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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: Support for Ski Santa Fe Snowmaking Infrastructure - Alternative 2

Dear U.S. Forest Service Decision-Makers,

I am writing in support of Alternative 2 for Ski Santa Fe's proposed snowmaking infrastructure improvements and respectfully encourage the Forest Service to approve the project.

Ski Santa Fe is an important part of the outdoor recreation economy in northern New Mexico. It provides opportunities for skiing, snowboarding, youth recreation, outdoor education, and family activities while supporting jobs and businesses throughout the Santa Fe region. More broadly, New Mexico's ski industry generates more than \$600 million in economic activity and is an important component of the state's tourism economy. Reliable winter recreation is increasingly important to maintaining that economic contribution as natural snowfall becomes more variable.

I recognize that the proposed improvements must be balanced with protection of the Santa Fe National Forest and its water, wildlife, vegetation, cultural resources, and recreational values. The concerns raised through the environmental review-particularly regarding water resources, wetlands, temporary construction disturbance, and the effects of a changing climate-deserve careful attention. However, these concerns can and should be addressed through the project's design requirements, construction practices, monitoring, and mitigation measures rather than by foregoing necessary improvements to an existing recreation facility.

Importantly, this proposal is not an expansion of skiing into an undeveloped landscape. It is an investment in the infrastructure supporting an established ski area and an existing recreational use of the National Forest. Improving the efficiency and reliability of snowmaking can allow Ski Santa Fe to make better use of its existing footprint and available water resources while providing a more predictable winter recreation season.

The project also represents an investment in the long-term viability of Santa Fe's outdoor economy. Ski areas are anchors for winter tourism, supporting lodging, restaurants, retail, equipment rental, guiding, transportation, and numerous other local businesses. Maintaining a reliable ski season helps sustain these businesses and the jobs they provide, while strengthening Santa Fe's identity as a year-round outdoor recreation destination.

I therefore encourage the Forest Service to approve Alternative 2, with appropriate resource protections and monitoring to ensure that water resources, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and the surrounding forest ecosystem are responsibly managed throughout construction and operation.

Investing in Ski Santa Fe is an investment not only in a ski area, but in the broader outdoor recreation economy and quality of life of northern New Mexico. I believe Alternative 2 provides a reasonable balance between maintaining this important recreational resource and responsibly stewarding the public lands on which it operates.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Renn Halstead

Albuquerque, New Mexico