

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/20/2025 6:44:59 PM

First name: Kevin

Last name: Schaum

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan projects as outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). As an avid skier, biker, and hiker, I spend over 100 days a year at Grand Targhee and the surrounding proposed expansion areas, and I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts of this master plan.

My primary objection stems from the proposed expansion into areas that are currently public land and are widely used for recreation by myself and many others. The DEIS details significant Special Use Permit (SUP) boundary expansions into the South Bowl and Mono Trees areas, totaling 866 acres. This means that public land, which I and many other individuals currently access freely for backcountry skiing, hiking, and biking, would be brought under the control of a private entity. This conversion of public land to private commercial operation is detrimental to the experience of all who currently use and value these areas for their undeveloped and unconfined recreational opportunities. The purpose of, and need for, the Forest Service's action is stated as deciding whether to grant a special use permit for the project, and whether it is in the public interest. I argue that taking public land and placing it under resort control for a fee-based experience is not in the broader public interest for those who currently enjoy these areas.

Furthermore, I am particularly concerned about the destruction of old-growth trees. The DEIS explicitly states that "tree clearing and grading would be required to create space for the lift terminals and skier egress" and that "terrain projects would require tree clearing to accommodate trails and glading to accommodate gladed areas" within these proposed expansion areas. The document also acknowledges the presence of "late seral and old growth forest" within the relevant Targhee Principal Watersheds (TPW19 and TPW20), which overlap with the proposed SUP area. The destruction of these old-growth forests, which are vital ecological components, is an unacceptable consequence of this expansion. While the DEIS mentions that project design criteria (PDC) aim to minimize impacts, the act of cutting ski trails through these established, mature forests represents an irreversible loss of valuable natural resources.

I believe that Grand Targhee Resort should be allowed to develop and improve its facilities, including adding restaurants, but this development should occur inside the current boundaries. The DEIS itself outlines numerous proposed projects within the existing SUP area, such as lift replacements and additions (Crazy Horse, North Boundary, Palmer Platter), terrain improvements, snowmaking expansion, and new guest service facilities like the Fred's Mountain Top Guest Facility and the Sacajawea Restaurant. These developments would allow the resort to enhance the recreational experience, improve skier circulation, and upgrade guest services within their already permitted footprint, addressing their stated proponent objectives without encroaching on vital public and ecologically sensitive lands. The resort's desire to "improve the recreational experience and address shortcomings in their terrain offerings and operations in order to remain viable in the competitive destination skier/rider market" can and should be achieved through intensification within their existing operational area.

In conclusion, while I support the continued viability and improvement of Grand Targhee Resort, I strongly oppose any expansion of the Special Use Permit boundary into the South Bowl and Mono Trees areas. This expansion would unjustly privatize public land, lead to the destruction of irreplaceable old-growth forests, and negatively impact the diverse recreational experiences currently enjoyed by a significant portion of the public. I urge the Forest Service to select an alternative that focuses on development within the existing resort boundaries.

Sincerely,

Kevin Schaum