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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Dressler,

Please consider and accept this letter as my support of Monarch Ski Area's proposed expansion into "No Name Basin". As a landowner in Chaffee County whose property is surrounded on all sides by National Forest, I appreciate USFS's need to balance private and public property interests and I believe that Monarch Ski Area ownership, in partnership with USFS, has proven their ability to do this over the last several decades. The resort is an important recreational and economic resource for the County. Access for skiing in No Name already exists today through Monarch's snowcat operations and the additional infrastructure proposed in connection with the expansion stands to increase recreational access and enjoyment of the resort, the demand for which existing Monarch facilities and space are struggling to meet. I am confident that the expansion can move forward while still balancing environmental and ecological goals that are obviously important for the successful management of this public resource into the future.

A growing trend seems to be that longer lift lines and increased demand for crowded resort spaces is pushing more and more skiers into the backcountry every year. While it is great to see folks utilizing our public lands in different ways, the reality is that backcountry activities are harder to manage and control in terms of access, safety, and impact, and there is no doubt that these challenges put a strain on resource managers, county service providers, etc... Increasing capacity in resort areas where conditions and activities can be controlled, and where demand has clearly been demonstrated, may take pressure off of backcountry activities that the Forest Service may have more difficulty managing. Speaking purely for myself, I know that I will choose less adventurous days skinning up random passes with no avalanche control measures in place and enjoy more resort days in the coming seasons at Monarch if I can rely on more terrain, shorter lift lines, and a more diverse skiing experience that No Name is poised to bring!

I do not envy your position and respect the fact that you have a diverse set of stakeholders that you represent and consider when weighing a decision like this. I trust and appreciate that the USFS will give the expansion request due process, consider it on its merits, and make the decision that best balances the varying interests, protections, and opportunities that the forest resource provides for in this location.

Thank you for the public outreach being performed as part of this process and for your consideration of this letter of support.

Regards,

Dan Cohen