

October 20, 2025

Mike Kaputa, Director
Chelan County Department of Natural Resources
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411 Washington St. Suite 201
Wenatchee, WA, 98801

RE: Mission Ridge Master Planned Resort Expansion DEIS

Dear Mr. Kaputa,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the DEIS for the proposed development adjacent to the Mission Ridge ski area. I live in my hometown of Wenatchee so I can enjoy the incredible outdoor amenities we have here in our region. A singularly delightful pleasure for me is skiing at Mission Ridge. I began skiing at Mission Ridge in the mid-70s as a kid; I love this hill.

I am concerned about the environmental impacts of the residential development as currently proposed (water supply, waste and surface water disposal in a fashion that could exacerbate landslide risk and impacts to wildlife). I am also concerned about ingress and egress to the site in the event of an emergency. I know many other commenters are addressing these issues comprehensively, so I will not go into detail here.

However, I am also very concerned that we risk losing Mission Ridge as a beloved recreational facility and as a business that is important to the financial health of our community and serves as both an attractive amenity and a key part of our identity as a community.

But my deepest concern is with the nature of much of the dialog occurring around the complicated – but not intractable – issue of how Mission Ridge can and will continue into the future. Many appear to be framing this as a zero-sum game: Either Mission Ridge wins, or those with environmental concerns win.

Some of my friends seem to make light of the interest of the owners of Mission Ridge to have a profitable operation. None of us should vilify the owners, or suggest it is somehow nefarious, to want to operate the ski area in a fashion that pays for itself. I have read analyses that support the perspective that expansion of services, perhaps lodging or residences and year-round operations may be required to operate a ski area in the 21st century.

Similarly, I hear from those who support the development as currently proposed, that the County has ‘dragged it’s feet’. From what I can ascertain, the County has been doing the methodical and incredibly time-consuming work of environmental analysis. It is not a simple task, and has many regulatory parameters defining how it must proceed. I also hear that those who oppose the current proposal are hopeless romantics with no concept of the ‘real world’ of operating a ski area.

As long as name calling and rigid position-taking continues, no progress can be made to find the creative, innovative and ‘out of the box’ solutions that will be necessary to have a viable Mission Ridge while simultaneously protecting natural resources and public safety. We have to do this together, folks.

This is not a competition, nor are there ‘bad guys’ ensconced on each ‘side’ of this issue. Yes, there are plenty of people with strong opinions, models, analyses, research reports and pages of data. But I genuinely believe that all

those I have heard from, read about, and spoken to on this issue truly want what is best for our community. Even if their current visions of what is best appear to be diametrically opposed.

Prior to being (happily and fully) retired, I was public policy mediator, focusing on tough and highly contentious environmental regulatory issues at the local, regional and national level. Before becoming a mediator, I was a natural resource planner with extensive experience conducting environmental impact work and EIS project management, both as public employee and as a consultant. My professional experience tells me people of goodwill, those who have respect for their fellows, and those who have a willingness to work hard, can indeed find solutions that perhaps no one has even thought of before. It is not only possible, it is what is necessary.

I strongly suggest the government entities, the non-profit organizations, private businesses, interest groups, and the owners of Mission Ridge seek the assistance of a skilled public policy mediator to guide the hard work of identifying and coming to agreement on solutions. And it is *hard work – it takes time and can be frustrating. A broad array of talented mediators with appropriate expertise and decades of experience can be found locally, in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. An impartial and talented mediator would serve our community very well.

Mediation is expensive and time consuming. But less so than lawsuits. And less costly than the financial hit our community will take if Mission Ridge is no longer economically viable. Mediation is not a “woo-woo” or “kumbaya” endeavor. It is both intense and practical, and requires people of good faith to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

All must ‘come to the table’ with an ability to listen and learn from others; to honestly and fully express their interests and seek to understand those of others. For government agencies and entities to participate effectively in a public policy mediation, they must have the authority and ability to make regulatory and management decisions that may be unconventional while still following the letter of the law. For owners, they must be willing to think creativity and be willing to put up with uncertainty while discussions are underway. For private citizens opposed to the development as currently proposed, they must be able to see the perspectives of those who operate the ski area, and consider innovative mitigation options for impacts. They must also be willing to accept that it is not possible to live one’s life without impacts (a paraphrase from the late Jane Goodall); but we *can and *must find ways to minimize our impacts. Even the impacts created by participating in the very recreational opportunities we love.

Please know I am *not angling to be a mediator for this project. I am very happy to *not be working in my former profession. I do have an idea for the future of Mission Ridge, which is a key reason I could not be an impartial mediator. I imagine the possibility of a public-private partnership, or non-profit ownership, similar to Bogus Basin, Mount Spokane, or Mount Ashland. We live where public ownership of our power supply is a given (“Owned by the People We Serve” is the proud sign on the side of Chelan PUD). Why not consider ways to make Mission Ridge a place that is owned by the community?

Thank you for considering my comments.

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