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Comments: Hello!

I am writing in regards to the 'Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements Project' with a request that the United States Forest Service do an Environmental Impact Study about how these proposed 'improvements' might impact the natural environment at Taos Ski Valley and the Rio Hondo watershed, with a focus on how live water, wildlife, and forests will be impacted, as well as downstream agricultural and recreational use of waters from that river.

As a catch and release fly fisherman and outdoorsman, the Rio Hondo is my favorite river in the world. I have lived in Arroyo Seco and have fished that river for twenty five years. Already, I pick up a huge amount of trash that washes into the Rio Hondo from activities during the ski season. Now, Taos Ski Valley wants to increase access to its facilities, which will inevitably cause even more impact on the Rio Hondo than already occurs. One of the many impacts of this increase in human activity is an increase in human waste that flows through the wastewater treatment plant at the Ski Valley. The effluence from the human waste treatment plant at Taos Ski Valley empties directly into the Rio Hondo, and introduces all manner of pharmaceutical residue that humans excrete right into the river. These chemical introductions, as well as the myriad of other chemicals that people flush down toilets and rinse down drains, can and do affect fish and other wildlife in the watershed, as well as agricultural use downstream, despite waste treatment efforts. Please see this bulletin from the USGS about this: <https://www.usgs.gov/news/technical-announcement/understanding-how-pharmaceuticals-environment-affect-fish>.

And <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/environmental-health-program/science/complex-mixtures-complex-responses-using>.

By making the proposed improvements, TSV intends to increase the number of people using the area especially during winter months, and this increased usage translates directly to an increase in pharmaceuticals that will find their way from the toilets of Taos Ski Valley to the trout, mayflies, minnows, and birds of the Rio Hondo. That water and the chemicals it contains then flow down to Acequias which are used to irrigate hay to be fed to animals as well as crops that are ingested by local Taos people. There are already plenty of people using Taos Ski Valley for recreational use, and with the increase in lift ticket price, most of those people are monied people from out of town who come to enjoy the mountain, but aren't around for the potential negative impacts of increased human presence in the upstream tributaries of one of the main rivers of Taos County.

I feel that it is also important to do Environmental Impact Studies of how all the construction of lifts and gondolas will cause erosion into the Rio Hondo that could affect the water quality for the wildlife, recreational fishing, and agricultural use downstream. Once these kinds of projects are approved, it seems too late to try to mitigate damages that could have been avoided had a more careful study been conducted. An ounce of prevention being worth an pound of cure, as the old adage says. Can you please take the time and effort to conduct thorough studies of how this construction will impact the river and wildlife that will be affected?

The proposal of a Five Million Gallon Tank that will sequester water from the already strained watershed of the Rio Hondo is also most alarming. I do read that these projects '...will not increase the current water uptake from the Rio Hondo,' as the scoping letter states, but I am curious as to why they need to build a tank that big that they do not plan to fill. I also see that TSV suggests that this water that hypothetically would not really be held in a tank they don't actually intend to fill could be used for fire suppression, which sounds great should the need arise, but the primary use of this water would be for making snow. I have heard the argument that the snow they make just melts back into the aquifer, and I am sure that a portion of it does, but a lot of that water converted to man-made snow will evaporate due to sun and wind and will leave the watershed.

And, speaking of snowmaking, there are some very real negative environmental impacts of snowmaking that should be considered when Taos Ski Valley is considering increasing their production of artificial snow to counteract the climate change that is reducing snowpack. Please read this bulletin from the American Chemical Society (founded in 1876) about the potential environmental perils of snowmaking:

<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/resources/highschool/chemmatters/past-issues/2018-2019/december-2018/artificial-snow-a-slippery-slope.html>

Please read the bulletins I have shared in this email. I hope that the USDA and United States Forest Service will safeguard our forests, which belong to everyone in America and not just to those few who seek to profit monetarily from opening it to more human impact. Please take the time to require full and thorough environmental impact studies for these proposed projects.

Please protect the Carson National Forest and the Rio Hondo from potentially permanent damage from exploitation by private industry. The profits of a few should not outweigh protecting the national forest for current and future generations.

Thank you for your time and attention.