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Organization: Ski Utah

Title: President & CEO

Comments: Re: Brian Head Resort Expansion Project - Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Comment in support of Alternative 2

To the Dixie National Forest planning team:

I'm writing as President & CEO of Ski Utah, the trade association representing all of Utah's ski areas. For roughly 30 years I've had a front-row seat to how lift-served recreation shapes the economies and communities around our resorts, and I want to offer Ski Utah's support for Alternative 2 as analyzed in the Draft EIS.

Brian Head occupies a distinct and important niche in Utah's ski landscape. As the southernmost resort in the state and one of the highest base elevations in the country, it serves a market the Wasatch resorts simply don't reach - Iron County and greater Southern Utah, along with visitors from Nevada and Southern California. As that region's population continues its rapid growth, the demand for accessible, family-oriented winter recreation is growing with it. Alternative 2's expanded permit boundary, new lifts, terrain, and snowmaking are a measured response to that demand rather than growth for its own sake.

The economic case is straightforward. Ski tourism is one of the most reliable year-round drivers of jobs and visitor spending in the rural communities that host it, and Iron County stands to benefit directly - in resort employment, in the lodging and restaurant activity that follows, and in the tax base that supports local services.

I'd also highlight the forest-health component, which distinguishes this proposal from a simple footprint expansion. The hazard-tree removal and post-fire vegetation treatment contemplated under Alternative 2 address real conditions left behind by the 2017 Brian Head Fire, and pairing that stewardship work with the expansion is a sensible use of the resort as a long-term land-management partner.

Finally, this proposal reflects the kind of deliberate, multi-year process that NEPA is meant to reward - developed with the Forest Service, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and the community, rather than rushed to the finish. That collaborative foundation gives me confidence that the expansion can be built responsibly.

For these reasons, Ski Utah supports the selection of Alternative 2. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Nathan Rafferty

President & CEO, Ski Utah