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Comments:

October 9, 2020

Mel Bolling

c/o Jay Pence, Teton Basin District Ranger Teton Basin Ranger District

Re: Grand Targhee Master Development Plan Projects

Dear Forest Supervisor Bolling,

I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for some limited improvements at Grand Targhee as well as my concerns about Targhee's extensive expansion plans and the potential effects on Teton Valley. I chose to live in Teton Valley so I could pursue my outdoor recreation interests. Grand Targhee was a significant factor as I was looking for a ski area that wasn't too small, but equally as important-not too big. Some of the proposed changes appeal to me as a season pass holder, but I hope Targhee will proceed cautiously and avoid disappointing their current customers who value the family-friendly, low-key atmosphere that may be Targhee's most important asset (along with abundant snowfall). Modernization of existing facilities would be mostly welcome. What follows are my biggest concerns:

Parking and Traffic Congestion-On busy days, Targhee already has a parking problem at the base area and a traffic problem on Ski Hill Road. I'm sorry to say that I now mostly avoid going to Targhee on weekends and holidays. Targhee must absolutely address these problems before any further expansion takes place. What will be the environmental impact of expanding parking facilities at Targhee and increasing the traffic capacity of Ski Hill Road?

South Bowl Expansion on Peaked Mountain-South facing slopes are not usually desirable for ski slopes due to the poorer snow quality and quantity. The South Bowl poses high avalanche danger and the presence of lift-served ski slopes here would be detrimental to other users of Teton Canyon and its wildlife. Teton Canyon is of much value to Teton Valley for many forms of outdoor recreation and as a home for wildlife-these multiple established uses of Teton Canyon should take precedence over Targhee's proposed expansion plans. Furthermore, Targhee already has approval to develop the Peaked Lift (which I am looking forward to)-this should be sufficient for area expansion purposes for the foreseeable future and I think it would be prudent to monitor this approved phase of Targhee's expansion before considering any further proposals.

Light Pollution-I can sympathize with the desire for lighting to allow ski racer practice and for tubing, but as a Valley resident, I will be disappointed to see Targhee contribute to light pollution causing the reduction of our already threatened dark skies. Many Valley residents value our dark skies and are keenly aware that most people are unable to enjoy such views of the night sky from their homes.

Mountain-Top Restaurant Facilities-I really question the value of a restaurant on top of Fred's Mountain. The summit is windy and foggy much of the ski season and I would think skiers would prefer to dine at the base area. A summertime operation might have more appeal, so maybe a seasonal, non-permanent solution could be found that would have a much lower environmental impact. I would encourage Targhee to modernize the restaurant facilities at the base area as a far more important priority. If a mountain-top restaurant is built, I hope Targhee will be mindful of the visual impact to Teton Valley, light pollution, and the environmental impact to the summit.

Impact on Population Growth of Teton Valley-Over 40 years ago, I spent a winter as a ski bum in Steamboat, Colorado. Steamboat Springs was then a small town, much like Driggs is today. The ski area was a short drive away and the open space in between was mostly used for agriculture. Today, that open space is filled with condominiums, hotels, convenient stores and so on. Continued expansion of Targhee will escalate population growth and traffic congestion in Teton Valley. How much growth do we want and at what point will our quality of life here be negatively impacted? People who desire a big ski resort experience already have other nearby options such as Jackson Hole Resort and Big Sky.

In closing, I will say that I have really enjoyed skiing/snowboarding at Targhee and mostly like Targhee as it is. I hope Targhee can improve the parking and traffic problems and build the Peaked Lift already approved. I fear that more extensive development will negatively impact Teton Canyon and the quality of life in Teton Valley. This new expansion plan is proposing too many changes for evaluation in a single phase.