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Comment:

Cascade Backcountry Alliance (CBA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed expansion of Mission Ridge Ski and Board Resort. CBA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and improving winter backcountry access throughout the Pacific Northwest. We recognize the economic and recreational value that the Mission Ridge area provides to the region and wish to ensure that any development maintains equitable access and environmental integrity for all winter recreation users.

While Mission Ridge is well known for resort skiing, there is also year-round recreational access in this zone, including well-loved backcountry ski and snowshoe terrain. Under the leadership of El Sendero, a local advocacy group, this area has gone through a collaborative recreation planning processes in the last decade with Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Chelan County, which has led to the development of two new winter non-motorized areas that will now be impacted by the this project.

CBA is concerned about the potential loss of access to the newly established winter non-motorized recreation area in the upper Stemilt Basin. The existing uphill route to Stemilt Basin, as currently identified on the Mission Ridge website, would be rendered unusable under the proposed expansion. The route originates from the parking area and ascends terrain that, under the proposed plan, would lie directly beneath a new chairlift and within the expanded Special Use Permit boundary. This area would likely be off-limits to backcountry travel once integrated into resort operations.

We urge the County and the applicant to revise the DEIS to include a designated alternative uphill route that maintains safe, reliable access to the Stemilt Basin for backcountry users. Ensuring continuity of non-motorized recreation access is essential to balancing the interests of both resort and dispersed winter recreation communities.

The Draft EIS indicates that the proposed road will reduce parking availability in the existing main lot, which is used to access the popular Clara and Marion Lakes trailhead and non-motorized zone. This trailhead not only provides access to those lakes but also to Mission Peak and the surrounding terrain. The DEIS mentions that a new proposed parking lot will help mitigate the anticipated crowding at the main resort access lot resulting from reduction of spaces from the proposed road. Unfortunately, that proposed lot is about a mile away from the trailhead, which may not be practical for regular access. The Cascade Backcountry Alliance requests that the Draft EIS include a detailed analysis of the impacts of parking reduction in the main lot and clearly describe the final trailhead layout, including mitigation measures for any loss or disruption of parking for backcountry users accessing Clara and Marion Lakes.

This development is expected to bring a substantial increase in visitation to the Mission Ridge area, which

may place additional pressure on the surrounding environment and recreation resources. According to the DEIS, Phase 1 alone is projected to result in an 89% increase in weekday trips and a 112% increase in Saturday trips. While this issue extends beyond the immediate scope of the DEIS, we strongly encourage Mission Ridge Resort to explore the establishment of a Community Benefit Agreement—or a similar mechanism—through which a modest portion of annual resort revenues could be dedicated to supporting local recreation infrastructure. Such funding could help maintain trails, improve signage, and support restoration or clean-up efforts to mitigate the environmental impacts associated with higher visitor volumes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important proposal. We appreciate Chelan County's work to ensure a balanced approach to recreation, environmental stewardship and community benefit.