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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [External Email]Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project

[External Email]

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To those concerned, my name is Glen Helgeson, a cabin owner at 256 Carlson Trail, Lutsen MN. I'm also a downhill skier who skis at Lutsen 4 to 5 times a year. I would strongly encourage the US Forest Service to rule against the Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project. I feel the expansion of 495 acres of neighboring public land would be an unwise decision causing a negative impact for the region.

The following are my concerns as to why the expansion would be a negative factor for the area

1. The Lutsen area is already hindered by peak tourist traffic. At times Highway 61 is already at peak capacity for highway safety. The expansion would more than double the "comfortable carrying capacity" of Lutsen Mountains, from 2,850 visitors currently to 6,300 in the future. It would mean creating more than 1,200 new parking spaces and about five miles of new roads.

2. The loss of old-growth trees. The environmental review reports forests on Moose Mountain specifically contain undisturbed remnant examples of northern white cedar-dominated forests and mesic hardwood forests. Botanists who examined the site said some of the white cedar trees are more than 140 years old. They also found several rare lichens in the area. Once these trees and the lichens are lost we will never be able to bring them back.

3. The proposed project would also reroute 1.7 miles of the Superior Hiking Trail/North Country National Scenic Trail on Moose Mountain. This section of the superior hiking trail would be changed forever. The Superior Hiking trail near Lutsen is a draw for tourism. Rerouting the hiking trail may negatively impact the reason hikers come to the Lutsen area.

4. Proponents claim that local business need the Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project for survival. However, the Lutsen area already is a vibrant region for tourism. Businesses always want more revenue but at what cost does the increased revenue become a detriment to the unique "Northwoods experience" of the Lutsen area? Too much development may have a negative impact on why people come in the first place.

5. Lutsen Mountains claim the expansion would be necessary to compete with other national ski resorts. This is a bogus claim. No amount of expansion would make that much of a difference for skiers, like myself, to forgo a ski trip out West for a vacation at ski Lutsen Mountain due to an expansion.

6. I believe the ultimate goal of the Lutsen Mountain owners will be to ultimately sell the resort at the detriment of cutting down old growth forests, increasing the traffic to the area and negatively impacting the environment.

For these reasons please consider voting "No" to the Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project.

Sincerely, Glen Helgeson 4321 East Lake Harriet Parkway, Minneapolis MN 55409