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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Supervisor Duran:

My husband and I live in Valdez. We see how the expansion of the Taos Ski Valley has impacted Valdez, Arroyo Seco and Taos.

Many of our roads are small. We learn to drive slowly and carefully on them. The lovely little town of Arroyo Seco has had to yield to the increased traffic, and unsafe drivers. Taos is facing the same traffic problems. Not only do our communities take the impact of the traffic, problems with water, and increased fire danger are also a major concern.

Water:

Here in Valdez, our acequia system has been a way of life for many generations. The Acequia de San Antonio was set up on the concept of sharing the precious water. The health of our small community depends on the mountain water for our orchards, farms, gardens and livestock. The water that comes down our acequia in Valdez has decreased over the years- not everyone gets the water they need.

The proposed TSV plan, to continue developing, completely disregards the concept of sharing the water. It's unwise to assume that there will be a continuation of the same amount of rain and snowfall over the drought years ahead to fill our streams, wells, and acequias.

Communities downstream and all over New Mexico are preparing for drought. The Taos Ski Valley is ignoring the crucial fact that drought is upon us, and will only worsen over the years to coming years.

Water is NOT unlimited. The Taos Ski Valley should be preparing, like the rest of New Mexico, to decrease their water usage.

They should not be allowed to attain Covid Relief Funds to increase their wealth, while putting our rural communities more at risk.

Taos Ski Valley touts themselves as being 'Environmental', but how can they consider it environmental to increase their already huge energy and water consumption, and over-impact the high mountain forests even more? It would be wiser for them to invest in a water recycling system, so that pure mountain water isn't wasted flushing toilets, landscaping etc..

They could be investing in small electric cars and buses that would bring people up to the Ski Valley, and transport them from place to place, which would make a lot more sense in that fragile environment.

Water Quality:

It is very important that extensive water quality studies be conducted, to monitor the pollutants that flow from the Taos Ski Valley into the Rio Hondo. The public should know what is really happening with the runoff.

Fire Danger:

If a fire got started in the narrow canyon leading up to the Taos Ski Valley it would travel rapidly up through the Taos Ski Valley, and on to the peaks above. I recall sadly the summer of 2011, a particularly dry summer when forests were closed and hikers were not allowed on the trails in the Columbine- Hondo area. The trails in the entire Taos Ski Valley were closed as well. This summer could well be the same. How can the TSV be allowed to

expand even more summer activities - in that tinder dry narrow wilderness?

It seems irresponsible to allow the TSV to continue building more infrastructure, attracting even more people to go up there in the heat of the summer to recreate. More businesses, cars, and traffic only increases the chance of fire.

Now the largest fire in the United States, The Calf Creek Fire- very near to Taos, has burned 160,000 acres, only 20% contained. How would Taos Ski Valley handle a fire like that?

What is the purpose of putting all of us at that kind of risk? How is the water from one large water tank going to put out the magnitude of fire that will undoubtedly occur one day, up in the Taos Ski Valley?

Tourism:

Not all tourists love growth. Having worked in a gallery in Taos for almost 5 years, I had many conversations with tourists who sadly commented on the rampant growth and difficult traffic. They showed concern that Taos might lose the charm and beauty that brings them here to visit. Some of the summer tourists were dismayed at the changes in the Taos Ski Valley area, where they once had enjoyed quite wilderness hiking.

If we ruin our unique communities of such incredible cultural diversity, if we lose the wilderness, the ruralness, hardiness and intelligence of what it takes to live in this high desert environment, we have lost an entire way of life- for ourselves and our children.

Many of us living in nearby communities, including Taos Pueblo, enjoy taking their families up to these high mountains in the summertime. The trails are lovely, simple paths through the forest, as they should be. We come to the wilderness to enjoy nature, the natural way. We come for the serenity and beauty. Now there are lifts running full time, (mostly empty) ...destroying what we came to enjoy.

It is so important that we have places to slow our lives down, listen to the wind in the pines, the flowing streams, the birdsong. People need to have places to experience the deep relaxation and rejuvenation, that pure nature gives. We need to preserve what is left up in our forests and high country.

The National Forest Lands belong to the public, not the Taos Ski Valley.

I am strongly opposed to ANY more growth in the Taos Ski Valley. It has been too much already.

I'm asking the Forest Service to conduct a thorough Environmental Assessment, and to develop an Environmental Impact Statement for all of the projects proposed by the Taos Ski Valley, and to not hurriedly push this expansion project through.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts,
Erica Collins