



MY TURN

‘Keeping backcountry areas intact is so needed’

JOANIE BERDE

The Taos News, 2/16/12

For many in New Mexico and far beyond, the Taos Ski Valley (TSV) is a special place. Besides recreation, it provides valuable wildlife habitat and water supply for many downstream communities.

But the very qualities that make TSV unique are threatened by the Master Plan Development proposed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) just issued by the U.S. Forest Service. This draft EIS is currently out for public comment, and proposes a significant expansion into the backcountry of TSV.

The new lifts, ski runs, parking lot, and other developments will threaten water quality in the R'o Hondo watershed, and the installation of ski lifts into the backcountry will permanently alter the wild character of this special place.

Many users of TSV value the undeveloped terrain on Kachina Peak and the West Basin Ridge for its adventure and solitude. The phase one of the master plan would lose this quality with new lifts and ski runs.

Habitat for rare species of wildlife identified in surveys by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and remaining islands of old growth forest would be lost due to these proposed changes.

And the R'o Hondo, an important tributary to the R'o Grande that provides vital water supply to acequias and villages, would suffer negative impacts from the development. Many friends and neighbors depend upon TSV for employment; but there are ways to provide these jobs in a sustainable way, without damage to the environment.

Folks who value Taos Ski Valley (TSV) and its backcountry experience on the Carson National Forest, and those who live along the R'o Hondo, have about a month to comment to the U.S. Forest Service on this Draft EIS for TSV.

Please let Kendall Clark, forest supervisor for the Carson National Forest, know the importance of forest and watershed protection to you at Taos Ski Valley (TSV).

Keeping backcountry areas intact is so needed in these changing climate times in the Southwest. The new lifts and runs would be visible from the Wheeler Peak Wilderness as well.

TSV is unique among the big monster ski resorts in the Western U.S. — for wildlife and the river; let's keep it that way!

Joanie Berde is a long-time coordinator for Carson Forest Watch Citizen's Group.

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