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Title:

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

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Hello,

My name is Drew Harbeck and I am writing today to provide my comments on the proposed Lutsen Mountains Ski Area expansion. I am a board member of Superior Highland Backcountry and while I know that my fellow board members will agree with much of what I have to say, the views expressed are my own.

As a backcountry skier and a resort skier, and a frequent visitor to the North Shore of Minnesota, I am asking that you deny permission to Lutsen Mountains to develop pristine public lands with chairlifts, parking lots, base facilities and on-mountain chalets for commercial use.

I moved to Minneapolis six years ago from Salt Lake City, Utah, where I was introduced to backcountry skiing. The first time I visited the North Shore of Minnesota, I recognized that the terrain and climate could be conducive to backcountry skiing if the right feature (vertical feet, slope, etc.) was found. Moose Mountain is that feature. It is the most prominent, skiable, sustained pitch in the state of Minnesota. Moose Mountain is the best and only terrain for backcountry skiing, Nordic touring, and other sustainable, public-access winter recreation in Minnesota.

Approval of the Lutsen Mountains Ski Area proposal will cause the public to lose access to this terrain. If approved, should anyone want to ski Moose Mountain they will have to pay Lutsen Mountains for the ability to do so, and that cost is prohibitive for many individuals and families.

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021 the U.S. Department of Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture said in a joint statement that they want to protect Minnesota's Boundary Waters, which they called a "unique natural wonder." I would argue that Moose Mountain is also a unique natural wonder for the state of Minnesota. Mountains like it simply do not exist here. Additionally, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said in the statement. "A place like the Boundary Waters should be enjoyed by and protected for everyone, not only today but for future generations." This should apply to Moose Mountain as well.

Please choose "No Action" for the proposed Special Use Permit for a Lutsen Mountains Resort expansion. Moose Mountain is an irreplaceable feature and the loss of access to it by the public would be irretrievable.

Thank you for your consideration.

Drew Harbeck