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Comments:

Subj: Comments on Sandia Peak Ski Area Mountain Coaster Project

I support the proposed Mountain Coaster Project at the Sandia Peak Ski Area (SPSA) because it has the potential to provide much needed revenue to maintain and improve the existing facilities at the SPSA, thereby preserving the winter sports recreational opportunities that been available in the Sandia Mountains since 1937.

By way of introduction, my name is Ric Davis and I have enjoyed countless days over the past 50+ years at the SPSA, first as a local day skier, then as a member of the Sandia Peak Ski Patrol, and later as an ski instructor with the NM Adaptive Sports Program which provides opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy the mountains in the winter.

However, recent years of declining snowfall and aging equipment have greatly limited the things we once took for granted; for example -

* Availability is now reduced from 7 days-a-week, all-mountain, seasons lasting more than four months to seasons lasting only a few weeks for only 4-, 3-, or 2- days-a-week, where only a part of the mountain with a limited amount of water for snow-making is open.

* The original chairlift has now been decommissioned. Mountain bike operations have been discontinued. And because Lift 1 was the only chairlift that could transport Adaptive skiers in sit-skis, it is no longer possible to offer that experience to students with disabilities.

Fortunately, a forward-looking SPSA Master Development Plan which proposes solutions to these issues, as well as others, was prepared in 2016 and accepted by the Cibola National Forest Supervisor in 2018. Two particularly relevant planned upgrades which I believe are critically needed to again provide the services SPSA had been able to offer in in the past are:

* Replacing the now-defunct Lift 1 with a much faster detachable quad chairlift which would not only attract more skiers to the area in general, but also could allow mountain bikers and sit-skiers to again enjoy the mountain, and

* Building a new 10 million gallon snowmaking pond and associated infrastructure to expand the snowmaking capability from 22 to 65 acres, which would greatly enhance operations during low snow years.

But these upgrades are costly and revenues are down. The good news is that the Master Development Plan also includes a Mountain Coaster which could supplement the SPSA revenue.

The Mountain Coaster upgrade is also supported locally by the Bernalillo County commissioners who approved up to \$2 million in an industrial revenue bond (IRB) to finance the project. (The County considered the economic impact where the new mountain coaster will enable the Sandia Peak Ski Company to hire approximately 16 employees once the facility is completed. During construction the project will create 8 construction jobs.)

In summary, the SPSA Mountain Coaster Project can provide not only new recreational options in the existing U.S. Forest Service Special Use Permit (SUP) area, but also funding to restore and preserve the recreational options at the Sandia Peak Ski Area itself.