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Comments: I have lived in Albuquerque since 1972 and have hiked in the Sandia Mountains at least weekly since that time. It is a place I and many hikers from Albuquerque and from around the state go to experience the quiet and beauty of the natural world and to view the flora and shy fauna indigenous to the area. The identity and longevity of this spectacularly beautiful area would be threatened by the proposed Coaster project.

The Sandia Mountains are a small and fragile wilderness. Already, heavy vehicle traffic makes finding quiet on the trails near the ski area and northern Crest trail difficult. Fast moving motorcycles and cars speed up and down the road to the Crest. Often these vehicles hit squirrels and deer. Visitors who do not appreciate the value of wilderness litter the trails and rest areas. Presumably because of lack of funding, the areas open for public use are overused and not well maintained. They are frequently dirty. The increased traffic generated by the Coaster project would only increase the misuse of these fragile areas.

I have looked at the cite identified for the Coaster project. The cite identified would destroy a section of the mountain adjacent to the wilderness between the Crest trail and the 10K and Tree Springs trails. The additional noise and activity created by such a project would largely destroy the tranquility for walkers and hikers on these trails. The Coaster would frighten away native birds and animals. It would overburden an already threatened natural environment.

The Coaster project would be roughly equivalent to locating an amusement park ride in the middle of a wilderness. It would not add value for the many people who already value the Sandia Mountains for the retreat they provide from the busy world. Similarly, eco-tourists from other states and abroad would find nothing attractive in such a ride. Instead this project would encourage traffic from groups who have no appreciation for the intrinsic value of wilderness.

There can be no justification for implementing such a project. I strongly oppose it.

Ruth Pregonzer