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Comments: May 6, 2022

James Duran, Forest Supervisor

? Paul Schilke, Winter Sports Coordinator

P.O. Box 110

Questa, NM 87556

Re: Taos Ski Valley Gondola and Other Improvements Project

Mr. Duran,

I live in Upper Arroyo Hondo, just upstream of highway 522. I am a fisheries biologist with the BLM in Taos. I am not sending you this letter as a representative of the BLM, but as a community member with a background in river health.

My concerns are related to the Rio Hondo. My personal experience with the river as a specialist has shown me that the river has the three indicator macroinvertebrates present in numbers. Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera (mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies).

Every year the Rio Hondo goes dry between the fire station and 522. This happens at different times of year depending on the snowfall. The last few years it's been happening in April. This year it disappeared and then came gushing back for just a couple days. Every year I walk the river and scoop up Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout that would otherwise die and I bucket them down below highway 522 to where the Rio Hondo is flowing. I have pictures documenting this.

So my concerns are that development in the ski valley will affect the flow even more so. Rivers have rights. The Hondo valley is a beautiful riparian valley, perhaps one of the most beautiful in the state. It needs to be protected. It needs to have a minimum flow year round. I realize this also has to do with acequias pulling water and I am pursuing this with them as well.

Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your time.

Sage Dunn, MSc

Aquatic Habitat Management Biologist