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

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I oppose the expansion of Lutsen Mountains Ski Area into US Forest land. I believe there needs to be an equitable opportunity for non-lift-assisted backcountry access for downhill recreational sports in the area. Lutsen Mountain currently offers an extensive system of lift-assisted trails on a landscape and terrain that actually offers limited areas amenable to downhill skiing. The Lutsen Mountains Expansion would greatly reduce that available area and thus unfairly impact those skiers that seek a backcountry experience.

Please consider that this is a decision that has long-term impacts; once that area is developed for lift-assisted skiing it will inevitably also be developed for off-season activities that further impact users seeking a more "wild" experience. Given the ever-shrinking ski season, Lutsen Mountains use of the land will necessarily change, leading to further impacts on the existing natural landscape. I have hiked Lutsen Mountains skiing terrain in the off season and can't attest to the fact that the entire area is impacted by infrastructure required for ski area operations; it is far from a natural or wild landscape. It is important to remember that the issue is access to a limited amount of terrain usable for downhill sports - THAT is exactly what Lutsen Mountains wants more of, and what backcountry skiers and boarders are looking for. The Lutsen Mountains Ski Area effectively shifts access away from the backcountry user group and gives it to a commercial entity.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Best,

Steve Diamond

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