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Organization:

Title:

Comments: US Forest Service, Caribou Targhee and Supervisor Mel Bolling

Re: DEIS Comment Letter and Targhee Expansion

I am writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and potential Grand Targhee expansion.

I have lived in Victor, and been a season pass holder, for over 18 years. While I agree that Grand Targhee is a valued part of the character of our community, I strongly disagree that any proposed expansion of the resort will benefit the community that I love and call home.

There is so much at stake for Teton County, Idaho with this proposed development--none of it positive or beneficial.

This is why I support Alternative 1 of the Draft EIS. I see this proposal as one sided, flawed in its lack of foresight, and detrimental to Teton County, Idaho.

My comments are in bullet point format below:

1. Effect on water supply is a primary issue: Water is a resource that is already under stress for our growing community. Ski area expansion will mean water for construction, water for snow making, water for operations, and sediment from water that flows into Driggs. Where will all this water come from? ANY expansion will further affect our waterways and water sources in Teton Valley.

2. Effect on traffic congestion: There is only one, two- lane road to and from the resort. Currently, cars are already backed up for one or two miles by 10am during the ski season. Nothing can be done to alleviate the mass congestion and chaos that will occur from expansion--both down in Teton Valley and the access to the ski area.

3. Effect on Wildlife to the area, from the area, and on the area of expansion; We already see the effects to wildlife at the current ski area. Further expansion, even a restaurant, will affect an already stressed population of Bighorn Sheep, mule deer, grizzly bear, raptors, birds, and wolverine habitat. We are responsible for these non human assets-- the short and long term effect of expansion will devastate these populations in this area.

4. Effect on Teton Canyon: I have skied in canyon for 18 years, often twice a week. While it has gotten busier in the past few years, it still remains a place of quiet refuge for both humans and wildlife. Many early mornings, I am one of a handful of people skiing there. The effect of expansion into South Bowl and Mono trees will absolutely destroy this beautiful canyon. And it will devastate the surrounding land and the White Bark pine-- the latter being one that other species are dependent on.

5. Housing and medical care: there is already an issue with affordable housing in our valley so, where will the huge number of employees, needed to support the expansion, live?

I was Director of Nursing at Teton Valley hospital from late 2007 to 2009. The hospital is the first line of care for injuries at the ski area. While our local health care system has grown and improved since then, the emergency services, while still stellar in quality, are still limited in the number of beds and staff. The expansion projects many thousands of skiers per year. How will a significant influx of visitors, who will need emergent care, be handled?

As a Colorado resident and avid skier for 32 years, I saw each of the small communities adjacent to the large ski areas change-and not for the better. And many of these communities were adjacent to a major highway where it was 'proposed' that traffic flow and their towns would not be affected. How wrong they were.

The proposed type of growth at Targhee is on our door step. It is a recipe for disastrous results for our community- and perhaps for the resort itself. And the only financial benefits are for one person: Geordie Gillett. Its is unconscionable that he, and his associates, would propose this expansion with so little concern for Teton Valley.

I ask that the Forest Service not agree to supply land and resources for this expansion. It will open the door to irreversible consequences for our community.

Sincerely,  
Debra Taylor