



ALPINE LAKES
protection society

Comments on Tamarack Saddle LLC Proposed Development (Mission Ridge Expansion) Draft EIS

From: Alpine Lakes Protection Society

To: Mike Kaputa, Chelan County Dept. of Natural Resources
missionridgeeis@outlook.com

Dear Mr. Kaputa: These are the comments of the members and trustees of the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS,) on the proposed Tamarack LLC/Mission Ridge expansion project.

ALPS strongly opposes issuance of permits for the proposed Project.

There are innumerable arguments against this proposed Project, and few in its favor. If approved, this project would be a disaster for Mission Ridge and its natural environment. It would also fundamentally change the character, not just of Mission Ridge itself, but of the entire Wenatchee area and the surrounding areas of Chelan and Douglas counties. We urge Chelan County to deny issuance of any and all permits for this misguided, destructive and illegal project.

ALPS is aware of the many negative effects of this proposal on the natural values of the Mission Ridge area. Placing what is in effect a new city high on Mission Ridge will have many effects on local wildlife, all of them bad. The Colockum elk herd will suffer in particular, but so will every other species excepting perhaps non-native invasives. Squilchuck creek will be turned into little more than a combined storm and sewer runoff conduit.

Other organizations are commenting in depth on these many adverse effects.

Our focus, however, will be the many, and likely severe, direct and secondary effects of this proposal on the rest of Chelan and Douglas counties.

Anyone who has ever visited Mission Ridge, or driven the dramatic “Liberty – Beehive” road from Highway 97 east to Mission Ridge, knows that the entire area is one of the most fire prone in the Cascades. Numerous blazes have burned there in recent years. Plenty of fuel remains everywhere in the vicinity of this project, both in recent but incompletely burned areas, as well as areas where pine species dominate, now suffering from pine bark beetle outbreaks, killing numerous trees and turning them into fuel for the next fires.

Yet here, with this project, we see Chelan county contemplating issuing permits for what is in reality a new small city right in the heart of this firetrap area. And that new small city will have but *one way* in and out, the steep and curvy Squilchuck creek road.

To call this a recipe for disaster would be a wild understatement. This is a place which is guaranteed to burn. It does not take any special genius to see that. Yet here is Chelan county, contemplating granting permissions that would set the stage for catastrophe. Does anyone really believe that the Squilchuck road could really handle the traffic from thousands of panicked, fleeing residents of this new city? What happens if the fire burns along and closes the road?

Although there is a belief in some legal circles that governments enjoy “sovereign immunity” from lawsuits, there have been many cases where governments have been held liable for issuance of permits where they were clearly negligent. And in this case, all the evidence is right there, and very clear.

If Chelan county grants permits for this proposal, in an area well known for its fire danger, and knowing full well that there is no practical evacuation route, it could, and surely someday will, face a mountain of lawsuits which will in all likelihood succeed in showing that the county was negligent, and at fault, in granting permits for this project.

This is not so much a question of fire science as of common sense, or lack of it.

Some of the proposed means of dealing with this danger are almost laughable. The idea that a mid-sized parking lot can serve as a place of refuge from a wildfire? Is no one at Chelan county aware that in severe fires, asphalt itself can and does burn? Even if the asphalt itself does not burn, what happens to the people supposedly gathered there for “safety” as fire envelops the whole area, raising the air temperature to lethal levels, as well as consuming all the oxygen?

If this project is approved, such “safety” measures will only serve as more evidence for lawsuit plaintiffs that Chelan county ignored fire science and common sense in letting this project go forward.

And what happens to Chelan county and its government if it faces such lawsuits and loses? It is hard to see any other result than the bankrupting of the county. It would result in a gigantic and unpayable tax on the entire county, paying for the mistakes of the people in its government who issued permits, knowing full well that they were setting the stage for disaster.

What happens to the rest of government services in Chelan county under such a scenario? They fall apart as settlement payments consume the lion's share of county revenues. It would mean economic disaster as well as human disaster. Would the Washington state government or the Federal government ride in to rescue the county from its self-inflicted folly? Highly unlikely given the budget problems they both face.

Even if, by some miracle, a fire disaster does not happen on Mission Ridge, just the costs borne by the rest of the county in paying for all the infrastructure required for this new city would be crippling. Who but Chelan county will pay for water, sewage, roads, and everything else required for this new city? It will require enormous public subsidies to make this new city happen, and the taxpayers of Chelan county will have to foot the bill.

It used to be that, in some cases, new development would increase the county's tax base, generate economic activity, and essentially pay for itself by doing so. But this will never be the case with this project. Whatever economic activity it generates will not come close to paying for the immense costs of putting an

entire new city into a place so far away from existing infrastructure.

We could go on and on.....the list of reasons why permissions for this project should be denied by Chelan county is almost endless. Not only will the direct environmental effects on Mission Ridge be widespread and severe. This project, if approved, presents a financial liability risk to the entirety of Chelan county that is simply unacceptable.

And it requires only a minimum of basic common sense to see that. The Alpine Lakes Protection Society urges Chelan county to step back from clear and obvious danger and deny permits for "Tamarack LLC/Mission Ridge Expansion."

Thank you,

Rick McGuire, for Alpine Lakes Protection Society