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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Clifton Bain. I have lived in Arroyo Hondo for 42 years. I am President of the Acequia de Atalaya, diverting water from the Rio Hondo. I am honored and grateful to live within the watershed of Rio Hondo and, as with most of my fellow human beings who live here, I feel it is my responsibility to work to protect this sacred watercourse and all the life that thrives here.

I am submitting my comments in this scoping phase of the National Environmental Policy Act that mandates the US Forest Service to study and assess the impacts of the proposed actions of Taos Ski Valley Inc. ( # 61390). That these proposed actions are labeled as "Improvements" is an unwarranted presumption that reveals bias within this process.

\* I request that the comment period be extended 60 days and that a public scoping hearing be held no more than 30 days before the closing of the period of scoping comment.

Taos Ski Valley, Inc. holds a Special Use Permit that allows it to use designated public land for the purpose of recreation. This permit was held by the Blake family, who operated a ski resort that sought for decades to scale its activities to the high mountain eco system at the headwaters of the Rio Hondo. Even so, it is my opinion that excessive development occurred in these years.

When this permit was transferred by sale to Louis Bacon, the pace and breadth of development within the boundaries of the Special Use Permit and most particularly on the inholding properties surrounded by public lands, much of it owned by Taos Ski Valley, Inc ( presently incorporated as The Village of Taos Ski Valley) has been stunning and rapid. Taos Ski Valley, Inc, a B Corporation mandated to the conservation of the public resource that makes its business possible, is fast on its way to irrevocably damaging these headwater lands and have the life it allows.

While elements of the proposed action may benefit the watershed (e.g. 5 million gallon water tank available for fire suppression) all of the cumulative and comprehensive impacts must be studied. Particularly troubling are lift replacements when Taos Ski Valley, Inc. boasts of a present capacity of 15,000 skiers per hour. What happened at the previous limit of 4800 per day!

The US Forest Service is required by NEPA statute to study the cumulative environmental, social and cultural impacts of proposed actions within the boundaries of the TSV, Inc Special Use Permit and the surrounding lands, public and private, within the Carson National Forest. Although these proposed actions are mostly within the Special Use Permit boundaries, the expanded commercial use will inflict greater impacts on air quality, water quality, increased non point pollution into the waters, noise pollution, and aesthetic damage in the entirety of the watershed, especially within the Village of Taos Ski Valley, but all the communities downstream and adjacent.

This is the latest in the long series of NEPA reviews. There have been in each of these proceedings, comments and objections from the public that the FS has consistently failed to study and assess cumulative and comprehensive impacts, choosing to consider with a narrow focus each proposal as a discreet action. This has permitted degradation of the integrity of the watershed, the water quality, the habitats of the nonhuman beings that live within the watershed, the experiences of members of the public that enjoy these public lands by overdevelopment by TSV, Inc and the Village of Taos Ski Valley.

The waters of the Rio Hondo are diverted by 9 Acequias, irrigating lands within the villages of Valdez and Arroyo Hondo, Canoncito, and Des Montes. The Rio Hondo Acequias Association is presently being funded to initiate comprehensive water quality and quantity testing and evaluation throughout the watershed. This data is vitally

necessary to properly study current impacts of development and anticipated impacts of these proposed action. The data acquired in the first year of this work will be available to an Environmental Impact Study but not an Environmental Assessment, given the cursory and fast pace of an EIS.

\* I call for an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared before any decision by the FS to permit this proposed "Improvements."

Respectfully submitted,

Clifton Bain