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First name: Jim

Last name: Joynes

Organization: Joynes Department Store and Ben Franklin

Title: Owner

Comments:

I support the Lutsen Mountains expansion project. The letter from Jim Boyd of the Cook County Chamber reflects the economic impact and risk of not approving the plan. As the owner of a retail store in Grand Marais, I would reiterate his comments and concerns. It's real. Businesses in Grand Marais and all along the North Shore greatly benefit from visitors to Lutsen Mountains. For some businesses, it is the difference between staying open or closing in the Winter. I would put our store in that category.

For our community members, Lutsen provides important employment opportunities. This is vital for an area that suffers from violent swings of tourist driven seasonality. The employment opportunities created around the ski area and created at the trickle down businesses is significant, especially in the Winter. Without Winter employment opportunities, our residents are forced to relocate.

Growing up in Grand Marais, the Lutsen Ski Area was a place I spent much of my youth. It provided an outlet for physical activity, it provided me employment, and it provided social interaction. Today, I still value the opportunity Lutsen provides me to get outdoors, both Summer and Winter. It's still a gathering place, a place for entertainment, and an important venue for social interaction. ?

Over the years, I've seen a number of owners and managers pass through Lutsen Mountains. Yes, mistakes in planning have been made, some having a negative impact to the environment. My impression has been that the Skinner and Rider families have not only committed time and financial resources to correcting the oversights of the past decision makers, but they are committed to making Lutsen Mountains a better environmental partner in the future. I've witnessed the Poplar River watershed and how they reacted. I've seen them respond to erosion in the area referred to as Greasy Gulch. I've watched them address the septic relocation. They've built buildings, bridges, access trails, added ski lifts, and reduced impact by removing certain ski lifts. My opinion is that if anyone is going to maintain the current Lutsen Mountains and move it forward in an environmentally responsible way, it's the Skinner and Rider families.

The Skinner family has guided Lutsen Mountains for the majority of my life. I've seen a lot. I believe they are the right people to carry out the expansion. Their plan is comprehensive and their vision is clear. I believe they have great respect and sensitivity to environmental impact. Ultimately, improvements to Lutsen Mountains will not only make it competitive and viable for the future, but it will continue to produce trickle down economic benefit for businesses in our community. It will increase employment opportunities, expand the outdoor experience for young and old alike, and be a center for social interaction.

I am proud to say that I grew up near Lutsen Mountains. It has positively impacted my life in many ways. It's an asset to the North Shore. It's an asset to Minnesota. I support the Lutsen Mountains expansion.