comments AGAINST approval of the Sandia Peak Mountain Coaster project summarized:

1. Additional destruction of trees and habitat for birds and animals should not be tolerated in the Sandia Mountains which are a sensitive and threatened island range.
2. A commercial amusement ride will not enhance the knowledge, respect, or appreciation of nature in the mind of the public.
3. Building of year-round commercial entertainment activities on Public Land is a violation of the original trust invested by the public in Sandia Peak Tram and Ski Area ownership.

HABITAT DESTRUCTION

Construction and subsequent use of the coaster will destroy trees and habitat at the top of the Crest area. While this section of forest between ski runs and other individual standing trees in the way of commercial development can be seen as a small portion of the entire national forest, it is a part of a very small strip of highest terrain in the mountain range. It is erroneous to compare this area to the size of the entire national forest because much of the rest of the CNF is on a lower elevation and consists of different types of forest ecosystems.

The Sandia Mountains as part of the Cibola National Forest are a very small mountain range situated directly against the largest city in New Mexico and surrounded by housing development or commercial development on all sides.

Larger predators are already limited in territory. As a hiker and a person who lives close to the National Forest I can testify to the scarcity of wild animals.

Although commercial logging has been carried out in these mountains for generations, many centuries-old trees remain and are found within the current ski area.

The minimal information available on the mountain coaster project are maps that indicate the coaster will be built with the downhill course of the coaster running through one of the few remaining swaths of forest between ski runs. Having hiked in that piece of forest, I can testify that it retains all the beautiful qualities of a forest with the ski runs behaving during non-ski season as adjacent meadows.

PUBLIC RESPECT FOR NATURE

I believe the overall goal of the National Forest Service is to enhance feelings in the public of respect for and appreciation of our natural world, so that it may be preserved for future generations.

I do not believe that members of the public will have the opportunity to understand or experience the natural elements of a national forest or wilderness area when they are participating in activities normally seen in a city.

The plans for the mountain coaster and a refreshment stand will create an amusement park atmosphere at the top of the mountain that is similar to what can be found in Albuquerque at our local amusement park all year and during the NM State Fair. In fact I believe people will think and behave as they do when in any amusement park. The results will be noise, disrespect for the natural setting, and an increase in trash.

Those of us who already love and appreciate wild areas will actually only experience a larger area of construction debris, bare dirt, and noise.

VIOLATION OF TRUST. The spirit of any historical agreement allowing private persons or corporations to use Public Land for ski areas did not originally allow those private entities to make plans for year-round development as if the land belongs only to them.

The owners of the Sandia Peak Tram and Ski Area are private individuals who have been entrusted with the use of public land in order to carry out their own profit-making business. I believe the owners have violated this trust and the spirit at least of the original policies by trying to seek year-round profits.

The public, for our part of the deal, has historically enjoyed the chance to pay to ski and snowboard in mountain areas in relative safety. There has always been a disturbance to natural areas by the building and use of ski areas and related necessary structures. However skiers and snowboarders generally represent a restricted impact on mountain areas by season and time.

The owners of the Sandia Peak Tram and Ski Area have already shown a lack of concern for their damage to the natural terrain. In recent years they have rebuilt a restaurant at the Crest. In spite of the construction being complete there have been no repairs to the surrounding terrain. Visitors currently must step off the walkways onto steep areas of bare dirt and look at piles of dirt, gravel, rocks and a dusty new parking area for heavy equipment.

If there were true respect for the mountain area I believe we would have seen these Owners putting in nice walkways and re-planting natural vegetation. I have actually seen in my neighborhood in Cedar Crest commercial interests who built new wells and solar facilities come back later and bring the road and natural areas back to their previous appearance. Why is this not expected in the National Forest?

The ski area owners have shown disrespect for members of the public this winter by plowing the service road from the Ellis trailhead that is normally used by cross country skiers and snowboarders.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

please do what is necessary to cancel this coaster project!