

Date submitted (UTC-11): 10/12/2020 12:00:00 AM
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Organization: Friends of the Wheeler Peak Wilderness
Title:
Comments:
Dear Supervisor Bolling,

Please accept this written comment during the scoping phase of the Grand Targhee Master Development Plan Project.

According to the NOI and the scoping notice package, the proposed GTR project include the following components:

1. Special Use Permit (SUP)/Operational Boundary Adjustments 2. Lift Additions, Replacements, and Realignments 3. Terrain and On-Mountain Infrastructure 4. Non-Winter and Alternative Activities

The most troubling component of this plan is the idea that the USFS would expand the SUP of a ski area. These are public lands that we pay for with our taxes. To have more land taken away and put into the hands of a business where we would then have to pay to access it is misguided.

This land also borders wilderness and is vital to wildlife, watershed, view shed, and general health of the area. Please do a full EIS on the impacts that developing this land would have on the habitat, water quality, ecology, wildlife corridors and wetlands. This area has been identified as being within the Canada Lynx area of influence. It is critical habitat for isolated populations of bighorn sheep and grizzly bears, among other species.

The expansion of the SUP in conjunction with the other components would increase the CCC to ~7,000/day, which is more than double to what that number is today. Not only will that impact the environment and habitat, it will greatly affect the community and social services of the county. These include traffic, housing, energy consumption, and cost of living. These social issues need to be included in the NEPA.

This expansion would also put more people in what is now considered backcountry terrain as well as giving them easier access to get even farther into the wilderness. This will put greater strain on search and rescue and the forest service. By expanding the SUP it will also displace those who have been accessing their public lands without utilizing the ski area. It will negatively affect the character of the Jedediah Smith Wilderness Area which it will abut.

Any new development at ski areas draws more people. Please do a full analysis on the impact that more density will have on the area.

Including, traffic, pollution, human-wildlife interactions, water quality issues, habitat/wetland impacts, housing, cost of living, and the nature of the small towns in the surrounding areas.

The SE group has been responsible for development in many small town ski areas (Taos Ski Valley, Stowe, Breckenridge, etc.). These projects have been responsible for displacing locals, raising rents, overcrowding, increase wildlife interactions, loss of habitat, pollution, and more.

Our mountains do not need to be turned into amusement parks. These small town ski areas have all been gentrified and you can no longer differentiate among them. Please don't let this happen to one of the few small towns that still has its culture intact. I urge you to hire a different company to assist with this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in this stage of the NEPA process. I hope you take everyone's concerns to heart and look forward to you addressing all these issues in your draft EIS.