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First name: Forrest

Last name: McCarthy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: June 5, 2026

Kim Pierson

Forest Supervisor

Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Re: Objection to Amendments to the 1997 Targhee National Forest Management Plan

Dear Forest Supervisor Pierson:

We submit this objection to the amendments to the 1997 Targhee National Forest Management Plan adopted as part of the Grand Targhee Resort Master Development Plan decision.

We are eligible objectors because we submitted timely written comments on June 10, 2025, during the public comment period. In those comments, we expressed concerns regarding wildlife impacts, wilderness character, recreation values, climate resilience, transportation impacts, and effects on local communities. We believe the Forest Plan amendments fail to adequately address these concerns and are inconsistent with the long-term stewardship objectives of the Targhee National Forest.

For over thirty years, we have lived in the Teton area and have regularly hiked, climbed, and skied in Grand Teton National Park and the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. Our concerns arise from a long-standing connection to these public lands and from our desire to see them managed responsibly for future generations.

The proposed expansion would introduce new development into currently undeveloped areas that provide important wildlife habitat and contribute to the natural character of the landscape adjacent to Grand Teton National Park and the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. The amendments to the 1997 Targhee National Forest Management Plan appear to modify existing management direction in order to accommodate the resort expansion rather than requiring the project to conform to the protections and standards established by the Forest Plan.

In our original comments, we raised concerns regarding the impacts of the proposed expansion on grizzly bears, wolverines, moose, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife species that depend upon relatively undisturbed habitat. We are concerned that the Forest Plan amendments weaken protections intended to maintain habitat integrity, wildlife movement corridors, and ecological connectivity within the broader Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

We also expressed concern regarding the effects of development in the South Bowl area and construction of facilities on Fred's Mountain. The amendments facilitate development that will diminish scenic values, natural soundscapes, and opportunities for solitude experienced by visitors to adjacent public lands, including Grand Teton National Park and the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. These resources are among the defining characteristics of the Teton region and deserve long-term protection.

Additionally, the amendments fail to adequately consider the long-term implications of climate change and the sustainability of expanding ski resort infrastructure into previously undeveloped terrain. Modifying Forest Plan standards to accommodate expansion may provide short-term development opportunities while creating long-term environmental consequences that are difficult to reverse.

Forest Plans are intended to provide durable guidance for the management of public lands and resources. Amending long-standing management direction to facilitate a specific development proposal sets a troubling precedent. Rather than ensuring that projects comply with established resource protections, the amendments alter those protections to accommodate development. This approach undermines the integrity of the forest planning process and risks incremental erosion of the conservation measures that the public has relied upon for decades.

The record does not adequately demonstrate that these amendments are necessary to achieve broader forest management objectives, nor does it show that the benefits of weakening existing protections outweigh the environmental and public-interest costs. We believe the Forest Service should retain the existing management standards and protections contained in the 1997 Targhee National Forest Management Plan unless a more comprehensive analysis demonstrates that changes are necessary, environmentally responsible, and consistent with the long-term public interest.

Requested Relief

We respectfully request that the Forest Service:

1. Withdraw or reconsider the amendments to the 1997 Targhee National Forest Management Plan
2. Retain existing Forest Plan protections for wildlife habitat, scenic resources, and backcountry values.
3. Conduct additional analysis regarding the long-term environmental consequences of modifying Forest Plan standards.
4. Require that any future development proposals conform to existing Forest Plan protections rather than weakening those protections to accommodate development.

Thank you for your consideration of this objection and for your stewardship of our public lands.

Sincerely,

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