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Comments: To The Carson Supervisor:

I have read through the proposals offered by Taos Ski Valley Inc., for the planned improvements it is proposing. I believe that, on balance, they offer a reasonable approach to fine-tuning the experience in Taos Ski Valley as a recreational facility on National Forest lands. Some aspects make more sense than others. Contrary to popular belief, mostly what I see being proposed is not "expansion," but rather replacement of facilities already in-place, or enhancement to venues that already exist. Certainly, some of the proposals are completely new items, though I would note that they exist within the current permit boundaries. Inappropriate private-land development, while certainly of serious concern overall, is not able to be addressed within the Forest Service mandate.

First off, the replacement of chairlifts number 2 and 8 would be a welcome fix for the problems that exist there. Chairlift number 2 can often be a bottleneck on many days as it gets overloaded due to both visitors wanting to ski that particular part of the area and those who wish to gain access to the terrain and facilities over at chairlift number 4 in the Kachina Basin area. It would make more sense to be using chairlift number 2 as a specific use chairlift for those wishing to ski that part of the ski area, only. Hence, upgrading this old lift to a newer more efficient lift makes sense. It also underscores the benefit of a "frontside-to-backside" gondola to alleviate those wanting to use chairlift number 2 as merely a "transportation" lift to the Kachina Basin area. Upgrading chairlift number 8 would allow that part of the mountain to be put to more effective use that is now defined by very little usage. Chairlift number 8 is a long, slow chairlift; hence people bypass it in favor of more accessible recreation leaving this substantial aspect of the mountain underutilized.

The re-positioning of water storage tanks makes total sense to me. Better placement allows for less energy needed to pump already stored water when gravity helps you out. It would seem the placement would also be better suited for allowing use for firefighting needs should that event arise.

Reconfiguration of the Whistle Stop cafe would be welcome. But rather than a larger footprint, it would be better to "go up," rather than "out." Traffic in that particular part of the mountain is already an issue; making a larger footprint could be problematic. Having a similar size footprint, but with added decks in a vertical format might be a better solution rather than larger surface area.

The "frontside-to-backside" gondola, I believe, is a decent idea. Not only does it remove unnecessary bottlenecks from the frontside of the mountain, it keeps vehicles off the roads--both in winter and summer. I believe that is a good thing. If I understand the proposal correctly, the pathway to be used is already very much within the confines of the return trail from Kachina Basin back to the frontside (Rubezahl). While that's still quite a bit of machinery to be putting onto the mountain, the trade-off of dispersing people and removing vehicular traffic is a sensible plan.

For proposed Nordic ski and snowshoe trails, I think this is a reasonable proposal as well. As long as trails are situated in a low-impact fashion (minimum-to-no clearing/terrain alteration; no building structures, etc.) this would be a nice enhancement. It would be particularly good if these trails were also designed in a fashion that would allow for people to hike them in non-snow times of the year.

I do NOT believe putting a restaurant near the top of the current chairlift number 7 is a good idea. No matter where you place it, you will create skier traffic of a fashion that does not currently exist on that part of the mountain. I am much more comfortable with sending people down to the bottom of chairlift number 4 to find the

facilities available at the Phoenix (which could stand to be enhanced--rather than building something new). Bringing people the short distance from chairlift number 7 down to the Phoenix and the Bavarian is a more sensible plan that doesn't create additional hazardous traffic zones, congestion and bottlenecks, and pretty much keeps them out of the way from active skier traffic zones. To me this makes much more sense. The logistics of equipping and continuously supplying a restaurant at the top of chairlift number 7 is seriously more problematic than what it takes to supply the Phoenix and the Bavarian--which are already there. Don't create more headaches than you've already got!

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.