



**BACKCOUNTRY  
HUNTERS & ANGLERS  
WASHINGTON**

**October 21, 2025**

**Mike Kaputa, Director  
Chelan County Department of Natural Resources  
SEPA Responsible Official  
missionridgeeis@outlook.com  
411 Washington St. Suite 201  
Wenatchee, WA, 98801**

**RE: Draft EIS Mission Ridge Expansion Master Planned Resort**

Dear Mr. Kaputa,

I am writing on behalf of Washington Chapter of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (WA BHA) to express our concerns about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Mission Ridge Expansion Master Planned Resort. WA BHA supports the No Action Alternative and opposes large-scale development in this region of the Central Cascades. We are open to supporting an alternative that genuinely expands recreational opportunities for the public, including hunters and anglers. However, the current proposal appears primarily focused on business development and could have unpredictable impacts on the local community and reduce opportunities to hunt and fish. This letter outlines the potential consequences of the proposal for wildlife, habitat, and the people who value them.

**Wildlife and Habitat**

Mission Ridge supports one of Washington's largest Rocky Mountain elk herds and a major migratory mule deer population. The area's distinctive blend of forest and shrub-steppe creates a mosaic of habitat that provides both forage and cover. At higher elevations, patches of shrub-steppe adjacent to perennial water sources offer critical forage and secure habitat for ungulates throughout the year. The proposed development would remove or degrade many of these key habitat features, disrupting the movement patterns of elk and mule deer across the ridge. Increased noise, lighting, vehicle traffic, and human activity are likely to displace animals into narrower movement corridors, leading to habitat fragmentation and increased risk of stress, malnutrition, or mortality. In a state with an already smaller number of elk relative to other western states, the impact on one of the elk herd could greatly impact hunting opportunities in our region. As such, please provide a detailed description of how the proposal will address or mitigate the impacts of increased human and vehicle traffic, development, light pollution, and noise on elk and mule



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deer populations. Please provide how the proposal will not reduce the hunting opportunities for and total numbers of elk and deer in the Mission Ridge and Colockum areas.

### **WDFW Land Exchange**

The Section 25 is owned by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and includes Windy Ridge and Bowl 4, the upper half of Chair 4, and overlaps with the proposed project. In the DEIS, WDFW said: “...an expanded, year-round ski resort is not an allowable use of the land under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) contract that funded WDFW’s purchase of the property.” WA BHA members and other hunters use the section during archery, muzzleloader, and rifle seasons as well as for forest grouse hunting. In addition to game animals such as mule deer, elk, mountain lions, and black bears, other species such as golden eagles, goshawks, pika, marmots, and bobcats, regularly use the section's wildlife corridors. Section 25's whitebark pine forests, springs and wetlands, talus slopes, and undisturbed shrub-steppe openings are vital wildlife habitats which WA BHA members cherish. Section 25 is especially important as development threatens to destroy similar habitats on adjacent parcels. The DEIS discusses a land exchange between WDFW and Washington State DNR that would result in DNR owning Section 25. This implies an expanded year-round resort would be allowable on DNR-owned Section 25. However, the DEIS further states that: “The land swap is not part of the current Proposed Project...”. With the land exchange not on the table, the likelihood that it is illegal for WDFW to swap the land, and WDFW indicating that expanded year-round activity is not an allowable use of Section 25, Section 25 should be excluded from any expanded ski resort or development activity. Please remove any potential business plans on Section 25 as there has been no approval to exchange this land.

### **Forest Management**

The role of fire ecology at the proposed site cannot be understated. In particular, the complex mosaic of north facing denser forests, talus slopes, and drier forests require ecologically distinct approaches. The DEIS describes blanketed forest thinning but does not distinguish between ecologically different forest types. Each of these land cover types requires a complex and scientifically informed management strategy. Not simply a “one size fits all” thinning approach. In particular, many dense north facing slopes are essential to summer habitat for ungulate species. Please provide a plan for how each of these different forest and land cover types will be managed on a continual basis to provide the existing ecosystem services. Please provide a plan for how to mitigate for the loss of north-facing shaded timber due to the forest thinning and ski area expansion.

### **High Density Development in Open Spaces**



The proposed level of development is outside of the urban growth boundary and require a Master Planned Resort Overlay (MPR), otherwise this development would violate the Chelan County Urban Growth Act. The purpose of the Chelan County Urban Growth Act ensures wild spaces for hunting and fishing are preserved for generations to come. Indeed, many of the hunters and anglers in WA BHA have hunted Mission Ridge and Colockum Area for generations. Please describe how this resort expansion would not greatly diminish the natural resources and rural character of the area.

We appreciate your consideration and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ryan Niemeyer  
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Washington Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
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