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First name: Robert

Last name: Pearce

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Williams,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed "Willow Creek Land Exchange".

I am a homeowner on a property immediately bordering on the federal parcel that is at the base of the Mary Jane ski area. I purchased this property in large measure due to its proximity to natural habitat. The proposed development will have an adverse impact not only on myself and my family, but on all who come to this part of the mountains to enjoy the natural beauty and participate in outdoor activities on the land.

The Winter Park area has differed substantially from other ski areas in Colorado by maintaining a natural character with limited development near the ski area base. The federal parcel that is in question commands a sweeping view of the valley below. If it is developed for housing, as the notice that I received implies (to facilitate building condominiums and townhomes at the base of the ski area), it will begin to look and feel like many of the other areas where the adjacent town creeps up onto the mountain. It will also differ from the Base Camp and Iron Horse properties that adjoin it: those housing developments are tucked away in a hollow, largely hidden from view. The proposed hillside development will be highly visible.

I question the proposition that the land in the Willow Creek area has a value equal to that of this unique parcel of federal land that sits at such a prominent position. The federal parcel contains a healthy stand of mature forest that has not been subject to the level of 'beetle kill' in the surrounding hills. This valuable resource is seen and enjoyed by all who visit the area - a reminder of what treasured natural habitat the mountains can provide. If acquired for private development, the value of the developed property will be substantial. I would like to see a formal estimate of land values on this federal parcel if transferred and approved for development vs. the Willow Creek parcel.

Finally, I would note that transferring this federal parcel to a private party for development erodes trust in our system. We purchased the land with the understanding that Federal Land is protected from development. I understand that the Forest Service has interest in consolidating holdings in other areas including the Willow Creek area. However, I urge you to seek other means of accomplishing this worthy goal that do not erode public trust.

I do intend to file an objection under 36 CFR § 218.8