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Organization:

Title:

Comments: We support Alternative 3. We own a home in Cook County and appreciate the need for careful and thoughtful development of the economy and stewardship of the land.

Easy access to the Lutsen Mountains ski area is a significant reason we decided to buy a home in Cook County. We have studied the proposals and USFS impact statements. We have hiked over Moose Mountain to look at the area that is being considered for the expansion.

We support Alternative 3. If we only had the option to choose between Alternative 1 and 2 we would choose Alternative 1.

We appreciate the incredible natural landscape and scenery of the Sawtooth range as accessed the Lutsen Mountains ski trails as well as other trail systems (hiking/running, biking and nordic skiing) that have been developed and maintained by local non-profit organizations. We believe Alternative 3 is an exciting expansion for downhill skiing that highlights the unique natural beauty of the Sawtooth range and Lake Superior. Alternative 3 allows new ski runs on the south side of Moose, and incorporates areas of 'legacy' (aka non-gladed) forest interspersed with the proposed new ski runs. These legacy areas will preserve important habitat and plants as detailed in the Environmental Impact Statement and will minimize impact on the view of Moose Mountain from the Lake Superior shoreline and highway 61. We believe the proposed expansion plans will allow Lutsen Mountains to build a modern destination ski experience that will provide positive economic opportunities for the region for years to come.

Another distinguishing factor of Alternative 3: it would not authorize expansion on the north side of Moose Mountain. The north side of Moose is very steep and Lutsen Mountains has had difficulty maintaining the existing runs on the north side. These runs are often closed because they cannot maintain safe skiing conditions on them. We would respectfully suggest that Lutsen Mountains Ski Resort turn them back to their natural habitat. The north side of Moose mountain is a delicate terrain that features old growth cedar forest stands transitioning into beautiful wetland forest that is home to the headwaters of Rollins Creek. This area is currently accessible via the SHT and the Highclimber MTB trail. Alternative 3 protects the natural environment on the north side of Moose mountain and preserves the landscape for the users of those trails. Under Alternative 2 a service road would be cut through this terrain to support the new lifts and ski runs. We think the environmental impact of expanding downhill skiing on the northside of Moose mountain (Alternative 2) is unacceptable.

A few other points:

Lutsen Mountains and NFS should provide financial support to the SHTA to help adapt the SHT route to improve its usability and sustainability as the SHTA has requested. <https://superiorhiking.org/lutsen-mountains/>
The Norpine Trail Association maintains nordic trails accessible from the Ski Hill road that crosses USFS and Lutsen SNA lands. Lutsen Mountains and USFS should accommodate and preserve Ski Hill Road access points to the Norpine Trail network.

We believe that Alternative 3 strikes a good balance of supporting economic development in Cook County and providing public accessibility and environmental stewardship of the public lands.

Respectfully,

Michael and Amy Determan