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Title:

Comments: Dear Development Review Commission,

As a member of the Taos community, and a stakeholder in the Rio Hondo watershed, I am concerned about several of the development projects proposed by Taos Ski Valley. There is a difference to be drawn between renovation and wanton expansion. TSV's goal of expanding snowmaking operations falls into the second, more dangerous category.

Snowmaking is a highly inefficient procedure, expending copious amounts of energy and water. By reducing water infiltration (through sublimation) and increasing carbon emissions, it exacerbates the very conditions that necessitate it, creating a vicious cycle of dependence that can only lead to more perilous drought.

While TSV claims that their new 5-story tank will not require any increase in uptake from the Rio Hondo, 5 million gallons of water will not magically materialize for them out of nowhere. If they intend to source the water from springs and tributaries upstream of the Rio, that will create the same negative effects for downstream communities. The water that they utilize for their financial gain will be unavailable for New Mexicans to drink, irrigate or grow crops.

The reduction of infiltration via sublimation also seems to undercut TSV's stated goal of protecting the local forests from wildfire. Even if their infrastructure could contribute to the response to existing fires, their snowmaking operations would remove moisture from the forest, creating conducive conditions for fires to spread in the first place.

I also have concerns about the ecological impacts of the new restaurant facilities and the proposed gondola lift, which will likely strain the ecosystem and negatively influence water quality and biodiversity. Trees will have to be cleared, habitat will be disturbed, and pollution and runoff will be difficult to control.

There is already extensive anecdotal evidence of negative downstream effects on acequias and the watershed as a whole from TSV's activities. Further development will almost certainly worsen the situation. A thorough environmental inquiry concluding in an evidence-based environmental impact statement is the only responsible way to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration.