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First name: Molly

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed expansion of Grand Targhee Ski Resort. I am a loyal Targhee skier and the holder of a season's pass, however, I have serious issues with some of the changes envisioned for the resort. My preference is for Alternative 1 (no action), however, if further development has to take place, I am in favor of Alternative 3, no special use expansion. I do not want to see the resort boundary expand.

Alternative 3 contains several options that I believe will help improve the visitor experience and allow Targhee to realize the resort's economic potential. These options include a restaurant at the top of Sacajawea that will help alleviate overcrowding at the base, and the addition of the Crazy Horse lift to increase uphill capacity.

But there are many parts of the proposal that I find alarming and believe will have a negative effect on the surrounding ecosystem as well as nearby communities like Victor and Driggs. Specifically, I encourage you to deny allowing a ridge-line restaurant at the top of the Dreamcatcher lift because of its impact on our dark skies and the adjacent wilderness. Light pollution can have negative impacts on migrating birds and other wildlife, not to mention its impact on humans both aesthetically and physically. Already our valley struggles to minimize light pollution. This is a time to try to prevent it rather than add to the problem.

I am also against the proposed North Boundary lift and on-mountain guest facilities in Rick's Basin. I see no need for this lift as there are never lines at Blackfoot and it's easy enough now to access the terrain that the proposed lift would service. I do not want to see the aspen glades in Ricks Basin disturbed - they are a magical place that already provides summer recreation. I believe we should strive to see Rick's Basin kept wild and pristine.

But my greatest concern is the proposal to expand into South Bowl and the Mono Trees. Lifts in these areas would be visible from the three most popular wilderness hiking trails in Teton Canyon. Such changes to the viewscape have a profound effect on the visitor experience. We are incredibly lucky to live in a place with easy access to wild places that have no visible sign of human development, and I hate to see that lost. Hundreds of us use Teton Canyon all year round and part of its attraction is its pristine, world-class scenery. Furthermore, wildlife rely on the south-facing slopes above Teton Canyon for winter habitat and bringing more human activity-things like an increasing number of skiers and avalanche control in particular- into the area. Winter is a vulnerable time for all wildlife, and I am against causing further stress on already challenged species, particularly in light of the habitat changes that are inevitable as the climate warms.

I'm also disturbed by the fact that the primary beneficiary of these efforts is Teton County, Wyoming, while Teton County, Idaho, bears the burden of increased costs, crowds, and impacts to existing infrastructure. Teton County, Wyoming, is already one of the richest counties in the United States. Teton County, Idaho, struggles to meet its budget. I believe that if the proposed expansion occurs, there needs to be a more equitable sharing of both costs and benefits between the two counties.

I also believe that Targhee can realize many of its goals for improving visitor services by focusing on projects within the resort boundary. There are many issues that need resolution, not the least of which are impacts to Ski Hill Road, economic impacts in Driggs, housing pressures, limited parking and outdated infrastructure. Targhee's focus should be on addressing these concerns and not on expanding its impact onto precious public lands and vital wildlife habitat. Targhee's natural beauty is unsurpassed. Let's protect it -especially the surrounding public lands - for future generations.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Sincerely,  
Molly Absolon