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Organization:

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Comments: WATERVILLE VALLEY RESORT SCOPING

Tom Corcoran's original plan was to expand the skiing on Snows Mountain. The land below the National Forest Alpine Ski Area Expansion Zone was zoned Village Commercial with plans for condominiums and commercial development. The gondola would cross Valley Road and service Snows Mountain. After houses were built, the land was rezoned to Low Density. The new resort owner changed the plans for the gondola going to Snows Mountain to the top of Mount Tecumseh, over a mile away.

VILLAGE TO SUMMIT LIFT SYSTEM

The Waterville Valley resort's request is all to benefit the resort without any consideration of the impact on the forest or the town of Waterville Valley. If the resort's request for approval of all the items included in the scope is granted, it will have a significant impact on the National Forest and the town of Waterville Valley. The changes requested would only be a benefit to the Waterville Valley Resort. The folks that live in the Town of Waterville Valley who enjoy the peace and quiet of XC skiing, hiking, bird watching, etc., would be paying the price for the loss of acres of forest. Not to mention the loss of habitat for the flora and fauna, some on the endangered list, that live on Mount Tecumseh.

A gondola from the Town of Waterville Valley to the top of Tecumseh Mountain, a mile away, doesn't make much sense to me. A gondola from the base of the ski area to the top of the mountain may have some merit. A gondola to the mountain base would require extensive tree cutting and leave an ugly scar through the forest, think about Northern Pass. It would create parking problems in the center of town. It would require airspace over condominiums. It would rarely be used for six months of the year. It would have a huge negative impact on the residences and the Town of Waterville Valley.

SKI TERRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Skiing has changed from skiers staying multiple days to driving in for the day. Most of the skiers drive directly to the ski mountain for the day. To encourage skiers to drive into town, where parking is at a premium, is, in my opinion, a bad idea.

SNOWMAKING

We all know the weather is changing. When my wife and I started to XC ski after the blizzard of '78, we always planned on XC-skiing on Thanksgiving weekend. Now the mountain is lucky to make enough snow on the top to be able to open on Thanksgiving weekend.

One of the water sources for snowmaking is Corcoran Pond. The pond has silted in again since it was dredged about 20 years ago. The pond has lost shoreline in the eastern corner of the pond and the capacity to hold much water. That means more water coming out of the Mad River.

PARKING

The Town of Waterville Valley has 500 acres of private land, which is mostly all developed. Parking in the center of town is already tight. To add more parking to accommodate skiers in the center would be problematic when there are parking lots at the ski area that are never filled.

IMPACT ON TOWN OF WATERVILLE VALLEY

Waterville Valley Resort's Master Plan indicates Valley Road being replaced by some condominiums and a gondola terminal building. The plan also shows the gondola going over the airspace of Snows Brook Road. Replacing Village Road with condominiums will severely disrupt the traffic pattern in the Town of Waterville Valley. Valley Road (formerly Rt. 49) is the major truck route bringing supplies into Waterville Valley. The side roads aren't adequate to handle large delivery trucks.

I added Impact on Town of Waterville Valley because I'm a long-time homeowner and resident of the town, and I believe the Forest Service must consider the impact on the Town of Waterville Valley. This is a unique town of approximately 700 residents living on 500 acres of private land. A large percentage of residents came to and moved to Waterville Valley for the skiing and fell in love with the beauty of the area and family-oriented resort. All the skiers remember Al, the cigar-chomping shuttle bus driver that knew all the children in town and where they lived. We're not Lincoln, and we don't want to be.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Village Road and Snows Brook Road are town roads, and the land they're on belongs to the Town of Waterville Valley. The Waterville Valley selectmen gave the resort a conditional go-ahead for the project, including air rights. The condition requires approval by the town residents at an annual town meeting to be valid, which hasn't happened yet.

When and if the townspeople approve the gondola terminal, skiers will create heavy traffic on the town's roads, which may even require traffic lights.

The Waterville Valley Resort does not have a good reputation for maintaining what it has. The Town Square, Conference Center, and employees' housing all need upgrades to bring them into the 21st century.

We came to be near the mountain but didn't expect the mountain to move into town.

If the resort gets the approval, I don't believe it has the finances to complete it and will remain unfinished for years.

The resort only operates the ski mountain from late November through early April. For six months, there is not much going on at the mountain. During the summer, it may get used on weekends for weddings.

I don't see much benefit to allow another Alpine Expansion Area at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.

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