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Comments: Good morning,

I am writing these comments in response to the public scoping period for the proposed upgrades to the Taos Ski Valley.

The scoping letter indicates that a revision to the 1986 Forest Plan is in process and that future projects are anticipated to be compliant with the management direction in the 1986 Forest Plan. This 1986 Plan is outdated and must be updated prior to individual analysis for this proposal. The Forest Plan revision must also take into consideration this project as a foreseeable action for potential cumulative impacts before a decision on the Forest Plan is issued. As this is a foreseeable project within the scope of the Forest Plan revision, it is imperative that the Forest Plan take into consideration impacts of this proposal before an individual analysis is conducted for the Taos Ski Valley.

The scoping letter indicates that the purpose of the improvements are for recreational opportunities and promoting sustainability on NFS and adjacent lands. However, the scoping does not indicate how sustainability efforts are incorporated into the proposal. Many ski areas in the American Southwest have seen increased drought and significantly less snowpack for the regional aquifers. If the proposal is intended to increase visitor use through increased infrastructure, the proposal must take into consideration how these are to be met in a period of extensive and debilitating drought for the region. The scoping letter indicates there are deficiencies with the mountain facilities including the snowmaking system and fire suppression. This indicates the improvements are to also potentially meant to draw additional water from the regional aquifer for additional snowmaking to increase the seasonal recreation of the ski valley. The scoping must identify how much of an increase of regional water this proposal would use annually to indicate if this is a significant change from existing operations during the extensive drought.

The new infrastructure would require disturbance in currently undeveloped areas of the ski valley. The new gondola is not a replacement in kind as existing lifts and would require more detail of siting of poles, staging areas, access roads, and equipment used to establish this new gondola system.

The scoping letter indicates that the new water tank and booster station will not increase the water uptake from the Rio Hondo, but does not disclose why this new tank would not draw additional water for increased snowmaking and visitor use.

The construction access and staging areas need additional locational information to identify environmental impacts for supporting the construction phases of this proposal.

One final question: how will the project be compliant with the provisions on climate change indicated in Executive Order 14008?

Thank you for your consideration of these comments for the project proposal.

David M. Holtkamp