

Dear Mr. Mike Kaputa,

I have many concerns about the Mission Ridge Expansion MPR DEIS. I agree with the points raised by Conservation Northwest, at the end of this letter. One of my concerns is with the statement:

The Applicant has determined that the Proposed Project is necessary to provide diverse outdoor recreation opportunities sufficient to meet public demand, both locally and regionally.

As a resident of Wenatchee, and avid outdoor enthusiast, I can speak to local and regional outdoor recreation opportunities already in existence. I request that the Mission Ridge Expansion MPR DEIS specifically demonstrates how we are lacking sufficient outdoor recreation opportunities to meet public demand. They should also elaborate on other viable options, aside from a “no action” alternative. If anything, most weekends I struggle to figure out plans; not for lack of outdoor recreation opportunities, but because I am overwhelmed by the variety of options.

The proposed expansion project primarily caters to the elite by prioritizing luxury lodging, and exclusive amenities that cater to wealthier visitors and second-home owners. The focus is not on improving diverse outdoor recreation opportunities. Simply put, this expansion project does not improve outdoor recreation opportunities for the greater public but caters to the elite minority. These expansions often increase property values and resort prices, making access more difficult for local residents and average-income families.

By contrast, sustainable growth strategies that leverage existing community resources and transportation infrastructure promote inclusivity and broader access to winter recreation for the “public”. These strategies also support our local economy.

I advocate for sustainable transportation and improved utilization of existing resources as a preferable alternative to expanding ski resort infrastructure into sensitive natural areas. Ski resorts can accommodate growing visitor demand while minimizing environmental impact by investing in enhanced transit options and leveraging existing nearby community resources.

Below, I outlined counterpoints to the supposed need for resort expansion as a way to provide diverse outdoor recreation opportunities sufficient to meet public demand. I provided viable alternatives to resort expansion, as detailed below.

Purpose and Need:

The Applicant’s objective is to expand Mission Ridge as part of a MPR to enhance existing services and provide year-round outdoor recreation opportunities.

Current limitations that impede resort operations include:

- Insufficient on-site parking facilities to meet peak demand

I urge resort management and local governments to prioritize investments in shuttle services, public transit partnerships, carpool incentives, EV charging infrastructure, and road safety enhancements. These measures reduce traffic congestion, lower emissions, and create a more inclusive and resilient outdoor recreation experience. Promoting these alternatives obviates the need to expand parking.

- Undersized and crowded beginner skier terrain

Mission Ridge does not need to expand its beginner terrain because the existing beginner areas, coupled with other local and regional ski resorts, sufficiently meet current demand. The resort's terrain distribution, with about 10% beginner trails, aligns well with visitor needs, allowing it to maintain its character and minimize environmental disturbance. On average, most ski resorts dedicate approximately 10-20% of their terrain to beginner slopes, ensuring a balanced mix of terrain for all skill levels. This percentage allows resorts to cater to novices while maintaining challenging options for intermediate and advanced skiers. Mission Ridge's allocation of about 10% beginner terrain aligns with this industry standard, supporting the argument that its current beginner offerings sufficiently meet visitor demand without requiring expansion.

Nearby resorts with more extensive beginner terrain options provide alternatives for those seeking a wider variety of beginner slopes. Badger Mountain Ski Resort provides beginner and intermediate terrain with affordable access, serving the East Wenatchee community. Loup Loup Ski Area, located between Twisp and Okanogan, features groomed trails suitable for all skill levels, supported by a strong community foundation. In fact, Mission Ridge Premier Pass holders can receive 3 free passes at Loup Loup. Echo Valley Ski Resort offers a family-friendly ski area with beginner terrain, ski/snowboard instruction, and tubing facilities, making it a valuable alternative for novice skiers near Mission Ridge. The Ski Hill in Leavenworth provides beginner and intermediate terrain and a family-friendly magic carpet.

Stevens Pass and Snoqualmie Pass offer additional beginner terrain options for visitors near Mission Ridge. These resorts provide a range of beginner-friendly slopes and amenities, making them suitable alternatives for novice skiers. Stevens Pass, located about 70 miles west of Mission Ridge, features dedicated beginner areas and ski schools, while Snoqualmie Pass, closer to Seattle, offers extensive beginner terrain and convenient access.

These nearby ski areas complement Mission Ridge by offering diverse beginner terrain options without necessitating expansion of Mission Ridge itself. This network of resorts supports sustainable recreation by distributing visitor demand and preserving the natural environment.

- Lack of recreation options for non-skiers

Mission Ridge and the surrounding area already offers a variety of winter non-alpine skiing alternatives that enhance visitor experience and attract a broader audience. These include snowshoeing or backcountry skiing around Lake Clara and winter hiking or snowshoeing opportunities at Devils Spur. Squilchuck State Park provides additional winter recreation options such as snowshoeing, hiking, fat-tire biking, sledding, and wildlife viewing in a natural forest.

setting. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy a variety of groomed snowmobile trails around Beehive Mountain and Wheeler Reservoir.

The nearby Leavenworth Winter Sports Club offers a variety of venues for Nordic skiing, tubing, and fat tire biking, while the Plain Nordic Trails offer cross-country skiing options for all skill levels. Echo Ridge offers Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, and fat tire biking. Loup Loup Ski resort offers cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, and the Bear Mountain Luge. Blewett Pass has groomed snowmobile trails, snowshoeing, and more rugged Nordic skiing opportunities. Lake Wenatchee also affords snowmobiling, Nordic skiing, and snowshoeing.

These alternatives support inclusive outdoor recreation and complement the skiing experience without requiring resort expansion. The lower-costs of these activities cater to a wide public audience, compared to the prohibitive costs of staying at a ski resort or paying for an alpine day pass.

For non-skiing guests, the Wenatchee area offers additional recreation options including indoor pickleball and tennis courts, bowling alleys, public ice skating, pottery lessons, a rock climbing gym, yoga, and cultural attractions such as the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center and Performing Arts Center. These amenities provide diverse entertainment opportunities for visitors who prefer indoor activities or want a break from outdoor recreation.

For summer recreation, expanding ski resorts to include mountain biking can positively impact revenue by diversifying income streams and extending the operational season beyond winter months. Many ski resorts have successfully utilized existing lift infrastructure to offer lift-served mountain biking, scenic chairlift rides, and other summer activities such as disc golf. This expansion attracts a broader visitor base, creates year-round employment opportunities, and helps retain staff throughout the year. Additionally, summer activities can boost local economies by increasing tourism during traditionally slower months. However, careful planning is necessary to balance environmental impacts and ensure the sustainability of these operations.

- Lack of on-site overnight accommodations

On-site housing and lodging expansion are often proposed to support resort growth, but these are not always necessary or sustainable. Many resorts successfully serve visitors who stay in nearby towns, hotels, and vacation rentals, commuting daily via shuttle services, public transit, or personal vehicles. This model preserves the natural landscape, reduces construction impacts, and supports local economies.

Visitors to Mission Ridge can already commute easily within 30-45 minutes to the resort from Wenatchee via shuttle or car, enjoying both the ski experience and the town's cultural offerings. There are currently sufficient accommodations in Wenatchee and the surrounding area to meet the demand of out of town visitors. If, on the very rare occasion one cannot procure accommodations in Wenatchee, they can access outdoor recreation in the surrounding areas described above. I am not sure how a lack of on-site overnight accommodations "impedes resort operations". I would want to know more information about this argument.

As demonstrated, there are already a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities at Mission Ridge and the surrounding area to address the public need for outdoor recreation. If Mission Ridge needs to separately address its financial sustainability; there are alternatives to ski area expansion such as investing in enhanced transportation options such as shuttle services and public transit partnerships, promoting carpooling and ride-sharing programs, expanding summer and off-season recreational activities to diversify revenue, and recognizing and promoting existing outdoor recreation activities. These strategies can increase resort profitability while minimizing environmental impact and supporting community well-being.

Thank you for considering these sustainable alternatives that balance growth with environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Sincerely,

Erin Andrade

See below for further concerns I share with Conservation Northwest

I am writing to urge you to select the No Action Alternative for the proposed Mission Ridge development. The DEIS fails to adequately address impacts to wildlife, habitat, and public safety, and does not meet Chelan County's standards for responsible growth.

The area surrounding Mission Ridge provides critical habitat for mule deer, elk, and wide-ranging carnivores such as black bears and cougars, as well as for species of greatest conservation need, including northern goshawks, golden eagles, whitebark pine, and American pika. These mountain and shrub-steppe transition zones are particularly sensitive to disturbance, serving as essential corridors for seasonal migration and climate adaptation. Fragmenting these connected habitats would cause long-term harm to wildlife movement, watershed health, and overall ecosystem resilience.

These foothills and forested slopes are part of a larger ecological network linking the Cascade crest to the Columbia Basin. Protecting their continuity supports not only iconic wildlife but also the long-term resilience of forests and watersheds, which face increasing drought, heat, and fire risks under a changing climate.

The proposal also depends on exceptions to Chelan County codes, enabling expanded human development in a fire-prone, high-elevation landscape. Increased human activity would elevate wildfire risk, strain emergency response capacity, and degrade sensitive habitats that wildlife depend on for survival. These risks are precisely why county planning standards exist: to safeguard public safety and ecological integrity alike.

Conservation and community are not opposing goals. Upholding existing land use protections honors both people and place by ensuring that wildlife, clean water, and natural character remain part of what makes this region special. Thoughtful planning today ensures that future generations can continue to hunt, hike, ski, and find connection in landscapes that remain wild and whole.

Please select the No Action Alternative to protect the Mission Ridge landscape and the shared benefits it provides for wildlife and the community alike.

Additionally, **the issues that are most likely to result in a lawsuit against the County if ignored are:**

1. [Traffic on Squilchuck and Mission Ridge Roads](#): The project creates a *level of service* condition below the minimum accepted Chelan County standard, yet no mitigation is proposed.
2. [Secondary Access](#): The code is clear that secondary access is required, yet the developer presents inappropriate loopholes to avoid this safety requirement.
3. [WDFW Land Exchange](#): WDFW has stated that “...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.” , yet the project is proposed including this WDFW land.
4. [Master Planned Resort Overlay](#): The developer is depending on this land use strategy that allows dense urban style development outside the urban growth boundary. Without the MPR, this level of development would violate the Urban Growth Act and could not be allowed. Despite depending on this planning tool, the development violates the requirements of MPRs including: The development is not primarily a destination resort, is not self-contained, does not consist of short-term visitor accommodations, does not consider affordable employee housing, and does not preserve the rural character or natural resource it uses.