

Squaw-Alpine gondola enviro docs open for comment

Updated May 3:

Environmental documents have been released for the controversial gondola that would link Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts.

The draft environmental impact statement/draft environmental impact report was prepared by the U.S. Forest Service and Placer County in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, respectively.

Three action alternatives plus a no-action alternative are part of the analysis.

The project would include 37 towers in undeveloped area. What alarms many people is how close the site is to Granite Chief Wilderness Area, as well as the 5 Lakes trail.

“Our job now is to study this assessment to better answer the fundamental question: does the gondola make sense for North Tahoe or is it just another example of KSL and Alterra’s attempt to turn Squaw Valley into a Vegas-style amusement park?” Tom Mooers, executive director of Sierra Watch, said in a press release.

The document is available **online**. The 45-day comment period started April 27.

Casey Blann, senior vice president of mountain operations at Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows.

“The release of the DEIR/DEIS represents a significant step closer to realizing the decades old dream of connecting Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows. We support the comprehensive review

process and the hard work of the agencies involved. On behalf of over 6,800 Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows skiers and snowboarders who have signed petitions in support, we eagerly await the agencies' final decision for the California Express Gondola. This base-to-base connection will enhance the ski and snowboard experience with the least possible impact on the environment," said Casey Blann, senior vice president of mountain operations at Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows, said in a statement. "There has been tremendous support and anticipation for this connection, and we encourage our guests and community to remain engaged in the public review process as it moves forward."

The proposed base-to-base gondola project would connect Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley, include two mid-stations, multiple towers along the alignment, and eight Gazex avalanche mitigation exploders to be installed within the Alpine Meadows Ski Area boundary.

There will be two public meetings to gather comments. The first will be an open house on May 22 from 3-7pm at the USFS Truckee Ranger District office on Stockrest Springs Road, the second will be before the Placer County Planning Commission on May 24 at 10am at the North Tahoe Events Center in Kings Beach.