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First name: Sasha

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service official,

I am a professional skier and resident of Teton Valley (Victor, ID). My livelihood depends on access to both backcountry public lands, and ski areas. I support Alternative 3, with modifications. Expanding into Teton Canyon would negatively impact our valley watershed, threaten key wildlife and keystone species of the ecosystem, and negatively impact the backcountry experience of Teton Canyon, and the visitor experience of Grand Teton National Park.

Our wild and public lands and trails draw many visitors to our community; tourism and outdoor recreation are the cornerstone of our local economy. Public lands like Teton Canyon, serve as a significant public health resource -- for mental health, physical health -- and are the cornerstone of our community's culture and the lifestyle that draws visitors and residents to our area. This all should not be threatened by one single business entity.

According to available user data, Grand Targhee's existing boundaries encompass 2,600 acres and services about 200,000 skiers annually. The Jackson Hole Mountain Resource operates on 2,500 acres of Forest Service land and services over 500,000 skiers annually. Grand Targhee has many opportunities within its existing boundaries and expansion is not needed or desired by the local ski community.

The ski area is not the only draw in our region and it should be able to update its facilities and expand its lift-served terrain and offerings without threatening the adjacent public lands that are the primary tourism, outdoor recreation and lifestyle draw of the Yellowstone region. I am concerned about maintaining the Wilderness and views from Grand Teton National Park and Teton Canyon. If approved, the restaurant should be located below the ridge line where it would not be visible from the Wilderness or GTNP, not on the very top of Fred's Mountain. Likewise, the North Boundary lift should be eliminated or modified to reduce this visual impact.

Across the past few years, backcountry skiers have restricted the areas we travel in order to maintain critical bighorn sheep habitat. That would be an ineffective and hypocritical restriction if Grand Targhee then expands with increased noise and direct expansion into critical habitat. The South Bowl expansion in alternatives 2 and 4 would convert important bighorn sheep habitat in South Bowl into a ski resort and indirectly eliminate adjacent critical habitat through the disturbance caused by avalanche mitigation. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest and other land managers in the Teton region have asked the backcountry ski community to voluntarily avoid important sheep habitat, including a portion of South Bowl -- Grand Targhee should not be permitted to expand into that same South Bowl.

I am also concerned about how the increased snowmaking and other proposed new water uses across all Alternatives will impact water resources. The DEIS fails to provide adequate information about where the water to support these activities will come from, if it is even truly available, or how wastewater will be treated and disposed of. This issue must be addressed in the FEIS. Residents of Teton Valley should not bear the cost of Grand Targhee's expansion and additional wastewater issues.

Thank you for taking into consideration a long term vision for our community and visitors. Please adopt Alternative 3 with modifications to protect threatened whitebark pine, critical bighorn sheep habitat and the views from the surrounding dispersed recreation areas.