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First name: Darien

Last name: Fernandez

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a longtime passholder of Taos Ski Valley. Additionally, I recreate in all seasons in the Wheeler Peak Wilderness, Columbine-Hondo Wilderness, and Rio Hondo Watershed. I frequently encounter a variety of wildlife on my backcountry ski tours and fly fishing expeditions in the area: bears, cutthroat trout, deer, eagles, elk, ermines, grouse, a lynx, marmots, mountain lions, pine martens, and squirrels--to name a few.

As a community member who values conservation of, and access to our public lands, for the benefit of wildlife and responsible human interaction of such magnificent areas that so many people in this area can claim a generational connection to, I must speak up to ensure that access to public land remains and that public land is protected for future generations.

Therefore, any decision made by the Carson National Forest related to this proposed project by Taos Ski Valley, Inc, must adhere to the following:

1. Full Impact Statement for the permitted area AND Wheeler Peak Wilderness, Columbine-Hondo Wilderness, Rio Hondo Watershed, and surrounding tribal and other lands that will be impacted by increased traffic.
2. Guaranteed free public access in perpetuity via protected easement to the Wheeler Peak Wilderness, with closures as needed for Taos Pueblo's cultural needs. Such access must accommodate people with various levels of mobility.
3. Price control or other mechanism to ensure that recreational activities in the permitted area are affordable for residents of Taos County, which is an economically disadvantaged area according to the White House Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).
4. Consideration of this proposal in relation to the 2017 Taos County Economic Development Plan, which was adopted by the Taos County Commission, and calls for a focus on economic development that prioritizes restoration of our natural environment to lessen the over-reliance of the tourism industry in this area.

Sincerely,

Darien Fernandez

Taos Town Councilor

Chair, Taos County Democratic Party

Advocate for Keeping Public Lands in Public Hands