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

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Hello. My name is Jessica Carlson. I live at 120 Camp 20 Road in Hovland, Minnesota, in Cook County. I'd like to submit a comment on the proposed special use permit for the Lutsen Mountains Ski Area Expansion Project.

I am a huge fan of sustainable tourism economies, especially those that are based on outdoor recreation. For this reason, I'm very concerned about the rate of growth we are seeing in our tourism economy here in Cook County. Many businesses cannot employ enough workers because there is not enough rental housing for low-income workers. Also, our county is feeling the stress and strain of increasing numbers of tourists each year. Our infrastructure (including our highways, trails, campsites, and sidewalks) are bearing the brunt of heavier usage than they were built for, and crowding is becoming an issue. I feel we are encouraging a rate of growth in our tourism economy that is not being supported by equal care and attention to the very things that draw people here: the local folks who call this place home and who create an authentic sense of community, which tourists expect to experience when they are here, as well as the forested public lands and publicly accessible trails and waterways that make Cook County unique.

Lutsen Mountains brings many visitors here. However, the jobs it creates do not pay well, and many of the economic benefits created by Lutsen are not felt by the community. The economic argument for allowing this expansion is one that only provides benefits to the company itself without taking into consideration how this proposed expansion will affect the local working class people who keep our tourist industry alive.

Most importantly however, this expansion would take lands that are currently publicly accessible and which belong to the public, which provide habitats and ecosystem services that benefit us all, and would transform them into privately held areas that would no longer be publicly accessible, and which would no longer be managed to provide public benefits, ecosystem services, and habitat. In exchange, our community would only see an even greater influx of visitors that we already are unable to provide for.

Losing any of our public lands in exchange for unsustainable rates of economic growth does nothing to create a more sustainable tourism industry. It actually erodes it. For the sake of our tourism industry, and for the sake of the public lands and the community character that draw people here, it is vital that we preserve the proposed area as undeveloped forest, open to all and managed for the benefit of all.

Thank you for including my comment in your assessment.

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