

Michael Draper

From: alice abbott <alice.v.abbott@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 11:23 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Mono Lake (Tioga Inn Project)

Categories: Tioga Inn

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1870 Jackson Street, #502
San Francisco CA 94109
August 9, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper, Community Development Dept.
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Mono Lake (Tioga Inn Project)

Dear Mr. Draper:

I and my family are dismayed and bewildered to learn that the Mono County Planning Division and the Board of Supervisors would approve the Tioga Inn Project. Of course, the consensus must be the anticipation of an increase in revenue, but would that really occur? The very attractive and welcoming lodges and charming restaurants that contribute to the legend of Lee Vining, over the years, will inevitably disappear, to be replaced by a "Lake Tahoe South Shore"-type complex, totally changing the complexion of a favored spot in the Eastern Sierra.

Million year old Mono Lake and the environs is so unique and pristine, unlike any other area in California - the Nation, for that matter. Mono Lake was at the center of one of the hardest-fought environmental wars of the century, of which I was involved, when we lived in Bishop for 6 years. It is now protected as both the "Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area" and the "Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve". Do you think that we are going to allow this threat to occur, considering the Lake's standing?

I have attended several Mono Lake Committee seminar field trips over the years, marveling over the overwhelming bird population, which would be deeply affected by this scheme, including the flora and fauna.

To drive down from the Tioga Pass today and look upon that breathtaking view of Mono Lake is very special, unmarked and unblemished by the impact of a 2-story, 120 unit hotel, 8 houses, and additional structures. The atmosphere engendered by this unfortunate proposal would change that part of the Mono Lake area forever. Please reconsider your decision! Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alice Abbott

Michael Draper

From: R A <randyxabbott@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 9:12 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Expansion of development plan by Tioga Innns by

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I write today to raise my objections to the impacts generated by the further expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

My concerns are centered on the unmitigated impacts to certain assets enjoyed by the public which are put at risk by the size and design and indirect impacts of the project.

Viewshed.

The relatively unimpaired landscape between hwy 395 and the wilderness at the Sierra Crest is something worth preserving, and at much cost, never sacrificing. It may be possible at great expense to disguise the structure using very creative architecture but it will be necessary that the County require such steps.

Night sky darkness must also be preserved, and although customers of the proposed project need only see the ground upon which they walk, I can think of no commercial venture that has restricted lighting to the lowest 1 foot of surface, although homeowners do this all the time with pathway lighting.

A good bad example of what commercial lighting can do to a wild corridor is the View Lodge in El Portal. Locals there opt for almost no exterior lighting, in respect to and for the great aesthetic advantage of living without a 'light dome', but a mile up the road at the View, this experience is denied the public.

Once again, a demand for such ground level lighting will only be realized if the County strictly requires it of the project.

Impacts to Hwy 120 and Yosemite

The number of increased beds translates closely to the number of cars entering Yosemite on a daily basis. While recreational opportunities abound outside of Yosemite, it would be disingenuous to claim that almost all of the travelers staying at the Tioga Inn (hence 'Tioga?'), would not be headed into the Park. After all, Eastside businesses are united in their cry for access to the Park via the spring road opening, and for years have claimed that without such access they are economically unviable, help!, etc.

What are my objections to access to cherished public lands? Not the access, but the impacts. Impacts to the resources being managed, impacts to public safety, and impacts to the visitor experience.

Currently traffic backs up over a mile at the Tioga pass entrance during summer. This poses a thread to the access of emergency vehicles, but more so when 200 more vehicles a day are joined.

Once inside the Park, facilities on the Tioga corridor are pushed to their limit as it is, with every roadside location parked on, and no public transportation option that viably allows the car to stay st the hotel in place.

The fact of the matter is that a project of this size is impacting government infrastructure without paying its fair share. A larger vision for public access I. The Park is necessary and should be funded by a TOT tax. The County should not be allowed to impact the Park out of proportion to investment. If this is not true, then calls to the NPS, crying for spring access should stop immediately.

Luckily creative solutions abound if the County could partner with the Park in looking out for the resource and creating a less that private vehicle centric access system.

Scope of Project

Lastly I question the legality of ad hoc expansion of the project description without a complete consideration of the newly proposed project as a whole. The purpose of the environmental review process is to capture as accurately as possible conditions at the time of the proposal.

It is not wrong to note that conditions have changed since the original project was proposed and vetted.

I believe the popularity of the Tioga corridor has increased. Along with impacts, and that the original proposal might face some additional criticisms if put forward today as a new project proposal.

I encourage the County to use this perspective to leverage greater sensitivity and visitor usage options from the developer and to set a standard for the future.

As long as the population increases, impacts will multiply, and it is only in the power of the County to both keep the changes out of the courts, and in keeping with the aesthetic experience of living in the area, that binds us all.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns,
Randy Abbott
Toulumne Meadows/El Portal.

Mono County Community Development Department

RE: Subsequent Environmental Impact Report--Expansion of the Tioga Inn

Thank You for providing an opportunity to comment on this major new development in Mono County. Our county is renowned for its commitment to, and economic vitality derived from, its natural, wild or scenic resources. In particular, the Mono Basin is of a rare and unique natural resource valued and revered by many from all over the world. As a landowner on the north shore of the Basin (Cottonwood Canyon Road), I am one who values the qualities that attracted me to the Basin when I purchased property in 1988.

I was startled to discover that what once was a modest enhancement of a good local business has morphed into a major housing development. In some respects this is a positive—an addition to our relatively limited housing stock. From the evaluation documents however, it is clear that this “good” is being accomplished through a project that 1) is inadequately vetted; 2) is poorly sited; 3) will create significant and permanent impacts; 4) has not identified any or adequate mitigation; and, 5) emerges from a poor planning process that has not fully considered alternatives or locations that might be better suited to achieving project purposes such as providing work housing. My specific concerns are highlighted below and the specific action I request you take is to suspend this project proposal until a public planning process is held to assess a range of community and business alternatives that might address project goals with lesser and insignificant impacts

- The project’s visual impacts are significant, and the proponent has not considered sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village.
- The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.
- This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Hwy 395.
- The previously approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the proponent seeks to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will affect highway travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day. All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, at once—not in pieces.

Long ago, the County of Mono made a difficult decision to enhance its scenic value by banning all existing or new billboards—a farsighted action that has reaped a reward for all who live in or have visited the county for over 50 years. Approval of this project would be of offsetting negative significance surely to be regretted by the many locals and visitors who prize dark skies and undisturbed vistas. Rather than a hasty decision, Mono County can make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place. **The current draft project impact statement does not include a process to develop alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts and result in a good project going forward.**

In conclusion, Mono Lake, the Gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed.

Thank you for considering my concerns with the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Grace Anderson

Cottonwood Canyon Road

1923 Normuk St.

Meyers, CA 96150

RECEIVED

APR 19 2019

Mono County CDD

4-12-19

Dear Mr Draper

I am writing you concerning the Troza Inn project.

I am against it mainly because of the water that will be taken from the water table. I and 3 other families live on Indian allotment land off of Horse Meadow Road - about a mile from the site. All 4 families are on one well. A few years ago we had to have the well dug deeper. It is now at 400 feet and we were told we cannot go down any further at the present well site.

I'm also concerned about the actual building site. Many Native Americans lived, died, and were buried in that area. In the 1930's my grandparents built a house across the street from the site. My grandfather worked for So. CA Edison and was told by the big boss that he and his family could live there as long as they wanted. My older sister lived there until just a couple of years ago when she was virtually forced out. There were many "cry dances" and other ceremonies took place on that land over the years.

When Edison started giving my sister a hard time about the land I figured that Dennis Donnelly wanted it as a possible parking lot for expansion of his business.

If there is any building approved for the area around Mobil Mart. Or where my family lived I would want an Indian Monitor on the site. The members of the Mono Lake Paiute Tribe feel as I do.

Thank you,

William J. Draper

Po Box 233

Lee Vining CA 93541

760-647-6471

Michael Draper

From: paul / dobie meadows landscaping <paul@dobiemeadows.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 5:37 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn - public comment

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Hello,

My name is Paul Ashby. I live in Orinda, CA.

I've been visiting Mono County three or four times a year since 2014. Whenever I get the opportunity for time off work, I drive the 6 hours to Lee Vining from the Bay area. I've named my local landscaping business after a dirt road on the east side of Mono Lake. I spend a considerable amount of time and money in and around and between Lee Vining and Benton. I intend to keep doing so.

I don't hunt, or fish. I rarely camp. I usually stay in local motels. I like to ramble in my truck on the USFS and BLM roads. I take photos of the landscapes and print them and give them to my friends. I drive out to remote places to be alone, and listen to the wind in the trees, and especially enjoy bird-watching and other wildlife, far away from concrete and steel and asphalt. I look around and see nothing but dormant volcanos, pumice, sagebrush and water. It's primeval, yet immediate. There's a palpable sense of natural history butting up against the present.

It's to the point that I'm just... well, visiting my house in Orinda the majority of the time — but when I arrive in Mono, it's as if it's where I belong. It seems like home. I've found no other place in or outside the USA that speaks to my heart, mind and soul the way Mono Basin and Mono County do. There is something both tangible and intangible there that keeps drawing me back. Perhaps it's the intangible that I find irresistible.

This letter, however, addresses certain tangible aspects that could be part of Lee Vining and Mono Basin's future.

I've been following the various permutations of the Tioga Inn project since 2016. After reading the SEIR, I have some comments.

The Tioga Inn complex described in past documents and the current SEIR remain far out of proportion with the literal and figurative "carrying capacity" of the area, as well as out of place in the general landscape, especially in the context of Mono Basin's fragile ecosystems.

I need to express my concerns -- on several levels. I know that some of the aspect of the plan I include below may have already been approved, to some degree, by Mono County, but I feel it's important they again be addressed in the overall context of the new amendments.

* AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

- Visual impacts:

Currently, the terminal moraines at the bottom of Lee Vining canyon do a good job of concealing Tioga Gas Mart from 395. From the maps provided, and overlays I've seen, it seems obvious the majority of the proposed structures *would* be visible from 395, 120, South Tufa Reserve, and other highly-visited areas in and around the Basin and Lee Vining -- presenting a startling man-made alteration to the familiar, unscarred natural landscape. The impact on the scenic appeal of the area would be immeasurable.

I found the portion of the SEIR stating "screening becomes effective within three to seven years after construction is completed" (when addressing plantings that would, eventually, hopefully) partially conceal the structures) to be particularly disturbing. So visitors and residents will have to endure three to seven years of visual blight while certain greenery may or may not grow high enough to shield the buildings? In an area where there are few trees or shrubs (other than sagebrush) presently?

I find it particularly perverse that taller trees will be planted so that people staying at Tioga Inn won't be bothered with having the view the US Pumice facilities near the airport, while the rest of us will have to wait three to seven years to not see Tioga Inn from a significant portion of the Basin.

- Night Skies:

There is no way Tioga Inn can exist without significant installations of electric lights on the buildings and in the parking lots. The direct and reflected light from these installations will significantly brighten the dark skies in Mono Basin, a haven for stargazing and night photography. Even with alterations -- as described in the SEIR, which attempt to comply with Dark Sky Regulations -- the effects will still be considerable.

And it must be noted that this issue isn't solely aesthetic. Many birds — a significant number of them species-of-concern — use Mono Lake as a resting point on the Pacific Flyway. Any increase in artificial lighting can and will affect feeding, breeding, and migration patterns.

* COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to decreased visitation over the winter months, existing retail and hospitality outlets in Lee Vining either shut down or are greatly scaled back during the period when westbound highway 120 is closed. How would a 120-room hotel and 100-seat restaurant sustain itself during the off-season?

During (yet not limited to) the season when west 120 *is* open, I see this development severely affecting existing restaurant and motel businesses in Lee Vining. These are run by Mono County citizens — most of whom live in the Basin year-round — who've spent years building their reputations and clientele, and make available hospitality outlets that fit in with Lee Vining's history and culture. Competing against a resort complex of this scale would be difficult, if not impossible.

If those businesses shut down, it would give visitors (and locals) less of a choice of where to stay and where to eat. This "Walmart effect" does nothing to enhance the character or the livability of the area. It enhances only the bank account of the developer — at the expense of the local citizenry as well as that of visitors from around the country and around the world. The latter are the economic lifeblood of the community and, to a great degree, Mono County -- people who appreciate the Basin's unique beauty and charm, and return year after year to spend their time and money there. The economic impact would be extreme, and detrimental to the Lee Vining community, and beyond

Currently, lodging in this area of Mono County is spread out among Mammoth, June Lake, Lee Vining and Bridgeport. The Tioga Inn Project would concentrate large numbers of people within a relatively small, environmentally sensitive space.

The population of Lee Vining was listed as 220 in the 2010 census, and has been trending downward since the 1990 census. Considering 75% occupancy in the proposed hotel during the height of the tourist season, with an average of two or three visitors per room, we'd be looking at between 180 and 270 visitors at any one time. Add to that the proposed 100 employees, and we've suddenly more than doubled the population of Lee Vining for the duration of the tourist season.

This is where my comment about carrying capacity comes into play. How can such a large influx of transient population not impact the Mono Basin and immediate area around Lee Vining?

* ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Which brings us to the most important factors -- which go far beyond the aesthetic and commercial/competitive effects. The threat of any environmental impact on vital watershed in such close proximity to Mono Lake should be distressing.

- I've already mentioned the issue of widespread artificial lighting on night skies and its impact on bird populations.

- A huge septic tank is proposed, along with the utilization of an existing "designated leach field" a short distance from Lee Vining Creek -- in an area where the ground consists mostly of porous volcanic tuff, located slightly over a mile above a treasured, spring- and creek-fed terminal lake. Have there been any geologic and hydrologic surveys with this in mind? What will the contingency plans be if the water treatment system — presumably designed to treat waste from up to 400 visitors and employees -- fails, or if an outflow pipe ruptures, or if a moderate-to-major earthquake hits this seismically-active area?

- Very little in the plan mentions wildlife corridors, or mitigation of the effect of increased vehicle traffic and foot traffic on and around said corridors.

- There is also the matter of increased vehicle exhaust confined within in a natural basin, especially when the exhaust emanates from an area directly upwind of prevailing air currents that deposit particulate matter into and around Mono Lake.

* SUMMATION

The plans for the Tioga Inn project have seen many permutations over the years. Initial proposal, amendments, Draft EIR, Subsequent EIR... even when one makes the effort to comb through the myriad documentation made available since 1993, it's difficult to piece together what the owners of the land specifically propose, in whole.

This piecemeal approach seems designed to be burdensome to those who love and appreciate the unique, scenic nature of Mono Lake and its environs, and want to know all the potential impacts of Tioga Inn. Mono County should request the developers formally present their complete plan for the site at least one more time -- in a single package. Only then can the public fairly and fully evaluate the overall impact of the project.

The area where the complex is proposed is the Eastern gateway to Yosemite. Such a site deserves better than Tioga Inn - as it is presented in the DEIR and SEIR — a complex which is far better suited to Mammoth, where outsized development of this sort has become the norm. Perhaps, back in 1993, this establishment might have seemed like something worth pondering. In the current business and environmental climate, however, a development of the scale and configuration described isn't something I can support.

So much progress has been made in restoring Mono Lake and its watershed, and so much remains to be done. The Tioga Inn, as proposed, however, is a potentially destructive project that does not fit in with Mono Basin's landscape or ecosystems, nor its history, or commercial or residential culture.

I hope you will consider these factors in your decision.

Sincerely,

Paul Ashby
Orinda, CA
415 516-5929

Cara Audenried - Owner
Joey and Cecily Audenried - Managers
Mono Cone LLC, Murphey's Motel LLC, and Mono Cup Coffee LLC
P.O. Box 57
Lee Vining, CA 93541
August 19th, 2019

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
PO BOX 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

We are writing to you in regards to the proposed amendments to the Tioga Inn Project. As residents of Lee Vining and also the current owner and property managers of Murphey's Motel LLC, Mono Cone LLC, and Mono Cup Coffee LLC, we have numerous concerns regarding this proposed project.

Lee Vining is an amazing community, known for its small town charm and distinct natural community. At our property we meet numerous people daily from all over the world that come to enjoy the wonder of our area. Majority of our guests come to enjoy Mono Lake, Yosemite National Park, and the many other natural wonders of our community. Our guests come to enjoy the simplicity of our area and love the natural aspect of what they are able to see.

The Tioga Inn Project would drastically change our current town and environment for all new and repeat visitors. One of the most shocking changes would be the visual aspects of this new property. Its location is right at the entrance to a National Park known for its natural beauty. With the proposed project it would now exhibit large buildings, added light pollution, and traffic congestion. Yosemite is already overwhelmed by the amount of visitors and traffic and has yet been able to resolve this challenge. Building this property would only add to this current concern. Also, there is a single entrance/exit anticipated for this project as well. This would create chaos for those staying there and traveling through. Having only one entrance/exit is a safety concern in the event of an emergency. Adding more routes though, would disrupt the environment further.

Another important element of our business is photographers. Yearly, we have numerous photography groups that come to document the area. Many visit Yosemite, but Mono Lake is an extremely important photography point. As of today, the South Tufa location at Mono Lake does not have any light pollution affecting its views. If this project was completed, imagine the amount of light pollution that would take away from this scenic viewpoint, known worldwide. Light pollution from the hotel and housing would be seen, but also the increased traffic of car light pollution. Would this directly affect possible tourists in the future? It is very likely.

Lee Vining is known for its small town charm. With small town charm comes limited parking, smaller businesses, volunteer fire departments, and smaller schools. If this project were to go through, the increase in population would be devastating to our community. Our fire department is not equipped to accommodate that increase of population (with the new proposed housing-or even the hotel). Our schools would become overcrowded and there could be a shortage of teachers for the amount of students. Our town would become overrun. Currently, parking and accessibility in town is very limited. Imagine what will happen with an influx of people from this new project.

These are merely a few concerns we have for our community and future visitors. We sincerely ask you to consider all the concerns from our community regarding this project. We feel it will cause more damage to our natural and charming community than benefit us.

Sincerely,

Cara Audenried, Joey Audenried, and Cecily Audenried

Michael Draper

From: Alan Bade <alanb1491187@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 3:03 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Wendy Gollop
Subject: Tioga Inn DSEIR comments

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Dear Mono County Planning Dept;

I would like to comment on the proposed project;Tioga Inn's DSEIR. I feel compelled to do so after learning about this project while visiting Lee Vining, Mono Lake, and Lundy Canyon. I have been visiting this area all my life, as my parents have, and actually also their parents in the early 1900s! We frequent the small family businesses in the area and look forward to returning every year, and sometimes many times per year.

The cumulative scale of the project is enormous. It seems like the project has gone through a cumulative growth from the original 1993 project with it's various amendments, and now has a cumulative impact that should not be approved in this piecemeal fashion! This is how impacts arise that cannot be mitigated or adequately addressed to make a good project. There are such effects in this last amendment for the Worker Housing Village that should not be allowed to move forward in this manner.

These include;

1. Significant visual impacts, as the project will disrupt the natural views from South Tufa, Panum Crater, and along highway 395. The natural vistas of this area are a significant attractive element of why people come visit! I highly value the uninterrupted natural views that can be seen Mono basin wide!
2. I feel that the lighting of this cumulative project will really disturb the Dark Sky quality of the basin. I come to the area to bird watch, botanize, and observe the dark sky as an aspiring amateur astronomer! At the very least, the lighting should be downward facing, and not be blue-rich white light. It should be under 3000k, warmer light, as these warmer wavelengths have a much less impact on birds. Birds see with 4 color sensors rather than our three, and see deeper into the blue wavelengths. The spectral output should minimize blue emission (CCT<3000K). Fixtures should be fully shielded, aim straight down, and use adaptive controls, such as occupancy sensors and dimmers. However, the total number of even downwardly facing lights will have a cumulative glow effect that will significantly impact the night sky!
3. I also feel that the lighting and reflective glass will be disruptive to year round and migratory birds. This must be mitigated. Bird-friendly glass should be used in the entire project! This is easy to require and cost effective, if done at the outset. Acid etched glass, UV grids, Frit and films can be used to reduce the probability of bird impacts. The rule of thumb is to have no more than a 2" x 4" space of clear glass, with at least 1/8" etched or UV printed lines. It is not something that impacts the look through the glass architecturally; they are well designed products. If the project moves forward, bird friendly glass must be included as a requirement!
4. I understand that this is a migratory deer corridor or area. The impacts on this must be mitigated or avoided.

When a document is approved as in 1993, the scope of that project is addressed by the planning dept *supposedly* in its' entirety. By going through this piecemeal additive process with the amendments, the TRUE scope of the project is NOT being addressed! Therefore, I feel that special measures are called for to address the cumulative impacts of the whole project in the approval of THIS amendment.

The Final SEIR must include project alternatives that reduce the visual/aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level. As written, the plan has identified, adverse impacts that are not mitigated or addressed, which is not a good plan for Mono County. Mono County will be damaging the very resource that is serving as the economic engine for both the project, and the County as a whole.

I'm really worried that this kind of planning will serve as a precedent for development in the future. The Planning Dept and the project applicant should realize that the very resource that draws visitors is at stake here, especially if additional projects add to this one, planned in this piecemeal fashion.

I urge Mono County to ask the project developer to come up with better solutions than presented in this DSEIR.

Best regards, Alan Bade and Wendy Gollop
280 Longfellow Drive
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Michael Draper

From: eleanorbade@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 3:02 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Letter in regard to future development of land at Hwy 395 & Hwy #120 Intersection

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

My family, for five generations now, has experienced that wonderful view of the eastern side of our beloved Sierras from this important intersection. I still remember the narrow one-way road, with pull-outs, which led to Tioga Pass and Tuolumne Meadows when I was a child. My father drove it, and I drove the more modern road, which my children and grandchildren have driven. The whole experience for our family has been with what the Sierras, Lee Vining, Mono Lake, and the wonderful roads at this intersection have been, through these generations. Just as the experience we have had when we visited Bodi, our family understands and cherishes the 'History of this Place' and how it fits into our grandparents, parents, children's and grandchildren's lives.

I believe that the new proposed development of this area can be rethought so that these experiences for future generations will not be lost. If you do this, more tourists will come to see your land and will take care of it. I hope you and your businesses and economic interests will reconsider these plans, so that they will continue to include the wild and wonderful views of the mountains and Mono Lake that are now possible, but which will be lost if you continue with the plans you have proposed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor J. Bade

33 Linda Avenue #2111

Oakland, CA 94611

Michael Draper

From: Lloyd Baggs <llog@lrbaggs.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 4:44 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Mono Lake Committee
Subject: Proposed Tioga Lodge

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Dear Michael,

I recently learned of the proposed Tioga Lodge adjacent to the Mobil in Lee Vining. While I wholeheartedly support the idea of having good workforce housing in Lee Vining I'm aghast at the way it all looks and by the proposed execution.

I'm a photographer represented by the Mono Lake Committee and a regular Mono Lake Calendar contributor. I have cherished and enjoyed the relatively unspoiled wondrous scenic beauty and peaceful solitude of the Mono Lake Basin for decades. The idea of structures the size of a semiconductor plant looming over this wilderness resource is horrific and, if the current plan goes forward, will simply ruin the character and charm of the basin. While the Tioga Lodge as proposed is not quite as bad as allowing a 7/11 to go in at South Tufa or Olmsted Point it's not as far from it as one may think.

It is the government's duty to protect our environment and preserve our natural scenic wonders. Many rank Mono Lake alongside of Yosemite, The Grand Canyon, and many other equally amazing gifts that nature has given to us all. I also believe that this proposed Tioga Lodge will be such an eyesore that it will eventually decrease tourism and with it valuable tourist dollars to the business in the region.

There just has to be some creative way to reconfigure or move the Tioga Lodge somewhere that will not be a looming eyesore over the lake or, for that matter, even be visible from it. I believe that moving forward with it as proposed would be a disaster and ruin the rustic charm of the lake forever.

Please require the developers to back to the drawing board and do a better job of protecting this precious natural resource for current and future generations.

Sincerely,
Lloyd Baggs

Sent from my iPad

Michael Draper

From: Robert Bakewell <rcbakewell@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 11:07 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: IRENE KUHN
Subject: Proposed expansion housing and hotel - Rte 120/395

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good evening Mr. Draper,

The current design and location for the proposed workforce housing and hotel project strike me as aesthetically and functionally horrifying.

I have accompanied family and friends to the wonderful East Side and Mono Basin since the late 1970s.

The stunning qualities of this place that draw visitors from far and wide would be significantly diminished if this goes thru.

The airstrip expansion scarring the west side flank of Mono Lake was certainly bad enough.

I pray that common sense will prevail, alternatives found and wise choices made.

Sincerely,

Robert Bakewell
863 Arguello Blvd.
San Francisco CA
94118
415-710-9617

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Draper

From: Jessi Barber <jessica.lynn.barber@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 3:37 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Comments on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR. Thank you for your work on this EIR. I began spending time in the Mono Basin as a summer worker in college, and now as a full-time Bay Area resident, I visit regularly and the area holds a special place in my heart. It is a unique community of people and important habitat that has faced many threats over the years. This project is another such threat, and its proposed implementation threatens to destroy what so many community members and scientists have worked so hard to protect.

The proposed Tioga Inn development is completely out of character with the current development of the Mono Basin and Lee Vining area, and would result in many unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the SEIR.

As explicitly laid out in the SEIR, there are unavoidable negative impacts with any of the projects that involve that much housing including on deer migration, traffic, visual impact, and safety. Reasons cited against the Reduced Development Alternative and the No Project Alternatives are that they do not meet the project objectives of providing "sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses (page 3-5)." The biggest problem with this entire project is that objective, which justifies the scale of the housing project based on a non-existent (though approved) hotel and a theoretical "workforce" need. There is no guarantee that this hotel will ever be built (it has been approved for decades and not been built), and there is no current need for housing for its non-existent employees. (for 30-60 people).

I strongly urge for the project as proposed in the SEIR be rejected (i.e. "not recommended or selected"), along with the Clustered and Apartment Design Alternatives, because as the SEIR clearly states, these three alternatives include significant negative impacts that cannot be fully mitigated. These proposals would forever change the character, nature, and quality of life in the Mono Basin and Lee Vining through the following impacts identified by the SEIR:

- Significant visual impacts. Any approved project should reduce aesthetic and visual impacts to an insignificant level. Visual impacts should also be considered along with the impacts of the approved hotel and gas station, and not piecemeal (the visual impact will not be piecemeal)
- Significant, cumulative impacts on deer migration. Any mitigation for this would be contingent on outside agencies and not the developers; as such, the mitigation is unenforceable and not guaranteed, which is unacceptable.
- Impacts on public safety and traffic. Mitigation of these factors likewise depends on uncertain funding and approval from outside agencies, and is likewise unenforceable and not guaranteed.

As someone who cares deeply about the community and environment of the Mono Basin, I strongly urge the following changes:

- Reject (i.e. “do not recommend or select”) the current project proposal, the Clustered Development Alternative, and the Apartment Development Alternatives because they have too many negative impacts that cannot be mitigated.
- Modify the stated project goals to strike reference to “sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel...” Re-word the project goal to be to provide a reasonable amount of general rental housing as needed for the Mono Basin/Lee Vining community.
- Take the disingenuous word “workforce” out of the project title. Replace with “Rental Housing.”
- Re-consider the Reduced Development Alternative (at a 50% reduction in housing level) considering the project as a simple rental housing development for current real housing needs, and not as housing for the theoretical future hotel.
- Consider a Reduced Development Alternative 2 in which the amount of housing is reduced by 80% to 20 units.
- Consider a Phased Development Alternative in which 15 units are allowed to be built immediately, but the remainder of housing development is contingent on actual workforce need at the site.
- Justify in the Final SEIR why the development proposal was increased from 80 to 100 units; if there is no reasonable justification, please drop the proposal back to 80.

The amount of housing requested is completely out of sync with the character of the local community. This proposal, as currently defined, would without a doubt forever change the character of the Mono Basin, through visual impacts, increased traffic, and negative impacts on deer, as well as the more than quadrupling of population of the town of Lee Vining (the SEIR states that 89 people currently live in Lee Vining). The Mono Basin and Mono County deserve an honest and straight-forward proposal that does not try to justify an inappropriately scaled, destructive rental housing development with an imaginary “workforce” at a hypothetical hotel.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jessica L. Barber
1619 Hopkins St. #204
Berkeley, CA 94707

Michael Draper

From: sallybarn@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 8:33 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: massive 100-unit project on Tioga Pass Road

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Whom it May Concern:

As a property owner in Lee Vining, I am appalled at the out-sized project proposed for the expansion of the Tioga Inn/Mobile Station on the Tioga Pass Road. Not only will a project of that size destroy the scenic quality and beauty of our area but it will threaten the life of the town of Lee Vining itself -- shops, restaurants, souvenir shops, gas stations, etc., and severely impact the public schools, community center and other public resources that our town enjoys. I suspect that, in the end, the taxpayers of Lee Vining will pay for the excessive greed of the property owner who appears not to be responding to community needs, but to seeking to line his/her own pocket at the expense of others.

Please reject the plan in the size and magnitude as proposed.

Sally Barngrove

Michael Draper

From: Matthew Barry <matthewbbarry@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 12, 2019 8:36 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Save Mono Lake

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Michael Draper

I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,

Matthew

--

Matthew Barry

Portland, OR

717-460-2543

www.matthewbbarry.com

Michael Draper

From: Gloria Bassler <glorbassler@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 12:25 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Proposed additional mono lake development

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am disappointed to learn about the Mono County approved hotel and restaurant at Mobile site. And now the developers want to add more

The eastern Sierra's are special and Mono Lake is awesome. Nothing should be done that spoils the natural beauty — visual impact or natural habitat

I am against the entire project but at least listen to the will of the people You can work with the Friends of Mono Lake. They are willing to help you avoid damage to the area

Gloria Bassler

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Draper

From: Mare Bear <megascops.2014@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:56 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: SEIR - Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Michael Draper, Community Development Department, PO Box 347, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546 via email mdraper@mono.ca.gov

cc: arya@monolake.org

Re: Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. As a frequent visitor to Mono Lake, Yosemite, and the Eastern Sierra and a recent longtime California resident, it is dismaying to learn Lee Vining may turn itself into the equivalent of a “little Los Angeles” with a development that more than doubles its permanent population.

Respectfully, this is a request to update the proposed project to successfully mitigate the six significant and unavoidable adverse impacts listed in the SEIR:

1. Hydrology - Risk of Seiche, Tsunami, Mudflow
2. Biological Resources - Interfere with Fish or Wildlife Movement or Migration
3. Utilities, Energy, & Public Services - Impacts on police, fire, schools, other services
4. Traffic and Circulation - Compliance with Plans& Ordinances
5. Traffic and Circulation - Impacts associated with IntersectionHazards

6. Aesthetics, Light & glare - Impact Scenic Resources, Visual Character, and Creates New Sources of Light and Glare

https://www.monocounty.ca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning_division/page/29999/1_tioga_workforce_housing_draft_subsequent_eir_full_doc.pdf
(page 324)

Of these six issues, in particular, the project is visually a disturbance: it can be seen from ***everywhere*** during the day and at night. This just destroys the unique beauty of the desert location of the 700,000 year old Mono Lake.

- Please change the project so it is not visible from any of the main view points in the basin, including South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.
- This project is lit up at night. Please change the project so no light is added to the night sky in Mono basin. This makes Mono Lake basin just like any other place in the developed world: lit at night, noisy, crowded, too much traffic, polluted.

To accommodate added traffic propane capacity is doubled, and a third gas pump island with 4 added fuel pumps and one added underground gas storage tank are added.

- Instead of more gasoline, please add a few electric vehicle charging stations to accommodate electric cars.
- Please use solar and geothermal energy sources instead of carbon-dioxide polluting gas and oil wherever possible.
- Please make the buildings highest level LEED certified quality – for the lowest possible carbon footprint

This project would more than double the potential population (posted as 222 on wikipedia.org), adding pets, trash, noise, traffic, chemicals and other detritus.

- Please scale back the number of people this project will accommodate, so as not to dwarf a small desert town in what is a still mostly pristine 760,000-year-old ecologically irreplaceable resource, Mono Lake with its iconic tufa and habitat for migrating wildlife, primarily birds.

In part of the project, non-native grasses and fertilizer are identified as being something to be used.

- Please change the project to use all native plants to the eco-region. Fertilizer, which is a pollutant, won't be needed, and plants will be less work to maintain. Non-native plants provide little or no food for wildlife, are costly to maintain, and can become invasive.

Is it a good idea to do any added development in this arid, dusty area in the first place?

- Where does the water come from for this project? Given climate change, the prediction for this area is less water, not more:

Ficklin, Darren & Stewart, Iris & Maurer, Edwin. (2012). Effects of Projected Climate Change on the Hydrology in the Mono Lake Basin, California. Climatic Change. 116. 10.1007/s10584-012-0566-6.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257548026_Effects_of_Projected_Climate_Change_on_the_Hydrology_in_the_Mono_Lake_Basin_California

- Finally, the area already has dust storms from time to time which spread small (10 microns or less) particles of dust including heavy metals and other materials naturally present in the soil that are easily diffused in the lower respiratory tract. This development plans on using water that the area will not have. Increased dust storms would be likely. That's very unhealthy to breathe.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3071514/#R13>

Sincerely,

Mary Keitelman
140 Lenore Drive
Hinsdale, MA 01235

6. Aesthetics, Light & glare - Impact Scenic Resources, Visual Character, and Creates New Sources of Light and Glare

https://www.monocounty.ca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning_division/page/29999/1_tioga_workforce_housing_draft_subsequent_eir_full_doc.pdf
(page 324)

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To accommodate added traffic propane capacity is doubled, and a third gas pump island with 4 added fuel pumps and one added underground gas storage tank are added.

- Instead of more gasoline, please add a few electric vehicle charging stations to accommodate electric cars.
- Please use solar and geothermal energy sources instead of carbon-dioxide polluting gas and oil wherever possible.
- Please make the buildings highest level LEED certified quality – for the lowest possible carbon footprint

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- Please scale back the number of people this project will accommodate, so as not to dwarf a small desert town in what is a still mostly pristine 760,000-year-old ecologically irreplaceable resource, Mono Lake with its iconic tufa and habitat for migrating wildlife, primarily birds.

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- Please change the project to use all native plants to the eco-region. Fertilizer, which is a pollutant, won't be needed, and plants will be less work to maintain. Non-native plants provide little or no food for wildlife, are costly to maintain, and can become invasive.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257548026_Effects_of_Projected_Climate_Change_on_the_Hydrology_in_the_Mono_Lake_Basin_California

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3071514/#R13>

Sincerely,

Mary Keitelman
140 Lenore Drive
Hinsdale, MA 01235

Michael Draper

From: Sharon Boies <sbmuzicmts@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 12:23 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Fwd: Expansion of Mobil in Lee Vining

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Mr. Draper ,
Just in case you were curious
smgsmb@verizon.net is my email too,
I was going to try to fax this to you from there
So I sent it there first
Sharon Boies

Will you please let me know you received my letter with this email?
Thank you very much,
I hope you have a great weekend

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Sharon Boies" <sbmuzicmts@gmail.com>
Date: Aug 9, 2019 3:02 PM
Subject: Expansion of Mobil in Lee Vining
To: <smgsmb@verizon.net>
Cc:

Hello Mr. Draper,
My name is Sharon Boies , I live on the east coast in Columbia , Maryland.
When I heard about the potential project to expand the existing Mobil Gas station in Lee Vining, Ca, my heart sunk and I thank you very much for the opportunity to express my views and concerns in this letter.

My husband and I have been coming to Lee Vining for many, many years now , usually for several weeks to a month at a time.
We stay in Lee Vining as our base for backpacking trips in the park and day trips in the area.

Lee Vining to me is coming in from the North East, stopping at the overlook and taking in that huge view of the Mono Lake Basin.

We always make reservations at Murpheys Lodge, we get Mono Burgers for lunch. In the evening we stroll by the people on the porch and sitting out front in the lovely gardens of the Lah-Dee-Dah Cafe and hotel as we make our way to Nicelys looking forward to the nightly special.

We usually go to the Mono Market for dessert and any refills on backpacking supplies we need.

I have so many souvenirs from the gift shops including at the Mobil Gas station .

We have also re supplied at the hardware store in town.

We buy awesome sandwiches, chips and drinks from the Whoa Nellie Deli for our day trips , we refill our gas there at

the Mobil too.

Walking back to Murpheys at night through town , looking up at the dark, non light polluted sky at all the stars is an incredible sight to see and one that is quickly disappearing from our night skies around this country at quite a clip. Dark night skies are so important to a lot of species.

Listening to the sprinklers water the beautiful street trees reminds me of the precious commodity water is out there. This is Lee Vining to me and I would venture to guess many others too.

The point I'm making is there are so many small businesses in town, I haven't named them all including other hotels and restaurants that have been there a long time and have endured alot to stay in business , the weather , the fire and the unpredictable , ever changing seasons.

I recognize the town does fill up, we make reservations before we come out. To those who arrive with no where to stay, I feel for them but there are so many existing year round hotels in June Lake and Mammoth and there's always camping.

If they've ever been to any town outside of a national park entrance before , seeing No Vacancy is to be expected .

Then there is the drive into the park. I've had the opportunity to see alot of this country and the West but holy smokes, I kid you not, the Tioga Road from the second you turn onto it is drop dead, jaw dropping , one of a kind spectacular ! You're so lucky to live there.

When you are at the top of the canyon looking down from a couple of the overlooks, you can see down to the lake basin and out to the NV line including the Mono cones and craters and the volcano, it just builds and builds and it takes my breath away each time.

I can't imagine that view ever changing .

When we are losing protections for iconic landscapes more now than ever, every one we still have becomes that much more special and it's so important that it remain unmarred.

To think that future generations would not have the chance or privilege to get to see Lee Vining and the canyon area the way it is now is almost a crime to me.

A landscape marred is a landscape gone forever , it will never be the same or returned to its natural state, as it is now, ever again.

That's alot to consider.

I worry for all the existing businesses that are there now and have been as I know the winter months can be a struggle. Bodie Mikes closes down each winter, Murpheys doesn't have all their rooms open just to name a few because when you get down to it, Lee Vining is a seasonal town.

To make such huge permanent , potentially devastating changes to the scenic beauty, the quaint atmosphere of the town, the non light polluted night sky, the financial stability of existing businesses and their employees, the environment , the existing herds of animals that use that area for their migration routes and always have and for the unpredictable water source that will be required , not to mention the industrial pollution from the project and the permanent run off that would be created from the expanded footprint. Does it seem worth it?

I haven't even started on the impact of the public services around there , like the fire department for example.

One of the most fun things we've done in Lee Vining was to see a band at the Mobil Gas Station. It's nothing against the Mobil itself but I am against any plans for expansion .

Please , please keep Lee Vining sacred and special for all future generations to see it as we see it now.

You can always kick the can of development down the road.

We've lost alot and learned alot in the past 26 years but you can't take that can back once you've approved the project.

Please consider all the permanent consequences for a part time business. I hope you will at least give that can a big kick, way down the road.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and considering my thoughts and concerns.

Very most sincerely yours,
Sharon Boies

Michael Draper

From: Laurel Boyers <laurel.yose@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 7:59 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Mobil Development

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr Draper—I am writing to express my sincere concern about the proposed development of the “Tioga Inn”. As a life-long resident of Yosemite National Park, I have watched with ongoing dismay as commercial interests have developed or sought to develop land around the park and other scenic wonders purely for profit. While they may say they are serving the public, these actions are self-fulfilling and consumptive, and only damage the very resource they tout. As more and more development occurs, the negatives increase exponentially—people beget more people, traffic pollutes both the senses and environment, natural balances become distorted or damaged irreparably. I am writing this to adamantly object to this development.

I would also point out that the park is on the cusp of day use limits. As a resident and career employee for the National Park Service, I am privileged to insider planning information, and while these limits may not occur under the present administration, they will come soon, probably before this project is even completed. It is very conceivable that this project will become a white elephant for the Forest, Scenic Basin and Park, an eyesore that cannot pay it’s bills yet has scarred the landscape, the “people-scape” and the stunning resource we as a nation cherish. Intact protected areas are for the good of all, not just developers, and while this is “outside the boundaries”, it is clearly inside the area. I’m guessing they probably will end up being unhappy broke developers dumping a big mess on you.....

Please consider the future, not just the present.

Sincerely,

Laurel and Darell Boyers
PO Box 55
Yosemite, CA 95389

Michael Draper

From: George Bracksieck <gbrack@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:41 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Mono Lake Committee
Subject: Planned expansion of Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper:

The proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn would be an eyesore. It would be visible, day and night, from around the basin and the surrounding mountains. And the “workforce” that it is proposed to house should be the responsibility of Mammoth Lakes or whatever jurisdiction that employs them. The Mono Lake basin is uniquely attractive, partly because of its undeveloped nature.

Sincerely,
George Bracksieck

Michael Draper

From: V Brothers <vabros1011@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 7:43 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Comments Re: Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper and the Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn. I have been coming to Mono Lake, the Mono Basin, and Yosemite National Park at least 3 times a year since I moved to California in 1975. I choose to stay in Lee Vining rather than in Mammoth Lakes because I value the small town that has changed so little in the last 44 years and because of the beauty of Mono Lake, the Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra.

The proposed multi-unit, two-story, 100-unit/150-bedroom Workforce Housing Village will, if approved as is, profoundly change the experience of the natural beauty of Mono Lake, the Mono Basin and the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park. As currently proposed, the project will be very visible from the South Tufa Reserve, Panum Crater and Highway 395 South of Lee Vining. The project should not be visible from any of these places. Some type of screening should be required in the Final SEIR to reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts of the proposed project.

On my latest visit to the Mono Basin and Yosemite National Park, I went to a dark skies star program at the South Tufa Reserve on the night of July 29, 2019. It is an incredible experience to view the night skies from the South Tufa area. The proposed project will have significant deleterious impacts on the Mono Basin dark skies. The proposal should be amended to protect the Mono Basin dark skies.

I urge Mono County to balance the needs of the project with the unique, irreplaceable beauty of this special place. The committee should ask for plan alternatives with options to eliminate the projects unavoidable adverse impacts. Mono Lake, the gateway to Yosemite National Park, the town of Lee Vining, scenic Mono County, and the countless visitors who come to appreciate beautiful Mono Lake and the Mono Basin deserve a better project design than the current project.

Virginia Brothers
[988 Peralta Avenue](#)
[Albany, CA 94706](#)
Vabros1011@gmail.com

Sent from my iPad

Kevin C. Brown
P.O. Box 52
Lee Vining, CA 93541
kevin.brown723@gmail.com

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
mdraper@mono.ca.gov

August 19, 2019

VIA EMAIL (no hardcopy)

Dear Mr. Draper and the Community Development Department,

I write to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment and Subsequent Environmental Impact Report. I am a resident of Lee Vining, and though I am relatively new to the Mono Basin, I am concerned about the permanent impacts of the Tioga Inn development project as described in these documents.

As prepared, the project has several permanent impacts that are not adequately mitigated, and feasible alternatives are not considered. First, the project would have severe visual impacts on the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. As described, the project should be rejected. Additional alternatives that make visual mitigation a central component and are otherwise environmentally superior, such as modified versions of the “reduced development alternative” should be considered. Lee Vining is a gateway to Yosemite National Park and is itself an incredible scenic region—it deserves a project that respects scenic values.

Second, private projects, though their aim is the accumulation of capital, must still serve the public good in basic ways. This project, however, would put substantial burdens on the public infrastructure of Mono County without making clear contributions. Emergency services in Mono County are partly provided by volunteers and rely on public equipment that are scaled for a small community. The Tioga Inn will add substantial burdens on the Lee Vining Fire Department’s dedicated volunteers, and the design of the development may require additional/alternative emergency response equipment. Section 5.7 of the “workforce housing” SEIR discusses emergency response, but its “environmental impacts and mitigating policies and actions” fail to consider in any meaningful way the capacity of first responders to handle the inevitable emergencies (small and large) resulting from this large development.

Third, the large “housing” component of this plan will not meet the real housing needs of the Mono Basin. It was disturbing to hear that the July meeting on this plan included a variety of different justifications for this housing—but little about enforceable regulations for affordability or current community housing needs. As written, I am concerned that Mono County public officials would be doing residents a disservice by approving such a large block of housing that is isolated from Lee Vining and fails to serve current public needs.

Ultimately, the Tioga Inn development, as described, does not meet the main criteria of Mono County’s General Plan. As excerpted on the planning division’s website, “The environmental and economic integrity of Mono County shall be maintained and enhanced through orderly growth, minimizing land use conflicts, supporting local tourist and agricultural based economies, and protecting the scenic,

recreational, cultural, and natural resources of the area.” Currently, the Tioga Inn project does not meet this vision—especially with respect to scenic values, public goods, or current housing needs.

Thank you for recording and considering these comments on the Tioga Inn project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. C. Brown", is written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Kevin C. Brown

Michael Draper

From: Katy Buell <ktbuell@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 1:43 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Specific Plan and SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Kinda looks like this is slam dunk as the Supervisors have supported this project since its inception in 1993. Reading over the 1993 Specific Plan, it just seems like overkill to me. That many new rooms will put a lot of pressure on the existing motels in Lee Vining. I hope that whatever is built up there is low profile and very low light (light pollution mitigation is difficult when the light source is above the recipient). Assuming that the developer will work with caltrans to improve the traffic flow at the intersection of 395 and 120 to accommodate the increased turning traffic. Also assuming that the developer has acquired sufficient water rights to run a large hotel. Also, the County needs to draw some lines around "workforce housing" to prevent them from transforming into expensive second homes.

Katy Buell
email: ktbuell@hotmail.com
PO Box 500
Coleville, CA 96107
(530)495-1642

Michael Draper

From: Chad Buelow <cbuelow@pegasuscre.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 5:40 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn - Adverse Impacts // Significant Concerns

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Draper,

I am writing to express my extremely deep concerns with the above referenced project.

While I live in Los Angeles, I recreate in the Mono Basin on a monthly basis – and multiple times a year during certain times of the year, such as summer and fall. I was extremely disturbed to learn of the extent of the proposed development at the site of the Mobil Mart in Lee Vining. The Mono Basin is not only unique in California – it is one of the most special places on the planet. I am writing to ask that you and your colleagues do everything in your power to protect and preserve this amazing resource.

There are several reason I visit the Mono Basin, but the solitude, the views and the dark skies are very high on the list. Just this past Saturday, despite a nearly full moon, I chose to camp in Upper Horse Meadow (a short distance southwest of the site in question) because I was confident that I would be able to enjoy at least some of the annual Perseid meteor showers. And I was not disappointed. I was treated to a spectacular Mono Basin evening – after the stars appeared, the Milky Way soon followed and then, as the moon rose and illuminated the entire Mono Basin, we watched the Milky Way cede the night to the rising moon as shooting stars peppered the sky. It was absolutely magical. Based on what I have read about the project, I would no longer be able to enjoy this experience if it is developed as proposed. And that would truly be a shame. I implore you to ensure that any development at the site cause the absolute minimum amount of light pollution – and ideally none at all.

I also have significant concerns regarding the effect of the proposed development on the Mono Basin view shed. The views along Hwy 395 and from numerous vantage points throughout the Mono Basin (e.g., the South Tufa, Panum Crater, Mono Craters, etc.) will be adversely affected by the proposed development. The County should be as concerned about this as anyone because, let's be honest, Mono Lake is an attraction that is looked at (and not touched or entered) by the vast majority of visitors to the region. It should be in everyone's interest to preserve the existing viewshed as much as possible, and I strongly encourage you to do so.

I realize that the proposed project will bring significant economic benefits to the region. While this is undoubtedly important, it is imperative that you not allow the achievement of those benefits to destroy the very thing that makes Mono Lake and the Mono Basin one of the most special places on Earth.

Please do the right thing and limit the scope of this project.

Sincerely,

Chad W. Buelow
Venice, California
(310) 740-1439

Michael Draper

From: Dick Bunce <dbunce2946@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 4:28 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org; action@monolake.org
Subject: RE SEIR for Proposed Expansion of the Toga Inn Project and the Specific Plan Amendment Number 3

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

TO: Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

We write as annual visitors to Lee Vining since 1974, when we first discovered this remarkable landscape and town. We visit during all seasons. Just last month we came as 3 generations, 10 family members, for 3 days and overnights [at Murphey's Motel] in Lee Vining, to introduce our grandchildren to the beauty and values of this unspoiled and unique area. We have been members of the Mono Lake Committee since it was established in the 1970s and appreciate the extraordinary leadership they provide in securing what is most important – and irreplaceable – about this area.

The SEIR Project Documents do not provide alternatives for the *permanent negative impacts* of the project.

- Clearly the Tioga Inn developer is proposing a 3-story hotel structure that will **dominate the landscape** from every approach on 395, and every vista point in the Mono Lake Basin. This is so **out-of-character with the scenic values** of the area that so many have sought for so long to preserve. More than that **it is an assault on the natural beauty** that draws us and the thousands of visitors to the area. Today all over the world overnight accommodations are being designed in exceptional environments that understate their presence, that merge unobtrusively with their natural context, that seek by their presence to fit in – not stand out. This project is all wrong for this site and we all have to insist on protecting the extraordinary character of this area. It is a world-class setting and landscape and once scarred by the kind of out-of-scale, massive and domineering construction that is proposed – it can never be recovered.
- The proposed project's visual and aesthetic impacts are unacceptable. The Final SEIR must present an alternative that is respectful of the scenic and aesthetic character of the Mono Basin. Rather than a design and siting that trumpets its presence [for marketing purposes no doubt], an alternative is needed instead that conveys a sense of ethical respect for the natural forces alive in this environment.
- Further, this project should not be visible from the southern 395 approach or from South Tufa.

- We are also deeply disturbed with the proposed permanent impact on the darkness of the night sky and the visibility of the project's lights across the entire Mono Basin. This is a further assault on the character of the area which the project's owners seem by their proposal to disrespect. We could find no architectural drawings in the proposal that would reveal the true visual impacts – a further defect that should not be continued in a Final SEIR.
- We could also find no material on proposed signage – which we urge Mono County to strictly regulate and limit, to avoid an additional blemish on the scenic character.
- The Mono Lake Basin is an extraordinary jewel, Lee Vining is a wild, rustic and majestic gateway to Yosemite National Park. It's next stage of overnight accommodation and workforce housing development deserves an environmentally sensitive and aesthetically respectful design, not this oversized, overly domineering proposal. The developer's finite economic gain seems to be driven by an unapologetic disregard for the unique, timeless and enduring character of Mono County and the Mono Lake Basin.

Please exercise your wisdom and protect the values that have won for Mono County a place in so many hearts.

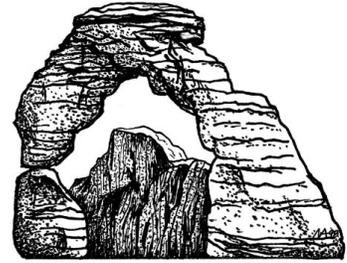
Thank you for considering our concerns.

Respectfully,

Richard and Deane Bunce
2946 Magnolia Street
Berkeley, A 94705
dbunce2946@sbcglobal.net
deanehiking@gmail.com

Californians for Western Wilderness

A project of Resource Renewal Institute



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e-mail:
info@caluwild.org

August 21, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Comments by Californians for Western Wilderness on the Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn

Dear Mr. Draper:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 950 members and supporters of Californians for Western Wilderness (CalUWild), a citizens organization dedicated to encouraging and facilitating participation in legislative and administrative actions affecting wilderness and other public lands in the West. Our members use and enjoy the public lands in California and all over the West.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft SEIR for the proposed Tioga Inn.

I have been a visitor to Mono Lake and the Mono Basin for over 60 years, since I was a child of age 2. I have observed many changes in the Basin over those years, and have been involved in efforts to educate people about the area and to preserve it. I am the translator of the Mono Lake Committee's road tour guidebook into German, published in 1997. I undertook that project as a private individual. Our organization, CalUWild, has been a long-time member of the Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership. I am also a serious photographer and have spent many days in the Mono Basin. I use my photos of the Basin for both personal and conservation purposes.

Many of CalUWild's members also spend time in the Eastern Sierra and the Mono Basin, and I know from their comments that it is a very special place to them.

We have serious reservations about this proposal and urge the county not to approve it.

This newest proposal is a major expansion of the proposal made in 1993 and a major expansion of the projects that were built following that approval. We question the need for a development of this scale.

Our objections are based on the adverse environmental impacts listed in the project documentation that are considered significant and unavoidable. From CalUWild's standpoint, the most significant are those that affect the natural environment, specifically the impacts on the scenic resources, the creation of light and glare, and impacts to wildlife. This is not to discount negative impacts to the town of Lee Vining, such as traffic and safety.

Visitors from all over the world come to Mono Lake to experience its unique geology and dramatic scenery against the granite wall of the Eastern Sierra. The area's scenic importance is reflected in the fact that the Mono Basin is a "National Scenic Area." As proposed now, the development will be visible from far and wide across the Basin. This goes for both visitors to Mono Lake, particularly the South Tufa Area, and people traveling along U.S. 395 from the south. The project should not be visible from South Tufa or from 395.

Glare from windows will only add to the prominence of the development. This will have extremely negative consequences for visitors and their enjoyment. It is unacceptable.

There is an increasing recognition of the value of dark skies at night. Having more development of this type will negatively impact the ability of visitors to see the stars at night.

Finally, wildlife movement needs to be protected, especially cumulative impacts to deer.

From an adequacy standpoint, the Final SEIR needs to include alternatives that reduce these impacts to a much less significant level. It is disappointing that the Draft does not already consider mitigation that would reduce the project's visibility. This intersection is the "Gateway to Yosemite," after all, and should reflect an accompanying respect for the natural environment. This proposal fails on that count. The construction of the Mobil Station was already an intrusion, even with its relative unobtrusiveness. This proposal is very much more significant (and worse).

Again, we urge you to reject it.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please inform us of your decision in this matter and please also inform us of further opportunities to be involved in your public decision-making processes.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Painter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael J. Painter
Coordinator

Michael Draper

From: Tom Camara <tcamara@sonic.net>
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 9:39 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: No to proposed housing village near Lee Vining and Mono Lake

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July 26, 2019

Dear Mr. Draper:

I have been visiting the Mono Basin (and East Side) for over 30 years and am strongly opposed to the proposed "development" (housing for workforce, hotel, restaurant, additional gas pumps, etc) near the intersection of Routes 395 and 120. This project would interfere with wildlife, impact the scenic value of the area, increase traffic, degrade the environment, to name a few of the negative impacts this project would have. The Mono Basin does not need this development - it would represent a significant disincentive for people to visit the area. Please do NOT allow this project.

Thank you

Tom Camara

8/16/2019

Dear Mono County Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR. Thank you for your work on this EIR. Please note that I am making these comments from the perspective of my background: I was raised full-time in Lee Vining, my entire immediate family currently lives in the Mono Basin, and I work in the Mono Basin seasonally, though I currently live in Soquel, California. The proposed Tioga Inn development is completely out of character with the current development of the Mono Basin and Lee Vining area, and would result in many unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the SEIR.

The SEIR considers a “Reduced Development Alternative,” which would reduce the housing development from 100 to 50 units, and states it is the “Environmentally Superior Alternative.” The SEIR also rejects a “No Project” alternative, which is also identified as environmentally superior. A modified Reduced Development Alternative (with a greater than 50% reduction in the proposed housing development) should be considered and recommended in the SEIR, and the project as proposed should be rejected, along with rejection of any alternatives that include 100 units of housing, including the Cluster Design Alternative and the Apartment Design Alternative. As explicitly laid out in the SEIR, there are unavoidable negative impacts with any of the projects that involve that much housing—including on deer migration, traffic, visual impact, and safety.

Reasons cited against the Reduced Development Alternative and the No Project Alternatives are that they do not meet the project objectives of providing “sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses (page 3-5).” The biggest problem with this entire project is that objective, which justifies the scale of the housing project based on a non-existent (though approved) hotel and a theoretical “workforce” need. There is no guarantee that this hotel will ever be built (it has been approved for decades and not been built), and there is no current need for housing for its non-existent employees. Thus, we are stuck evaluating whether the housing project meets the needs of the hotel, which may or may not ever exist—we may end up with a 100 unit housing development for 300 people, more than doubling the size of Lee Vining, and no hotel for them to work at.

If this project were evaluated for what it is, a simple housing development for the sake of rental housing, the Reduced Development Alternative would be a perfect solution for providing housing on a scale that is actually currently needed in Lee Vining (in my view, housing for 30-60 people). I recognize the difficulty perhaps in changing the proposed goals and taking the hotel out of the equation, though I strongly urge you to do so—but a simple solution is

project phasing. Please consider a Phased Project Alternative, where a small amount of housing (I propose 15 units) can be approved for current construction but the remainder of the “workforce” housing is contingent on there actually being an increased workforce when the hotel is built.

Please also change the title of the project to take out the word “workforce.” This title is misleading for the reasons I just explained—this housing is not contingent on a real workforce need and is really just a general rental housing development project. It is not going to be affordable housing (as stated by County officials at the public meeting in Lee Vining in July), and any regulations that residents must be working in Mono County are unenforceable. In the very title of the proposed project, the developer (and by extension, the county) is egregiously misleading the public of Mono County by using the word “workforce.” This is just rental housing, and any employed person can be housed in it, regardless of whether they are “workforce” for the Tioga Inn or not. This was made abundantly clear at the July public meeting in Lee Vining, with both the county and developer flip-flopping between justifying the project based on the hotel workforce and saying it is needed to provide general housing for areas as far away as Mammoth Mountain.

Because this proposal is not “workforce” housing, and because it is not contingent in any way on the construction of the hotel, I recommend you modify and re-evaluate the Reduced Development Alternative as defined in SEIR (a 50% decrease in units). I also urge you to consider another alternative which I’ll call “Reduced Development Alternative 2”, which would be a reduction in housing units of 80%, from 100 units to 20 units. Based on the calculations in the SEIR (100 units housing 300 people), 20 units would provide housing for about 60 people, which is much more fitting with the nature of the Mono Basin and would reduce negative impacts to non-significant levels, and would provide the amount of housing actually needed in the area, at a reasonable pace of development. As stated in the SEIR, the Department of Finance projects that the populations of Lee Vining and Mono City will increase by 52 and 41 people, respectively by 2040.

The current SEIR considers a 50% reduction in housing units for the Reduced Development Alternative. In my original comments on the draft EIR I recommended a 50% reduction from the 80 units proposed then (I proposed 40 units). In the SEIR, the number of units has been inexplicably increased from 80 to 100 with no justification I could locate in the SEIR document. At the public meeting in July, county officials and the people who wrote the SEIR were also unable to explain the justification for the 20 unit increase in units from the draft to current version of the EIR. Please include a justification in the next draft of the SEIR for why 100 units are needed instead of 80.

If it is impossible to consider this project in separation from the approved hotel plan, please consider another alternative that I'll call "Phased Development Alternative." This alternative would allow a small amount of housing development (15 units) to be built immediately, with the remainder of the housing being contingent on actual workforce need at the Tioga Inn site (i.e., the hotel is being built and more housing is needed for real-life employees, not imaginary ones).

My final recommendation is that the project as proposed in the SEIR be rejected (i.e. "not recommended or selected"), along with the Clustered and Apartment Design Alternatives, because as the SEIR clearly states, these three alternatives include significant negative impacts that cannot be fully mitigated. These proposals would forever change the character, nature, and quality of life in the Mono Basin and Lee Vining through the following impacts identified by the SEIR:

- Significant visual impacts. Any approved project should reduce aesthetic and visual impacts to an insignificant level. Visual impacts should also be considered along with the impacts of the approved hotel and gas station, and not piecemeal (the visual impact will not be piecemeal)
- Significant, cumulative impacts on deer migration. Any mitigation for this would be contingent on outside agencies and not the developers; as such, the mitigation is unenforceable and not guaranteed, which is unacceptable.
- Impacts on public safety and traffic. Mitigation of these factors likewise depends on uncertain funding and approval from outside agencies, and is likewise unenforceable and not guaranteed.

To summarize, I recommend the following to be included in the Final SEIR:

- Reject (i.e. "do not recommend or select") the current project proposal, the Clustered Development Alternative, and the Apartment Development Alternatives because they have too many negative impacts that cannot be mitigated.
- Modify the stated project goals to strike reference to "sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel..." Re-word the project goal to be to provide a reasonable amount of general rental housing as needed for the Mono Basin/Lee Vining community.
- Take the disingenuous word "workforce" out of the project title. Replace with "Rental Housing."
- Re-consider the Reduced Development Alternative (at a 50% reduction in housing level) considering the project as a simple rental housing development for current real housing needs, and not as housing for the theoretical future hotel.

- Consider a Reduced Development Alternative 2 in which the amount of housing is reduced by 80% to 20 units.
- Consider a Phased Development Alternative in which 15 units are allowed to be built immediately, but the remainder of housing development is contingent on actual workforce need at the site.
- Justify in the Final SEIR why the development proposal was increased from 80 to 100 units; if there is no reasonable justification, please drop the proposal back to 80.

To conclude, the circular reasoning of this proposal is bizarre, with the housing development being justified by a hypothetical hotel that has been approved for decades and not yet been built. The amount of housing requested is also completely out of sync with the character of the local community. Can you imagine a proposal that in one fell swoop doubled the size of June Lake, Mammoth Lakes, or any other town to be met warmly by the local community? This proposal, as currently defined, would without a doubt forever change the character of the Mono Basin, through visual impacts, increased traffic, and negative impacts on deer, as well as the more than quadrupling of population of the town of Lee Vining (the SEIR states that 89 people currently live in Lee Vining). The Mono Basin and Mono County deserve an honest and straight-forward proposal that does not try to justify an inappropriately scaled, destructive rental housing development with an imaginary “workforce” at a hypothetical hotel.

Thank you,

Ryan Carle

2621 N. Rodeo Gulch Rd., Soquel CA 95073

760-709-1179

Ryan.david.carle@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: David Carle <carle@qnet.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 3, 2019 10:17 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Bob Gardner
Subject: Tioga Inn Specific Plan comments

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

These are my comments on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan. We deliberately choose to live in one of the California counties with a very small population (we have been here 37 years, since 1982) and in the Mono Lake Basin, for the quality-of-life benefits of a small, rural community in a beautiful setting. It is a lifestyle that contrasts with most of the state where urban sprawl and crowding is the norm (I grew up in Orange County and watched in dismay as it transformed into one of the nation's most densely populated counties during my childhood). The concerns I have for this "small" development project in Lee Vining -- to build a hotel and restaurant, but with so many housing units hitching a ride onto that goal -- are the impacts of potential doubling of the current town population.

It is disingenuous to call the 150 bedrooms in up to 100 apartment units, "workforce housing," without truly connecting that number of units to the seasonal workforce needs of the on-site hotel and restaurant project. Rather, this may become urban sprawl development at its worst, illogically justified by concerns about too little low income housing *in the region*, without placing new housing close to jobs in distant towns.

One sentence in the specific plan draft suggests that housing will be constructed in tandem with the staff needs of the hotel and restaurant, but no language clearly **mandates** that key connection. Please amend the document to ensure that the hotel/restaurant complex (a very uncertain project since the current landowner does not himself want to build it) becomes actual reality **before** housing goes in. And that the construction of housing occurs in phases, with future adaptive management options to address impacts as they become apparent before each phase proceeds. Please ensure that the character of our small community does not drastically change, bringing *year-around* crowding, school, fire service, and traffic impacts for reasons that have little to do with the ostensible project itself: to operate a hotel and restaurant. And **clearly require** that this housing not be taken over by absentee owners renting to temporary residents. And ensure that the housing truly fulfills a need for *low-income* housing.

Thanks very much.

David Carle
370 Peeler Lake Dr.
PO Box 39, Lee Vining, CA 93541

760 709-1181
carle@qnet.com

Michael Draper

From: Anna Christensen <anna_christensen@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 2:07 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Draft SEIR comments

Categories: Tioga Inn

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8/20/19

Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the SEIR that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment #3. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my comments.

I am writing to express my sincerest concerns regarding the **six significant unavoidable adverse impacts** listed in the Draft SEIR. I have been connected to Lee Vining for the past 21 years and am employed by a Lee Vining based company, despite working remotely. I come to the Eastern Sierra many times per year and bring my husband and daughter to Mono Lake for several weeks each summer. There are many things we value that would be threatened if this project continues as outlined in the report.

We value the scenic beauty of Lee Vining. This statement is true during the day and at night. The light pollution from this project will destroy our enjoyment of the night sky in a permanent manner. The visual impact of this workforce housing development will wipe out scenic vistas that this region is known for. New buildings as well as their reflective windows will disrupt views around the entire region. The previously-approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the proponent seeks to expand the project and create even greater new visual impacts that can be seen from both the highway and from South Tufa. All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, at once—not in pieces. I strongly urge you to require further mitigation to address these issues if the project is to move forward.

We value wildlife and wildness. This area is known for scenic beauty and the creatures that live here. The adverse impact to migrating deer is a safety hazard waiting to happen. Vehicle impacts to deer are already a scary reality of the region, but the disruption this project will create to deer and wildlife will certainly be frightening. At minimum, there must be immediate and enforceable mitigation to provide a modicum of safety.

We value the character of Lee Vining. We strongly rely on the small businesses that provide lodging and food service in the area. These businesses keep Lee Vining running 365 days per year. I have utilized the expertise of the Lee Vining Fire Department in the past and I know that their services are stretched thin to support the current population. Adding a sizable influx of workers in the proposed housing and additional tourists in the hotel will stretch these resources beyond their current capacity. The same should be said for the schools in Lee Vining. Moving forward with this project will dramatically alter the town of Lee Vining in a way that will render it unrecognizable. Please consider the negative impact this project will have on the many services Lee Vining relies upon and the community itself.

This is the gateway to Yosemite National Park, one of the most treasured places in the United States. Please consider a special review of this project. We can do better.

Sincerely,

Anna Christensen
8 Cypress Drive
Vermillion, SD 57069
Anna_Christensen@yahoo.com



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Michael Draper

From: Alison E L Colwell <AELCOLWELL@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 4:58 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Public comment on proposed expansion of development of Mobil Mart, Lee Vining

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I live and work on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada, in Mariposa County, and have been coming every year (usually multiple times) to Mono Lake since 2003. I visit the Mono Lake Committee, and use the community park, the hotels, the coffee shop, the gas stations, grocery store, and restaurants in town, and I also enjoy an occasional meal at the Mobil Mart. Lee Vining is a place I recommend all of my California visitors to go to, specifically for the natural beauty of the lake in its austere basin setting. An integral part of the Mono Lake experience is that the Lee Vining community is both vibrant and unobtrusively set in the landscape: it is a community that is built on a human, communal scale, and not on a massive developer scale. This human scale of community may soon be threatened all over the east side of the Sierra Nevada, as the urban money-people see a potential to create demand on the massive scale they prefer to operate on. That Lee Vining has managed to expand its size and services modestly with as little visual impact as it has done, is a testament to the care and thought that the whole community puts into their planning. They have done an excellent job so far.

My sensitivity to the problem of ruinous development is this: I fled decades ago from the front range of Colorado, a region where, like the Mono Basin, every sagebrush scrub ridge, knoll and slope exposes each human insult perpetrated on it to every passing pair of eyes *in perpetuity*. I fled from there because there was little or no restraint imposed on any development plan and the result of the willy nilly gold-rush style development was that, within the space of 20 years, gridlock, extinction of vista and terrible air quality prevailed, with more of the same clearly on the way each year. The sagebrush steppe does not hide human impacts at all, it does not take much abuse to make it resemble urban blight. I specifically avoid other areas of the eastern Sierra Nevada (Lake Tahoe and Reno areas specifically) because they have been overbuilt and now embody the "concrete and traffic-light jungle" that I visit the eastern Sierra Nevada specifically to escape *from*. The entire eastern Sierra Nevada could easily tumble into the urbanization pit that destroyed the Front Range of Colorado in the 1990's. That gorgeous piece of the earth is now a single, sprawling megalopolis from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins.

I have looked through the plans from 1993 and for 2019 for the Mobil Mart development, and I would like you to know that I disapprove of the "mission creep" proposal of the 2019 amendments. I think better alternatives are easily had:

1) Whereas I applaud the inclusion of worker housing as a major component of any commercial enterprise (and I note with particular approval that the worker housing has largely been implemented BEFORE the hotel and restaurant), I do not believe the workers should be housed on the relatively isolated Mobil Mart site. I think it would be better for the health and happiness of the workers and better for the vibrancy of the Lee Vining community for all worker housing to be built within the town of Lee Vining, where they can park their

cars and walk to services, which they would then have an opportunity to use more and thus those services would thrive. Placing the workers in the isolated site on the Mobil compound would unnecessarily worsen the car traffic at that already congested site, and increase traffic between town and the Mobil Mart. The added housing would also be visible throughout the basin. I think it would be a critical improvement to move the worker housing to town, building it more densely (townhouse units?) and provide a shuttle to move workers (and customers!) to and from town and the Mobil site.

2) Whereas I applaud the high quality of food at Mobil Mart and the unobtrusive way they have built up the site until now, I believe the entire project is at the threshold of moving from a human scale service operation to a developer-scale "attraction" operation. I disapprove of that change is going to do the flavor of the area. What I mean is that the current services serve an existing need, but a larger hotel and the ancillary proposed development are intended to serve a clientele that will be intentionally attracted to the site by the operation, creating a larger demand and putting pressure on the local environment that it cannot sustainably bear. If more hotel beds are needed in Lee Vining (I think they are not, as its only hard to get a hotel room on a few summer weekends, and most of the year the hotels are empty or closed), then I think the hotel beds should also be built at a less obtrusive site in town, and built at as small a scale as feasible. I realize that a two-story 100-bed hotel was already approved in 1993 and thus cannot be stopped, but it should remain at two stories and be designed as small and unobtrusive as possible.

3) I disapprove of the placement of buildings on the prominent bluff where they can be seen. This permanently will damage the scenic quality of the basin and does not deserve consideration. The hotel rooms can be hidden and then a pathway and viewing area constructed for patrons to get to the top of the bluff for access in their wheelchairs or strollers. If worker housing were to be located in town, then possibly a less obtrusive site than the bluff can be chosen for the hotel, if its construction is indeed a done deal. Perhaps the existing worker housing on site could eventually be converted to hotel units to increase capacity if all the workers were by then housed in town.

I would suggest that, if Lee Vining can arrange it, to do a land-swap so that any further development on the Mobil site is only of things that MUST be put there, and anything that would work as well or better in town would be placed in town. Perhaps the original planned restaurant and the smaller hotel already approved would be deemed as a MUST as they are predicated on the special view available at the Mobil site, but all other infrastructure would be better done in town.

I appreciate your consideration of my opinion! I do love the Mono Basin and I think the Mobil Mart owners have done a good job over the years with their previous designs. I hope they can come up with a better plan that does not convert the site into a "corporate same-ole same ole".

Regards,
Alison Colwell
P.O. Box 167 Midpines, CA 95845

Michael Draper

From: Craig Cornell <craig.c.cornell@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 1, 2019 1:34 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Craig Cornell

2727 Concord Avenue

Davis, California 95618

August 1, 2019

Michael Draper, Community Development Department

PO Box 347, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

email: mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Dear Mr. Draper

I just became aware of the The Tioga Inn project planned for Lee Vining. Although I am not a resident of Mono County, I have a deep connection to the land and the people who live there. My wife and I were married at the Mono County Courthouse. I have had the pleasure of visiting Mono County on a regular basis for almost forty years.

I am writing to express my concern that excessive development in Lee Vining could damage the beauty and wildness that residents and visitors come to experience. The natural beauty and wildness of Lake Tahoe and Yosemite Valley have

been degraded by traffic congestion, development, overpopulation, and environmental pollution. These problems have irreversibly changed the environment that attracted people into one that is now unattractive to many. Residents of Big Sur recently erected a banner saying "Overtourism is Killing Big Sur".

You risk forever losing things that are becoming nearly impossible to find today. There are fewer and fewer places in the United States that have the dark skies and nearly pristine vistas that I have experienced near Lee Vining. I have looked east from the western edge of Mono Lake and experienced dark skies filled with stars. I can't imagine that those vistas won't be degraded by light streaming from hotel windows, lights in parking lots, and along the streets. The 395, 120 intersection is already congested and it is already dangerous to cross 395 in Lee Vining. I suspect the Tioga Inn Project will only make conditions worse.

Most of the problems I foresee have been considered by planners and solutions to them have been proposed. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the proposed solutions will not be enough to mitigate the damage this project will cause. I hope that any unintended consequences, that are revealed during any project, won't have a permanent negative impact on the area. For many years now I have avoided visiting Yosemite and Lake Tahoe during the tourist seasons, and when I do visit I find that development has degraded the beauty that I once had found there. I don't want this to happen in Lee Vining.

Sincerely,

Craig Cornell

August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
437 Old Mammoth Road
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Subject: Comments on the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn Project

Dear Mr. Draper,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Tioga Inn Project. I respectfully submit the following comments in strong opposition to the proposed Tioga Workforce Housing Draft SEIR.

First, I believe it is important that you understand my background and experience as it relates to Mono County, the Mono Basin and Lee Vining. I have been a year-round, permanent resident in Lee Vining for 20 years. Prior to that, I was an annual visitor with my family and friends for more than 30 years. After moving to Lee Vining I immediately became involved with the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) and have served on it ever since. My comments that follow are my personal concerns arrived at through my experience in the community and in no way reflect the collective view of the Mono Basin RPAC.

Compliance with the Mono Basin Community Plan

The *Mono Basin Community Plan: Visioning to Action* was finalized in 2012 after a series of facilitated community meetings and discussions and should be used to guide all aspects of the draft SEIR process. The Mono Basin Community Plan “is a community-based planning effort intended to guide future land-use, development, and quality-of-life decisions. The purpose of the plan is to inform decision makers at the community and local government levels, as well as other agencies, businesses and entities operating in the Mono Basin, about the needs and aspirations of the community.” This plan currently serves as the Mono Basin Area Plan in the Mono County General Plan Land Use Element and guides all Mono Basin RPAC actions.

The process to develop the Mono Basin Community Plan was comprehensive, inclusive, and arduous. Many meetings and workshops were spent discussing community values, visions, goals, and challenges and all of these conversations resulted (after long hours of collective detailed editing) in a final product that now shapes every aspect of our community. It is my understanding that any project proposal must conform to the current Mono County General Plan and to any Area Plan, if one exists. In this case it is the Mono Basin Community Plan.

The project, as proposed, is thoroughly in conflict with the Mono Basin Community Plan’s applicable goals, policies and actions. The Mono Basin Community Plan was approved in 2012 and is an Area Plan in the Mono County General Plan. CEQA requires that the Draft SEIR be consistent with the Mono Basin Community Plan.

The Draft SEIR (5.5-17) states that the “Mono Basin Community Plan was developed by the Mono Basin RPAC”. This is incorrect. The Mono Basin Community Plan was developed by the community members of Lee Vining through an intense, facilitated process that included multiple meetings, surveys, and detailed consensus-based drafting and editing to achieve a final plan that most accurately represents the community of Lee Vining.

The draft SEIR attempted to analyze project impacts as they relate to the Mono Basin Community Plan and, frankly, fell short. Below are the details as compared to section 5.5 of the draft SEIR which provides Mono Basin Community Plan goals and objectives and SEIR responses. My comments are italicized below:

Goal 1: Maintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural, small-town character of communities by managing growth, ensuring high-quality aesthetics, and providing for community development needs to enhance the quality of life for residents.

Objective A: Provide for the orderly growth of Lee Vining in a manner that retains the small-town character by directing future development to occur in and adjacent to Lee Vining.

SEIR states: The project would be consistent with the objective to pursue orderly development in and around Lee Vining, as well as the policies to prioritize existing built uses over new lands. Water and propane services would be provided (if desired) to supplement existing infrastructure in Lee Vining.

I do not consider tripling the population of Lee Vining orderly growth. Community growth at that rate, all at once, does not allow services such as volunteer fire departments, paramedics, schools and other county supported programs and infrastructure to develop as it would with more gradual incremental growth. The size of the development and the fact that it will dwarf Lee Vining, does not retain Lee Vining's small-town character. The project fails to adequately address connectivity between the project site and the town of Lee Vining, further exacerbating and degrading the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Objective C: Encourage building types and architectural design compatible with the scenic and natural attributes of the Mono Basin.

SEIR states: New uses will incorporate the colors, materials and rustic design elements of the existing Tioga Mart development. The siting of new uses incorporates recommendations of the project biologist as well as visual perspectives gained from the schematic renderings. Green energy will be integral to project infrastructure. The workforce housing will be designed as a residential community located inside a commercial development. All project lighting will conform with dark sky regulations that were enacted after the original Specific Plan was approved.

The color or architectural design will do little to mitigate the fact that the workforce housing has been sited out on a promontory bluff, highly visible from all areas of the Mono Basin. The current range of alternatives does not address nor utilize all possible ways to mitigate the visual impacts of the housing units such as grading below current surface levels, creating berms to shield project structures, or simply moving them to another location on the property perhaps below the moraine. Instead, it appears as though the highest priority of the housing

project is to create the best views possible of Mono Lake for future residents presumably to maximize “market rate” rents. I find it ironic and sad that the residents of these units will reap the rewards of iconic and scenic Mono Lake with no visual impacts from their units, while the rest of the community is forever changed with a diminished viewshed. Project lighting conforming to dark night sky regulations will not be enough to mitigate the mere quantity of lights necessary for the project development. The impacts to the Mono Basin dark night skies will be significant from every corner of the Basin, impacting both residents and visitors. Even with downward facing lighting, the glow that will emanate from the project area will be significant and visible from all points in the Mono Basin.

Objective D: Maintain, protect and enhance the natural, historical and recreational attributes of the Mono Basin.

SEIR states: No historic resources have been identified in the Cultural Assessment; however, the project site does have a cultural monument erected by the Bodie Chapter of E. Clampus Vitus that features ‘little known and forgotten facts about Mono Lake.’ The Kutzedika Indian Tribe of Lee Vining met with Mono County during January 2019 to discuss their history in the Mono Basin and their concerns about the project proposal (see EIR §5.4). Onsite trails will be provided, and the applicant and county have indicated they will jointly seek grant funding for safe trail linkage from the project vicinity to the Lee Vining Community.

Objective D is a foundational pillar of our community – “natural, historical, and recreational attributes of the Mono Basin” and the only way that the project will address and support this outside the project area is through the possibility of a grant to connect the project area with the Lee Vining community. Pedestrian connectivity between Lee Vining and the project is essential and should be a mandatory, required mitigation funded entirely by the proponent. I’m confident that there are other mitigations that could be developed such as a trail system in Lee Vining Canyon that would help to mitigate impacts to wildlife by focusing residents and hotel visitors on a particular route rather than dispersing them throughout the canyon, therefore interfering with natural patterns and behaviors of wildlife.

Objective E: Promote well-planned and functional community uses that retain small-town character and increase quality of life.

SEIR states: The project would increase the housing supply available to local workers, and occupancy would be linked to eligibility criteria. Ample parking would be provided for customer vehicles (standard & oversized), as well as transit vehicles (YARTS & ESTA) and car-pool participants. The project incorporates partnership opportunities including increased airport utilization (through rental car availability). Trails would be provided onsite for walking and bicycles, and efforts will be made to obtain grant funds for development of a walking/biking trail that would safely link the project site to the Lee Vining community. The 1993 project design was developed to optimize public access to the scenic resources and views around the US 395/SR 120 junction, and the newly proposed uses will be largely screened from offsite views.

Again, tripling the size of Lee Vining is not retaining “small-town character”.

As mentioned above, the possibility of a grant to connect the project site with Lee Vining should be a mandatory mitigation funded entirely by the proponent.

It is not clear from reading the draft SEIR who the housing would actually be for. In some places it states that it is for the onsite hotel and restaurant employees (but that project has yet to be built and some speculate it might not ever be built). Other places in the document it states it is for seasonal Mammoth Mountain employees, and at public meetings the proponent has said that it would be for anyone working in Mono County. Regardless of the shifting answer, one thing is clear: currently any eligibility criteria is not tied to any clear enforceable measures, either through the County or another oversight entity. Furthermore, The Mono Basin Community Plan specifically calls out requirements for workforce housing which include “establish tenant eligibility criteria, including a time requirement as a local resident and/or local employee, for workforce housing units, and identify the entity that applies, manages, and enforces the criteria”. The Mono Basin Community Plan also directs proponents to “promote workforce housing opportunities that connect the community with housing programs.” As drafted, the current proposal does not go far enough in prioritizing the local needs of our community.

The newly proposed uses will not be screened from off-site views as discussed throughout this letter. The Mono Basin Community Plan clearly states “recognize the junction of Highways 395 and 120 as an important viewshed for the community and its visitors, and therefore, a project should avoid potential impacts to that viewshed”.

Objective F: Provide appropriate public infrastructure and service capability expansion to support development, public safety, and quality of life.

SEIR states: Water, sewer and propane demands of the existing and proposed project will be met onsite, and the applicant will make water and propane service available to customers in Lee Vining. A sizeable share of the demand for electricity will be met through solar panels to be installed on all structures, and a cell tower located on the property supports Wi-Fi connectivity for project site and the region as a whole. The site serves as a staging area during emergencies, and provides space adequate for helicopter landings. All project utility lines will be underground (only the SCE overhead lines will remain).

The Mono Basin Community Plan directs that “future development should coincide with infrastructure and service capability expansion.” The project as proposed stands to triple the population of Lee Vining yet there is no discussion or plan on how local community services such as volunteer fire departments, post office capacity, the capacity of our schools, or public parking (to name a few) will be able to accommodate the sudden surge in community population.

Goal 2: Grow a sustainable local economy with diverse job opportunities that offers year-round employment and wages that reflect the cost of living in the area.

Objective A: Plan for a diversified, sustainable economy.

SEIR states: The proposed workforce housing will support continued development of a diversified, sustainable economy in the Mono Basin.

This is a completely insufficient explanation of how the workforce housing will specifically support this particular objective. How will the workforce housing proposal achieve a diversified and sustainable economy for Lee Vining?

Objective B: Enhance and support the existing tourism-related economy.

SEIR states: The project will support community efforts to promote longer stays, provide more visitor accommodations, host YARTS services, provide extend tourism into the shoulder seasons, and explore expanded use of the Lee Vining Airport. The applicant has communicated with USFS regarding the potential availability of housing for Yosemite employees, and has communicated with Mono County regarding the possibility of providing rental cars to airport customers. Restroom facilities on the site are well maintained and open to the public year round.

The Tuolumne River Plan approved in 2014 addressed the Park housing need through a reconfiguration of their existing facilities in Tuolumne Meadows, thus eliminating the need for seasonal Park housing in the Mono Basin.

Objective C: Diversify the existing economic base and employment opportunities to achieve a more sustainable economy.

SEIR states: The project would contribute to employment opportunities, provide a year-round residential market for locally produced goods and foods and an opportunity for expanded water and propane infrastructure. The workforce housing would increase the local recirculation of wages through increased resident purchases in and around Lee Vining. The onsite cellular tower would continue to support Digital 395 broadband access for the site and surrounding environs.

The workforce housing proposal does not constitute “new business developments and entrepreneurial efforts that contribute to a mix of uses and services” but rather includes redundant businesses (hotel and restaurant) that will threaten the stability of existing hotels and restaurants currently operating in Lee Vining.

The project does not “support the revitalization of Main Street” as the Mono Basin Community Plan calls for, as the project is on the outskirts of Lee Vining. And as stated before, currently there isn’t a reliable, funded plan for connecting Lee Vining to the project area.

It is questionable whether or not the occupants of the workforce housing would increase purchases of goods and services in Lee Vining as it would depend where the occupants are actually working. It’s quite possible that residents might spend at least some of their money on goods purchased outside of Lee Vining, especially if they are working in Mammoth.

Goal 3: Build a safe, friendly community where people feel connected, work together to resolve community issues and are involved in community activities and events.

Objective A: Build healthy social connections and interactions that contribute to a sense of community.

SEIR states: Eastern Sierra Unified School District notes that the project would enrich the school community and that developer fees would cover the cost of new facilities for children in the workforce housing area; onsite space will be provided for playgrounds, social meeting areas, day care, and other workforce community programs.

The project does not specifically propose opening a dialog with schools to collaborate relationships. It does not support the provision of higher education and workforce development programs, or cultivate community leadership, nor does it express support for various cultural and ethnic groups in the community.

Objective B: Encourage and support local events and programs that provide community and youth activities, capitalize on the tourist economy, and bring the community together.

SEIR states: The Tioga Mart will continue to host the popular free summer music events program which is open to all and offers diverse music forms.

Many other community opportunities exist under this objective such as outdoor education, youth activities, after school programs, supporting the local library, and working with the Kutzadika Mono Lake Indian Community. It is disappointing to see that the only institutionalized community offering is an already existing program which provides a direct financial benefit to the proponent since attendees dine and drink at the Tioga Inn while enjoying the musical events.

Objective C: Encourage people to volunteer in the community and participate in events.

SEIR states: A community poster board is provided outside of the convenience store.

Again, this is a disappointing and insufficient offering with a project poised to triple the existing population of Lee Vining and whose community functionality is hinged on so many volunteer organizations.

Process

The draft SEIR was released to the public on June 14, 2019 with a 60-day public comment period. The RPAC was notified by email on June 17, 2019. The general public was noticed in the newspaper on June 22, 2019.

The Mono County Planning Commission held a workshop on June 20, 2019 explaining the project. I attended that workshop and other than Commissioner Lizza, I was the only member of the public from Lee Vining. Given the long history of the project and the changes described during the workshop from the original November 2016 scoping documents to the newly revised draft SEIR, I

was concerned that members of the Lee Vining community might not be aware of the schedule and more importantly the content.

Immediately after the Planning Commission meeting, I requested that Mono County Community Development hold a community workshop to explain the project changes and that meeting was held on July 30, 2019, with the discussion led in large part by the project consultant.

On August 15, 2019 another Lee Vining community meeting was held so the residents of Lee Vining could further discuss the project and associated impacts and concerns. Supervisors Gardner and Kreitz attended this meeting.

I am summarizing the process timeline for a reason. The original deadline for comments was August 13, 2019 (now adjusted to August 21 to satisfy the 60-day legal requirement from the date published in the newspaper). The Tioga Inn Specific Plan and draft SEIR amendments are a significant project for Mono County. Given the size, complexity (teasing apart what's already approved via the 1993 Specific Plan and what is a new project proposal), and potential impacts to the Mono Basin, a clear understanding of the content and process is critical. My concern is that for such a significant project, members of our community (and I include myself) have not had sufficient time to analyze the draft SEIR to the extent that we would like to, even though Mono County has complied with CEQA noticing and comment deadline requirements.

Specific plans

In general, specific plans set limits on the maximum building or footprint disturbance of a particular site, including the intensity of the development. The 1993 Tioga Inn Specific Plan approved a building footprint with associated impacts for a 120 room hotel, a 5,000 square foot restaurant, and ten housing units. Now the proponent wants to increase that disturbance and impacts with a much larger housing project that would be 100 units with 150 bedrooms, effectively housing up to 300 people.

The environmental impacts resulting from the already-approved 1993 Specific Plan are significant. Adding cumulative impacts from the increase of 10 to 100 housing units must require a revisit of the entire project so that all environmental impacts can be analyzed and evaluated. Much has changed in our community since 1993; most notably the above-mentioned community plan, an increase in wildfire occurrence and intensity, the 1994 State Water Board Decision protecting Mono Lake, and the exponential tourism and recreational use that Mono Lake experiences as a visitor destination.

Specific plans must specify programs and establish regulations that are necessary to finance infrastructure and public works projects. In my review of the draft SEIR I found very little evidence that this requirement had been satisfied. For a project that at a minimum will triple Lee Vining's current population, I found very few examples of the project offsetting in any way impacts to the community infrastructure and functionality. Simple things such as parking in Lee Vining or access to the post office will be forever changed and in orders of magnitude not fully expressed in the draft SEIR.

Gateway community

Lee Vining is surrounded by public land and it is special land as evidenced by state and federal designations. The Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area (the first congressionally-designated

Scenic Area in the nation) boundary is across the highway, 1,000 feet from the proposed project boundary. The Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, a California State Park unit, encompasses the shoreline of Mono Lake, protecting wildlife habitat and unique shoreline features, the tufa. And 12 miles from the project is the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park.

In past decades, gateway communities have struggled with the challenge of how best to serve the needs of hundreds of thousands of visitors annually with the needs and health of the permanent resident population and the natural landscape that visitors are seemingly craving in larger and larger doses. Many gateway communities have failed to achieve this delicate balance and are now forever changed, and I would argue, have therefore lost their appeal. I don't want Lee Vining to become another over-developed, sterile, commercialized gateway community. Lee Vining and Mono County are unique and therefore require a unique, thoughtful approach to any development project.

Admittedly, preserving this unique character will be a challenge, now and with each planning decision we collectively make. But we can learn from experts in the field such as Edward McMahon, co-author of *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*. McMahon recommends the following:

- Many gateway communities are overwhelmed by haphazard growth that fails to meet local needs or aspirations and detracts from the integrity of public lands.
- The vast majority of gateway community residents, both newcomers and old timers, feel a strong attachment to the landscape and to the character of their town. They want a healthy economy, but not at the expense of their natural surroundings or community character. (Note: This exact point was made repeatedly throughout the Mono Basin community visioning process. Please review the plan for specific details.)
- Many residents and local officials feel helpless in the face of rapid change. People know what they like about their communities and what they don't like about new development. They just don't know how they can preserve what they love without saying no to jobs and economic development (or in this case, housing).
- Progress does not demand degraded surroundings. A number of gateway communities have implemented successful initiatives to cope with rapid growth and high visitation. Communities are demonstrating that economic prosperity doesn't have to degrade natural surroundings, rob them of their character, or turn them into crowded tourist traps.
(*Gateway Communities* by Edward T. McMahon; *Planning Commissioners Journal*; Spring 1999)

Conclusion

Based on the significant insufficiencies in the draft SEIR, the magnitude of the impacts of the project, and the fact that several major impacts (six in total) cannot be mitigated at all, the only alternative I can support is the environmentally superior alternative, no project alternative.

I will conclude my comments with this citation from the Mono County General Plan Land Use Element (ii-9) which should guide decision makers as they evaluate this project going forward:

"Residents express conflicting sentiments about additional growth. The concept of a sustainable, successful economy is supported, but the fear is that communities will need to become too big or

'citified' to achieve this, sacrificing the rural characteristics and healthy natural environment valued by residents. The challenge is to appropriately balance economic development goals with the desired rural community characteristics and protection of the natural, scenic, historical and recreational values of the area. Growth does not necessarily mean becoming bigger; it could also mean improving what already exists within the current development footprint."

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Lisa Cutting
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Please seek National Park-Quality alternatives for Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

August 20, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA
93546
(via U.S. Mail and email to mdraper@mono.ca.gov)

Dear Mr. Draper:

I encourage you to seek National Park-quality alternatives to the development proposals currently described in the Tioga Inn Draft SEIR.

I'm sure you're familiar with the six "unavoidable adverse impacts" already listed in the Draft SEIR. Rather than focusing on these negatives, I would instead encourage you to set a positive example, as Mono County has done many times in the past, by seeking alternative development proposals that mitigate these impacts and establish a National Park-quality example of enlightened Gateway Community development.

As you well know, Gateway Communities (like Lee Vining) do much of the heavy lifting for the National Parks they serve. They are visitor's first and sometimes last impression of a National Park. And despite the careful designation and administration of National Parks and Scenic Areas (of which the Mono Basin was the nation's first in 1984), Gateway Communities receive no protective designation or funding. As a result, they frequently suffer from un-planned sprawl that is environmentally, aesthetically, and economically incompatible with the National Park "idea."

You have the opportunity with the Tioga Inn Draft SEIR to seek alternative development proposals that would set a positive example for Gateway Communities across America. And given the global fame of Yosemite and Mono Lake, development at the Tioga Inn could establish a positive international benchmark as well.

It is rare when something that so many people view as negative can be turned into a positive. I believe with thoughtful review and creative problem solving, Mono County can again lead by example and turn the proposed development at the Tioga Inn into a model for other communities facing similar challenges. At the very least, I believe you owe this duty of care to the current residents of Lee Vining, of which my wife Kathy and I number ourselves. I thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this request, and I wish you success in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Doug Virtue and Kathy Day
1127 East Mono Lake Drive
Lee Vining, California 93541
P.O. Box 104 Lee Vining, California
dougvirtue@virco.com

Michael Draper

From: susan DesBaillets <susandes@earthlink.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:02 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Comments

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To: Mono County Community Development Department- Michael Draper

COMMENTS on TIOGA INN SPECIFIC PLAN DRAFT SEIR
August 21, 2019

From: Susan DesBaillets, PO Box 83, Lee Vining, CA 93541
760-9141833 susandes@earthlink.net

Dear Mr. Draper:

As a resident of Mono County since 1971, I am deeply concerned about the impact of the Tioga Inn project, and appreciate this opportunity for comments. This land is treasured by both residents and visitors who travel through to embrace the wild and untouched nature of the Mono Basin. Those descending Tioga Pass are gifted with expansive views of Mono Lake. Unfortunately the proposed Tioga Inn development will alter these wild and relatively unsullied views, and this impact to the visual and aesthetic experience is incongruent with the values of our community, and county.

The Tioga Inn project calls for 100 units of “workforce housing” to be built. (Note: I believe the term workforce housing is used incorrectly for this project.) The scale of this development is inconsistent with the size of our community, and would double the population of Lee Vining. The existing infrastructure will not be able to absorb the increased traffic, impact on schools, law enforcement, fire department, and more. The SEIR document justifies the need for employee housing for the proposed hotel, however, since the hotel project was approved 26 years ago, there is no knowing when, or if the hotel will be built in the near future. Indeed housing is needed in our community and county, however, the number should be scaled down from 100 units. The DEIR has a Reduced Development Alternative, however, I believe fifty units is still too large. Yes, there should be a reduced number of units. Perhaps 20 units built as the first phase of this project? This would allow the community and county to test the waters, and assess the impact on residents and infrastructure. We could proceed with this information to understand better the effects on Lee Vining. The need for further analysis is critical, and a phased approach will give us concrete information on how best to proceed. I hope the county will consider this.

The visual impact of this project is will mar views from the South Tufa area -- one of the gems of the Mono Basin. Visitors from all over the world come to this spot to take in the beauty of the lake with clear and unaltered views of the Sierra and surrounding environs. Photographers find Mono Lake a rare and pristine subject for their work—how will this change with 100 units of housing in the background? Will this project make the Scenic Area a contradiction? I should hope not. The housing development should be moved to a more appropriate location that would limit the visibility for areas that are heavily visited and valued for their vast and untouched views.

The SDEIR lists thirty-nine mitigations. Six of these measures will be the responsibility of other agencies. How will this be initiated? What is the timeline for services such as pedestrian access to Lee Vining, deer passages under 395, a 395/120

roundabout, and parking ingress egress signs? Who pays for these other agencies? Will our taxes increase? If this a cooperative venture, then who is in charge, and have agencies such as Caltrans agreed to be on board with the measures? Since many of these directly relate to safety, can we honestly proceed without these measures securely in place??

While there are many topics of concern for this project, traffic safety is paramount. Already traffic is unpredictable around the Mobil Mart. Drivers don't know when and where to turn into the gas station. There is a bus stop that is often confused for a turn lane. I've driven this road many times with cars braiding in and out of traffic trying to navigate the configuration. This will be exacerbated with the housing project. What about ingress/egress with only one road connecting to SR120, and hundreds of drivers headed in and out? And, won't there be state requirements for such a configuration should a daycare center be added? Again, a scaled back model would give us the chance to observe this model and evaluate further the impact.

Much of this grandiose project seems to be cart before the horse. Modifications are critical and need to be made to ensure that the impact on Lee Vining will not be chaotic, and something we are unable to redo. To restate-- my major concerns are regarding the impact an increased population will have upon our community, as well as for the visual integrity of our region. Project alternatives need to be explored before any sort of approval is made. My first choice for the project alternatives would be: No Project Alternative. Should the project go through, the Reduced Development Alternative with the modification to 20 units is my second choice. I request that the applicant come up with a better design than this for our community.

There are signs along the highway stating Mono County is Wild by Nature. Let's continue to make this our vision.

Thank you very much for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Susan DesBaillets

Michael Draper

From: Karen DeWitt <bdewitt2@san.rr.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 1:21 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Mr. Draper.

I am writing to express concern regarding the proposed Tioga Inn Project that would be built in and around the Mobil Mart gas station near Lee Vining off the 395. I own a vacation home in the June Lake area and we bought it to enjoy time in this special place. The whole of the Eastern Sierra in general, and the June Lake/Mono Lake area in particular, are extremely valuable because of the scenic and natural beauty they offer to visitors to the area, as well as a place for wildlife to flourish and maintain a healthy ecosystem. I know it's why my family has been traveling to the region since I was a kid and continue to visit as often as we can. Indeed, it's why most people visit the region and, presumably, what would attract people to visit and stay at the proposed Tioga Inn. I have read some of the information related to this project and am very worried that the current version of the plan does not take into account this fundamental and critical aspect of its impact to the surrounding natural landscape. For example, I am an amateur photographer and I find the area around the Mono Basin to provide some of the best photographic opportunities around, especially at night when the sky is dark and the Milky Way rises above the tufa. I know that I am not alone because on a recent trip to the region I found myself with a lot of company when out night shooting in the South Tufa. I urge you to support a dialogue and continued efforts to reach common sense, informed and strategic approach to any further developments to ensure that it takes all needs into account. I would suspect that this would benefit the project proponents as well given the fact that their clientele would be coming to the region for the same reasons that I and thousands of others do - to enjoy the natural beauty and opportunity to experience this spectacular area without the blight of unnecessarily impactful development, especially when there are ways to mitigate those impacts to the benefit of all. Thank you for your anticipated support. Regards, Brian DeWitt

Michael Draper

From: Robert Di Paolo <rdd11@humboldt.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 11:30 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Comment on the Draft SEIR and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Draft SEIR and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project.

Aesthetics:

The Mono Basin has very impressive night skies. Tourists from around the state and around the world come to the Mono Basin and Mono Lake to experience and photograph the night skies. While I appreciate that the proposed project features a variety of mitigation measures designed to reduce night sky impacts, I am deeply concerned that this project will jeopardize a unique and important resource of the Mono Basin and the National Forest Scenic Area. As stated in the report, the proposed project will have “a significant and unavoidable adverse impact on light and glare”, which I simply find unacceptable in a place renowned for its low levels of light pollution. The uniqueness of our night sky resource should inspire an equally unique effort to mitigate light pollution. Jeopardizing our night skies detracts from the Scenic Area, from the Mono Basin, and from Mono County.

The Mono Basin also features impressive and unique uninterrupted scenic views of the Sierra and of Mono Lake. Whether you’re standing at South Tufa looking up at the boundary peaks of Yosemite National Park or driving down the Tioga Pass HWY 120 and catching breath taking views of the Mono Basin, there are captivating sights from many different directions and aspects to be had. The design of the proposed project appears to impact many of these scenic views. The proposed project does very little to limit visual impacts and states that the project will have significant and unavoidable adverse impacts to scenic resources and visual character. While some mitigation efforts have been mentioned in the report to minimize visual impacts, the design of the project being so close to the bluff overlooking HWY 395 at the HWY 120 Tioga Pass junction makes visual impacts unavoidable. The fact that this proposed project sits in between Yosemite National Park and the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, two areas of high visitation and renowned for its scenic value, a less prominent design and additional mitigation efforts (e.g. screening) should be considered in order to more adequately mitigate scenic impacts to a less than significant level.

Biological Resources:

The proposed project will likely increase mortality of migrating deer by way of car collision due to the increased traffic and no mitigations are offered for this impact. There is growing concern that traffic collisions on HWY 395 with mule deer are a significant contributing factor to the observed decline of mule deer in the Eastern Sierra. The proposed project should consider mitigation measures that would mitigate impacts on migratory mule deer lest it further exacerbate an already problematic issue. The scope of the problem as it currently exists and the magnitude of additional traffic occurring as a result of the proposed project should necessitate mitigation.

Additional concerns:

It is unclear in the report who would utilize the 100-unit workforce housing. Are they low income units and are there measures to ensure that these units remain low income? Are these units prioritized for people who work and live near the proposed project or will they be utilized primarily by residents of Mammoth Lakes? Will these units serve to mitigate the county's housing deficit, or will additional staff associated with the proposed project utilize most of the housing? The answer to these questions presumably would alter how much traffic would occur at and around the proposed project area and will influence how helpful the additional housing units might be for Mono County. Here are some situations that could greatly alter potential impacts associated with the project:

- If the housing was dedicated to staff in Lee Vining and at the project site, we would expect much less traffic on HWY 395 than if the housing was dedicated to Mammoth Mountain staff.
- If the housing was occupied in the winter by mostly Mammoth Mountain staff, we might expect an increase in winter related traffic accidents on HWY 395 between Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes.
- If the proposed project attracts more people to the Mono Basin to live and work, this would likely negate possible benefits to Mono County's housing deficit.

The question of who the housing is for and how this intention would be preserved (if at all) is a poorly defined component of the proposed project and needs to be better clarified so that the public can more specifically consider and comment on potential impacts associated with the proposed project.

In conclusion, I think the proposed project threatens to undermine nationally recognized scenic views and world-renowned dark night skies, some of the most important resources the Mono Basin has to offer. I also have concerns about how the project will negatively impact the mule deer migration and population health. Lastly, I think there are several uncertainties pertaining to who will be utilizing the 100-unit workforce housing and how that may or may not benefit Mono County.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding my comments of the proposed project.

Sincerely,

Robbie Di Paolo
365 East Mono Lake Drive
PO Box 392
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Michael Draper

From: Jan Dietrick <jdietrick9@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:01 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village expansion must not damage scenic resources

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

Looking at this project from an aesthetic perspective, it is regrettable, and we question approval of the original project. The reason for traveling there is to experience the natural beauty without these negative visual impacts. How depressing to be entering this Yosemite gateway and try to cover part of one's face to block one's view of this out-of-place development. The project should not be visible from So Tufa or Hwy 395 so of the Tioga Pass Junction.

Secondly, be sure to protect wildlife corridors which requires that you consider the mitigations all together and not piecemeal.

Finally, I have not studied the detailed SEIR and am not an expert, but I am aware of projects built in historical geographic rain and wildfire corridors, such as in Montecito. I understand that there is a new awareness about risky developments located where terrible disasters historically occur from severe weather impacts. With these impacts forecast to be worse and worse under the circumstances of projected severe durations of drought and wildfire risk, intermixed with torrential rain, flooding, and mudslides, I urge you to check that out. Maybe this location is particularly low-risk for disasters, but do check it out. At least you should plan for all developments in your county to require net zero water and energy as a basic mitigation against current and future climate impacts.

Sincerely,

Jan Dietrick and Ron Whitehurst
Coordinating Team Members
350 Ventura County Climate Hub
108 Orchard Dr, Ventura, CA 93001

Michael Draper

From: Peter Dileanis <pddileanis@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 3:44 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comments on the Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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To: Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department Mammoth Lakes, CA

Dear Mr. Draper:

Having just returned from a visit to Mono Lake a few weeks ago I was surprised and a little alarmed to recently read about the proposed development at the entrance to Lee Vining Canyon. I have been visiting the Mono Basin for over 50 years and since retiring have made trips to Mono Lake and Lee Vining every year. Often two or three times a year, so I feel I have a connection and a legitimate concern for the future of the area.

I have several immediate concerns. First is the impact on the visual landscape of Mono Lake. On our last trip my wife and I spent several days at the South Tufa reserve and Panum Crater. A large complex of buildings at the proposed site would diminish the beauty of both these frequently visited locations. Part of the attraction of Mono Lake is the feeling of isolation and pure nature that has been lost in places like the Tahoe Basin. Because the moon was bright I didn't do my usual night photography, but light pollution from such a large complex could spoil this aspect of my visits.

Second, as a retired hydrologist, I am wondering about the impacts of increased water consumption and the stream of wastewater that would be generated. There are technical solutions for mitigating the effects of sewage and greywater disposal but they are often given less than adequate consideration in most developments.

Third and not least, how is the proposed development going to affect the community of Lee Vining and the natural wildlife in the area of development? Would the new addition enhance or take revenue away from small businesses that are the core of Lee Vining's charm. I would hate to see the Epic, Latte-Da, Nicely's, and all the other sources of food, supplies, and lodging suffer from reduced numbers of customers. What about the impact on housing? And how would the large complex affect deer, birds and fish that currently reside in the area?

I gas up at the Mobile, and eat at the Whoa Nellie. From my own observations of the summer crowds I can believe that an expansion of the business could be beneficial, but I hope the community and its government proceed with care and intelligence. Mono Lake is a world-class asset - just listen to all the languages spoken in the restaurants and on the trails. It's possible to develop services and businesses without lessening or destroying the very thing that people find so attractive about a place. That is why I hope that a complete and thorough SEIR is developed that considers the project as a whole entity and how it will fit into the existing landscape and community. Options to the existing development plan need to be considered to ensure a project that enhances visitor experience and benefits the existing community. A lot has changed since the 1993 plan and this is your chance to do it right. Once construction starts there is no going back.

Sincerely,

Peter Dileanis

Peter Dileanis
2312 Leonardo St.
Davis, CA 95618

Michael Draper

From: Joan Egrie <joanegrie@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:54 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comments on Draft Supplemental EIR for Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper and the Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to submit my comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn.

My connection to the Mono Lake Basin began in 1972 on my first trip to California. Since then I have visited Mono Lake and Lee Vining every year for 47 years, most years visiting 2-5 times a year. What I value most on my visits is how little has changed in the last ~50 years. The scenic value remains undiminished, man-made structures are hidden from view and the night skies at the lake have remained dark.

As proposed, the multi-unit two-story Workforce Housing Village will have significant negative visual and aesthetic impacts on the area. At a minimum, there needs to be sufficient screening of the Workforce Housing Village so that it is not visible from South Tufa, Panum Crater, or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction. In addition, the adverse visual impacts of the previously-approved hotel and restaurant and measures to mitigate their impact should be considered in concert with those of the new project expansions. In this way it will be possible to achieve the best overall screening for the entire project in an integrated fashion. Preserving the scenic beauty of this unique area should be a goal that everyone can support!

As proposed, the project also will have a negative impact on the night skies as experienced from the South Tufa Area. Screening alternatives for both phases of the project should be evaluated to be certain that the Mono Basin dark skies will be protected.

As the gateway to Yosemite National Park, Lee Vining and Mono County deserve a more thoughtful project design than the ones proposed. I urge Mono County to take additional efforts to balance the needs of the proposed project with the unique and irreplaceable beauty of the Mono Basin by requiring plan alternatives to eliminate the unavoidable adverse impacts of the project as proposed. Visitors and townspeople deserve a project design that will not mar the beauty and aesthetics of the Mono Basin.

Sincerely,

Joan Egrie
561 Los Vientos Drive
Newbury Park, CA 91320
joanegrie@aol.com

Sent from my iPad

August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am a Lee Vining resident with a lifelong connection to Yosemite National Park, the Eastern Sierra, and Mono Basin. With the understanding that the Mono County Board of Supervisors approved Mobil Mart's 120-room hotel, a restaurant (5,000 square feet), and ten units of housing 26 years ago in 1993, I respectfully submit the following comments in **strong opposition** to the proposed Tioga Workforce Housing Project and Tioga Inn Specific Amendment #3.

Gateway to the Mono Basin and Yosemite National Park

- Lee Vining is a gateway community, the small-town portal to both Mono Basin and Yosemite National Park. I have always loved Lee Vining—how over the years, unlike so many other gateways, it has managed to retain its size, clear boundaries, and character within the larger context of its internationally recognized, magnificent natural setting. Changes have certainly occurred within Lee Vining, but large commercial developments have not moved in to take advantage of the Mono Basin location or Yosemite's eastern entrance. The proposed Tioga Inn project expansion, however, is just that. It is a large commercial development that would degrade the integrity of community and place and convert the portal into just like Anywhere Else, USA. That is not what residents or visitors want.
- The proposed increased Workforce Housing is situated in full view from most all vantage points. The location will be nice for renters who look out their apartment windows but not for all who live in the Basin or visit the area or pass by on Highways 395 and 120. The housing location, therefore, privileges a paying few with open, uninterrupted views from within while spoiling the experience for hundreds of thousands of people outside.
- The location of this project at the confluence of Lee Vining Canyon, Mono Basin, and the entryway to Yosemite National Park deserves a plan far more inspired than currently proposed. In placement and architectural design, the buildings need to fit within the landscape and be hidden from view.
- In line with the bullet above, rather than break new ground and expand parcel boundaries and acreage to accommodate a substantially larger project (housing units, parking and associated amenities), the plan should stay within the pre-approved footprint of the original Tioga Inn Specific Plan. That may mean retaining the ten unit housing limit, not building 100.
- The proposed project would increase the pressure of day-use visitation in Yosemite National Park. The Park is already struggling to manage overcapacity as it strives to uphold the Organic Act of 1916 *...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations*. Mono County cannot, in good conscience, contribute to the dilemma of overcapacity as this project plan would.
- The Mono County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Goal 23. states: *Yosemite National Park is a national and worldwide treasure that must be protected and preserved. Bordering the Park's eastern boundary, and serving as its only access point*

from Eastern California, Mono County is an important component of the Yosemite region. Through its transportation planning efforts, the Mono County Local Transportation Commission will assist in the preservation and protection of the Park while still providing for visitor enjoyment, by strengthening the relationship between the Yosemite region and its eastern access through communities along the US 395 corridor. The RTP focuses, of course, on transportation and the Park and County working together in the seasonal opening and closing of the Tioga Road and traffic management, but it also expresses an honoring of the relationship and coexistence of County and Park, a partnership through shared boundaries, benefits, and concerns. The increased day-use visitation in the Park would be exacerbated by the proposed large development in Mono County at Yosemite's eastern access point. This issue must be fully taken into account by the County in the project's SEIR.

- I worry also about the impacts of increased visitation in Lee Vining Canyon and the Saddlebag Lake corridor, both located in Mono County in close proximity to the proposed project expansion. Lee Vining Canyon is a sanctuary for wildlife. Camping and other recreational uses already heavily impact it.
- Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra recreational areas will be affected, as well, by the proposed drastic increase in local population. The Mono Basin recreational experience, in general, has already deteriorated through increased visitation.

Workforce Housing

- Yes, Lee Vining does need more housing for employees, but certainly not 100 apartment units with up to 150 bedrooms. The Mono Basin Community Plan addresses the potential for building homes that would be affordable housing within the town of Lee Vining. This is a more desirable option that needs to be pursued before committing to the construction of additional Mobil units.
- Workforce housing should be located where it is needed, not on the edge of a little town far away from where the jobs are. Providing housing to Mammoth Mountain employees does not make sense considering commute time, winter road closures, the resulting increased traffic on Highway 395 and Highway 120, intersection congestion, and lack of local services. Lee Vining cannot carry the weight of being the bedroom community for Mammoth Lakes.
- Since local work tends to be seasonal, renters of the proposed 100 units will likely stay for short time periods. This coming and going, this transitory way of being, is not an ingredient for committed community participation. A healthy community depends on dedicated participants firmly rooted in place.
- In reviewing the document, many details regarding the Workforce Housing proposal remain unclear or not answered. Who exactly would be allowed to live in these units? If someone lost their job, would they be required to leave? Could renters sublet? To whomever they want and however long? Would renters have to move out when their seasonal job ended even if they knew they would return for another season in six months? How is the housing managed?
- There is no mention of affordable housing in the proposed development plan. Isn't affordable housing what Mono County needs most? The proposed Workforce Housing units, offering uninterrupted views of the Mono Basin from their terraced positioning on the bluff, will most certainly command supply and demand market rates—not affordable housing which the County lacks.
- The label "Workforce Housing" seems an attempt to legitimize a large and profitable development or somehow make it politically acceptable and, therefore, more easily

- approved. The draft SEIR should label the housing for what it truly is: market rate rental housing.
- Building 100 housing units, of any category, in the Mono Basin seems entirely inappropriate.

Additional Project Impacts on Lee Vining and the Mono Basin

- Even though the proposed project expansion is officially located outside the boundaries of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area (just outside, on the other side of Highway 395), the project's visual impacts, which have no respect for boundaries, will detrimentally affect the entire Scenic Area, day and night: the huge development always in plain sight; sunlight reflecting off buildings during the day; a bank of lights shining at night, dimming rare dark-night skies. People come here for the expansive views and dark night skies. Scenic resources are listed in the document as unavoidable adverse impacts. These permanent impacts are not acceptable.
- The potential construction of such a large development just south of Lee Vining creates sprawl, an uncontrolled expansion. Lee Vining currently is small with clear boundaries. This proposed project would more than triple the population of Lee Vining. The Tioga Inn complex would become the bigger town, a bedroom community that would stress the smaller community, changing it forever in not a positive way. It would impact police and fire protection, schools, emergency and other services. It would create intersection and traffic hazards as well as interfere with wildlife movement and migration—all unavoidable adverse impacts not acceptable to a small town.
- As humans, it is high time we give wildlife equal standing in project decisions. Interfering with deer migration is not a small thing. Neither is the intrusion of commercial development, more people, greater traffic, and recreational impacts on all other wildlife. A plan stating that interfering with wildlife movement and migration is an unavoidable (and permanent) adverse impact is not acceptable.
- Instead of installing a third gas pump island, the project should be required to add a bank of electric car charging stations. The climate crisis is accelerating. More and more people will be driving electric cars. The demand is already high. This must be seriously considered in the SEIR. Lee Vining already has three gas stations (counting the Mobil).
- I wonder about the perception and even the hydrologic wisdom of constructing a huge development complex in the Mono Basin well known for Mono Lake and the continued work dedicated to restoring the lake's level and ecology. Seems somehow not right to build a water-consuming project right there in the middle of it all.

Conclusion

26 years have passed since the Tioga Inn Specific Plan was originally approved by Mono County. Significant changes have occurred since then:

- The Mono Basin Community Plan, for instance, set a vision in 2012 with clear goals, like not sacrificing community character for economic growth, maintaining the small town feel and viewsheds, creating affordable housing within the community, improving what we already have rather than building more, ...
- Visitation to Yosemite National Park, the Mono Basin, and the Eastern Sierra has dramatically increased with associated negative impacts on all public lands.
- We realize universally now that climate change is not something of the future. All projects must be fully engaged with current and future ramifications, including, for example, the increased risk of devastating wildfire.
- Species worldwide are going extinct. It raises questions about how can we learn to live in this place or visit without causing more damage to all who share this planet with us?

- Sensibilities have increased regarding the immense value of undeveloped land, open space, dark night skies, solitude, ...
- And many more, I'm sure.

We need to take all of this into account in making any development decision. The whole project, including the Tioga Inn Specific Plan approved in 1993, should, therefore, be reviewed again in its entirety within the context of these and other major changes.

Thank you for reading and fully considering these comments. Yosemite National Park, the Mono Basin, and Eastern Sierra mean everything to me. They are in my bones. I write on their behalf, the integrity of the land, the wellbeing of the people who inhabit and visit, the Mono Basin community, for all who have ever loved this place. I write as if my life and all lives depended on our taking the best of care and making the best of decisions. Well, they do.

Sincerely,

Margaret Eissler
Lee Vining, CA 93541

RECEIVED
AUG 23 2019
Mono County CDD

August 18, 2019

Michael Draper, Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Tioga Inn SEIR (draft)

Dear Mr. Draper,

Thank you for this opportunity let you know of my disappointment regarding the Tioga Inn Project (Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.)

It is unfortunate that the developers decided to expand their project to include more ways that we travelers are forced to see the development rather than the beauty of the area. Why take advantage of the general tourist just to label something, ironically, the "Moble Mart"? Oil company harm to the environment should not be easily sold for a prominent sign.

In addition, as we read more about threats to nature with climate change, a forward-thinking citizenry would not continue to find ways to harm that very nature. Whether it be migration patterns, noise pollution, light pollution or animal contacts with traffic, let's remind ourselves, through development that we have done harm with old methods and need to add a little extra expense at the beginning of a project to mitigate the long-term damage that will be dealt to our environment.

Many communities have made progress in the fellowship of humans with the environment so let's follow in that path and do more to remind humans that they are not the only ones with needs to survive. For animals, that survival is not for the "extras" that humans desire including, faster, closer and just like home (which is already taxing the environment.)

Thank you for the work you are doing to review the proposal and work to put environmental concerns first for this relatively virgin area of California.

Sincerely yours,



Carol Enns
715 S. Central St.
Visalia CA 93277

Michael Draper

From: Terry Erickson <terry.erickson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 12:24 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comment letter regarding the Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am submitting a comment letter regarding the Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn and the "6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts" described in "Subsequent Environmental Impact Report And Specific Plan For The Tioga Inn Project".

My wife and I spend a considerable amount of time in the Eastern Sierra, back country skiing, climbing, hiking. We love the natural environment of the Mono Basin and are very concerned to hear about the scale of the proposed expansion to what is currently the Mobil station. One of the attractions of the Eastern Sierra and the Mono Basin are dark skies. Its getting harder and harder to find locations in California without light pollution where the Milky Way is visible. It would be a great tragedy if the Tioga Inn destroyed this for the Mono Basin.

I am also concerned that the Tioga Inn expansion will be visible from so many locations, being built high on the hill overlooking Mono Lake. Currently Mono Lake does not have any large visible near it. The Mono Lake Ranger Station is designed to blend in with the landscape and does not stand out. I think the Tioga Inn should be required to "meld" with the landscape, and the scale of the project should not be as large as proposed.

Initially 10 workforce units were approved for the Tioga Inn. Now "Plan Amendment #3" is for "100 workforce housing units with up to 150 bedrooms to accommodate employees of the previously approved hotel and full-service restaurant." It seems unrealistic that so many "workforce housing units" are needed for employees of a 120 room hotel and restaurant. This appears to be typical developer greed - get the initial plan passed and then try to expand the scope (and profit) as much as possible.

I think the workforce housing project is a very bad ill-conceived idea, considering the adverse impacts on the community of Lee Vining and should NOT be approved the way is it currently proposed.

Best regards,

Terry Erickson
San Francisco

Michael Draper

From: dancingbears <dancingbears@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:46 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Specific plan amendment comments

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Obviously, Mono County is bereft of private land for development opportunities. The few pockets of privately owned land available for development need to be able to move forward towards development without bureaucratic hurdles placed in their paths.

That said, I expect the existing laws, regulations, building codes etc. to be enforced by the County so that the developments go forward with the least public harm. Of particular concern would be

:

viewshed, ie. buildings should be low profile (low height restrictions) and color schemes that blend into the natural environment.

lighting - Mono County enjoys one of the most beautiful nighttime skies in the country. Lighting should be minimal (not allowed to be left on all night) and downward facing. I'm sure there are guidelines on this that Mono County needs to enforce.

Of course traffic impacts must be mitigated by the developer and fees for other various impacts to Mono Counties services.

Don't let NIMBYism (mostly from people who don't live in Mono County, interestingly) stop projects that Mono County needs.

But do your job and make sure developments are well planned!

Thank you,

Nancy Escallier
Mammoth Lakes

Michael Draper

From: Jeanne Evenden <jevenden7@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 10:14 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael:

I've reviewed the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project - including the elevations/site plans. I lived in the East Sierra in the 1990s, and have been a frequent visitor there since the 1970s. I celebrated my 50th birthday at a picnic table at Whoa Nellie's Cafe years ago, and am quite fond of that setting and what the company has had to offer visitors.

HOWEVER, I am very concerned about the scale and scope of the proposed development and its significant visual impacts - not only for those driving through, but to the quality of the dark night sky as well. There are fewer and fewer places to get away from the glare of human-sourced lights at night, and maintaining a dark night sky should be one of the top priorities in this project. And returning to the visual impact for those driving by: this project should not be visible from either Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass Junction, nor from South Tufa. To do otherwise will forever spoil the open and breathtaking natural views seen and enjoyed in this basin.

The draft proposal does not include sufficient alternatives to mitigate what are significant impacts. I strongly urge Mono County to make every effort possible to reduce the aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level, and to balance the needs of the project with the unique and wild qualities this area has to offer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeanne Evenden
2360 Pierce Avenue
Ogden, UT 84401

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three. I am not a permanent resident of Mono County, but I visit the Mono Basin every year and highly value the natural beauty and biological/ecological significance of this landscape. In total, I spend about 3 months of the year in the Mono Basin, and one of the things that I come to the Mono Basin for is to see the stars in the dark night sky and to view wildlife. In looking at the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project I see that impacts on light and glare are identified as some of the 6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts. I find it hard to believe that there aren't more things that can be done in order to preserve this special resource, and urge you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

Overall the project documents don't provide adequate alternatives and mitigation for the permanent impacts the project would create. My main concerns about the Tioga Inn project as presented in the Draft SEIR are the following:

1. The project's visual impacts are significant, and the proponent has not considered sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village.
2. The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.
3. This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Hwy 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.
4. I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place. The current draft project does not include alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts so that a good project can go forward.
5. Mono Lake, the Gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed.
6. The previously approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the proponent seeks to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will affect highway travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day. All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, at once—not in pieces.
7. There are cumulative adverse impacts to migrating deer with this project, and there is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife.

Again, I want to emphasize my concerns regarding the lack of written requirements for housing except that leases cannot be less than 30 days. I am additionally concerned about the visual/scenic impacts of the current project (light pollution) considering it is in very proximity to the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area.

Thank you for considering my concerns with the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Sincerely,

Krista Fanucchi

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Letter sent by email to mdraper@mono.ca.gov

August 20, 2019

Dear Michael,

I'm writing to express my concerns about the proposed Tioga Inn project. While I live south of the Mono Basin in Swall Meadows, I have spent much time over the years enjoying the Basin's incredible landscape, as well as helping private landowners and Mono County permanently preserve their lands for future generations. The scenic qualities of the Mono Basin have been recognized by state and federal designations and are worthy of the most stringent considerations when allowing new development. I have always been grateful to Mono County for taking the extraordinary step of purchasing and preserving Conway Ranch back in 1998. I urge the County to take similar extraordinary steps now in ensuring that the proposed Tioga Inn development does not degrade the special values found nowhere else in the world but the Mono Basin.

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan Draft SEIR identifies six very significant areas where impacts cannot be avoided. Given the critical location of this development, the County should require the proponent to provide options for mitigating these impacts. Either by downsizing the project and/or paying for solutions to the impacts, the proponent must take responsibility for eliminating these impacts before the project goes forward. All suggested options need to have specific timelines, funding sources, and long-term performance monitoring. Please analyze the following options for mitigating the adverse impacts:

1. Using current best management practices, build wildlife passages over or under Highway 395 and Highway 120 to allow mule deer and other wildlife to migrate and move within the Mono Basin. Wildlife collisions are a serious public safety hazard and contribute to the decline of wildlife populations throughout the region.
2. Complete an analysis to ensure that the location of this development does not increase fire hazards and that inhabitants of the proposed development are not unreasonably at risk from wildfire. Public safety needs to come before profits.
3. Develop and implement a plan to enhance the Lee Vining Fire Department to the level that it could safely protect the proposed development and the nearby community.
4. Develop and implement a plan to enhance the Mono County Sheriff's Department to the level that it could adequately respond to the proposed development and any associated activities in Lee Vining.
5. Develop and implement a plan to enhance the Lee Vining schools to the level that they can serve the increased population due to the proposed development. Consider needed after-school programs as well as sports and arts programs.
6. Develop and implement a plan, including identifying a funding source, for a round-about at the junction of Hwy 395 and SR 120 or for multiple entrances to the development to mitigate the traffic congestion associated with this proposed development.

7. Develop and implement a plan to mitigate lights/glare and impacts to scenic resources by building lower stories below grade, planting mature trees for screening, creating berms, and taking other steps to minimize the impacts to scenic resources.
8. Require an aquifer pump test by an independent hydrology expert before any approvals are made to ensure that sufficient groundwater is available and that increased pumping will not impact other wells or natural springs or wetlands. Share results with the public. Develop a ground water monitoring plan that will trigger development permit steps.
9. Ensure that any “workforce housing” is truly utilized by people working in Mono County and not by visitors. Consider requiring an official affordable housing designation or rent control system.
10. Create a phased development, with written criteria for building additional housing that is triggered by construction of the hotel and/or restaurant.

The best outcome for Tioga Inn and the millions of people who enjoy the special resources of the Mono Basin would be to downsize the proposed development to the point where there are no unmitigable significant impacts. I look forward to reviewing an updated and improved project proposal.

Thanks very much,

Karen Ferrell-Ingram
140 Willow Road
Swall Meadows, CA 93514

Michael Draper

From: Claude Fiddler <claude.fiddler@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 3:51 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: action@monolake.org; Joseph Holmes
Subject: Tioga Inn comment

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Dear Micheal

Aside from the the rights of private property holders there is the right of others not to have their lives negatively impacted by the actions of others. There will be impacts caused by the proposed Mobil Mart complex expansion and development that will have an effect on increased water usage at the facility and in Lee Vining, traffic congestion at the intersection of highways 120 and 395, increased planetary CO₂, wildlife migration interruptions and out right traffic deaths, the gateway to Yosemite aesthetics, increased public facility impact, and on and on. There may be no way to quantify or indentify the impacts potentially caused by the development.

At this point in time, it is smart to have the discussion as to what the impacts may be, good or bad, and how these will be addressed or not.

As a taxpayer and a citizen of the planet, there is little or no personal benefit with this development. Inevitably, there will be a cost associated with this development that will be paid for by the taxpayer. As a taxpayer and public servant I am well versed in the role government plays in providing for private concerns. Roads, water, maintenance, repairs, inspections, administration, local park development and maintenance, will be paid for by the government and will be an ancillary if not direct benefit to the project.

The wave of development is probably inevitable, but that does not mean we have to over or under think this current proposal.

What we need is an eyes wide open look at the project and the possibility that what is proposed is not all that may happen in the future.

As an aside, the Mono Basin Visitor center, the airport, the Forest Service detritus and buildings along Lee Vining Creek, are examples of, in my opinion, development without thought. We don't need more of the same.

Sincerely

Claude Fiddler

Michael Draper

From: Steve Finney <saf76@earthlink.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:48 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comment Letter on Tioga Inn SEIR

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Letter re: Tioga Inn Draft SEIR Aug 20, 2019

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (and associated documents) related to the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project.

I have been coming to the Lee Vining area 2-3 times a year for the 10 years or so, and am a patron of stores, motels, and restaurants there, including the Mobil Mart and the Whoa Nellie Deli. I primarily come to the area for the rich and widely varied natural environment.

My first concern involves two issues relating to the handling of the EIR.

1. It seems completely wrong to attempt to add a *major* development change to an existing project, but then to consider that change by itself, rather than explicitly considering the joint impact of the entire project. The joint impact may be more than the sum of its parts.
2. Also, although I don't understand the legal aspects, it seems to me that a *25 year old* EIR should be totally re-evaluated in terms of the current situation: the area's fame as a scenic area has grown a lot since the designation in 1984, and the active restoration of Mono Lake and the incoming stream environments has primarily taken place *since* the original EIR.

My second concern is the visual and light impacts of the project.

One of the main draws of the Mono Basin is the natural beauty of the area; the visual and lighting impact of the town of Lee Vining is fairly minimal from most places in the area. The impact of the new project, in its current form, appears to be massive, and would make the area much less appealing. This visual impact needs to be seriously considered. The Mono Basin has major values of its own, and should not just be considered as a place to house visitors to Yosemite.

My final concern is about the impact on the general character of the area. I find Lee Vining to be a charming, low key, friendly town. The large population addition caused by the Tioga Inn proposal would negatively impact this character and make it less appealing; from what I've heard from talking with Lee Vining residents, it would also have significant cumulative impacts on the school, fire department, water, and wastewater. The character of the region would also be significantly impacted by bringing in a major chain restaurant, making it more like a suburban strip mall than a town with local color. Although more tourist lodging in the Lee Vining area would have some benefits, it doesn't fill a drastic need; lodging is (as far as I can tell) available in any season at nearby June or Mammoth Lakes.

Thank you for considering my concerns about the Tioga Inn proposal.

Steven Finney (saf76@earthlink.net)

PO Box 1149

Mountain View, CA, 94042

Aug 20, 2019

Wendy Sugimura, Director
Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
437 Old Mammoth Rd.
PO Box 347
Minaret Village Mall, Suite P
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Submitted via email to mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Subject: Comments on the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn Project

Dear Director Sugimura and Mr. Draper,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the Tioga Inn DSEIR. As a resident and homeowner in the adjacent community of June Lake and a parent of a second grader at Lee Vining Elementary I wish to express some concerns and opportunities to improve this project. I am also a Mono Lake Committee member with a background in wildlife biology and public lands advocacy.

Scenic Resource Impacts

Mono County recently presented their findings of a 2018 tourism study sponsored by Mono County Economic Development, Tourism & Film Commission. The presentation I attended at the June Lake community center suggested Mono Lake is the #1 attraction in Mono County with the largest share of “Total Visitors” at 43.2% and that Mono County enjoys “high visitor satisfaction” mostly due to “scenic beauty perception.” The recognition that Mono Lake is now the overall #1 attraction in Mono County is an important, additional consideration in appreciating the extent of the scenic value placed on Mono Lake for all of Mono County.

The 1993 Final Environmental Impact Report recognizes the unavoidable significant adverse impact on visual resources. Unfortunately, the current analysis does not fully incorporate visual information, nor does it recognize the full extent of the visual impacts. For example, the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve is not mentioned within the context of the Scenic Resources. Given that the Public Resource Code § 5019.65 (2017) under State Parks specifically calls out the park to be “...managed for the purpose of preserving their native ecological associations, unique faunal or floral characteristics, geological features, and *scenic qualities in a condition of undisturbed integrity*” the EIR must address the scenic impacts to the State Reserve.

The DSEIR does not adequately consider siting and design mitigation or alternatives that could significantly reduce visual impacts. A possible addition to the County’s analysis is

to examine similar community projects in other Counties and states that have successfully mitigated visual impacts and offer a reasonable range of alternatives with analysis. Reducing the overall project footprint and size, using visual screening and requiring approval of visually sensitive building designs to blend into the natural environment are all options that that EIR should consider.

Lee Vining Canyon Recreation

The DSEIR fails to complete a recreation analysis of cumulative impacts to federal adjacent lands and neighboring recreation sites. Lee Vining Canyon is a popular recreational destination and the gateway to Yosemite National Park. Currently the Inyo National Forest does not have the infrastructure, such as bathroom facilities and waste disposal, to support an additional influx of up to several hundred residents and visitors. I was troubled that the DSEIR uses a generic formula for entire Inyo National Forest of number of people per a square mile as if people disperse evenly across the national forest. In reality the EIR should examine the current use and projected use of lands adjacent to the project site. Winter and summer recreation are increasing in Lee Vining canyon which contains sensitive biological and cultural resources. It is worth considering the development's potential to further add to this increase. Right now the County is taking on a significant portion of the INFs funding and capacity issues around recreation and although this is a step in the right direction the County must focus their efforts and resources on other high use recreation sites throughout the County. A possible mitigation for the recreational pressure Lee Vining Canyon will see under this development project is requiring the project proponent to establish a mitigation fund for recreational infrastructure costs and associated maintenance.

Lee Vining Creek and Groundwater

This project proposes significant increases in groundwater pumping and the impacts to Lee Vining Creek are currently unknown and not adequately analyzed in the SDEIR. The upper and lower reaches of Lee Vining creek have different hydrology resulting in them either replenishing groundwater or drawing upon it. Previous studies and monitoring well test sites have been inadequate to accurately obtain data on what future impacts to groundwater will be should this development move forward in its current capacity. Further analysis through additional monitoring wells and modeling should determine the change in the gradient of the groundwater surface elevation adjacent to the creek and thus the impact to groundwater. The project proponent should be responsible for such as analysis prior to approval of the project. A more thorough and detailed area hydrologic analysis, beyond the pump test, is necessary to determine the impacts to Lee Vining Creek and associated impacts, if any to Mono Lake.

It is worth noting the entire reach of Lee Vining Creek is a pending eligible Wild and Scenic River under the new Inyo National Forest Plan (decision expected November 2019) and would be managed as a Wild and Scenic River until Congress can act. The creek would be subject to management under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which

mandates it be to unimpaired and free flowing. Mono County has been supportive of this management objective in the Forest Plan and further revisions to the EIR should reflect this management obligation as it pertains to groundwater and the connection with flows on Lee Vining Creek.

Dark Skies

The DSEIR fails to examine the extent dark sky impacts will have on the visitor experience, tourism, and residents as well as wildlife including birds, mammals and insects that rely on dark skies. The DSEIR does not offer alternatives or mitigation to avoid significant and unavoidable adverse impacts to the world-class dark sky resource of the Mono Basin. While Mono County's dark sky ordinance is referenced there should be clear requirements and enforcement for specialized lighting to preserve dark skies. Although downward pointing lights are a first step, there are a number of loopholes in the ordinance that make commercial enterprises exempt from effectively controlling their light pollution. The International Dark Sky Association has helpful recommendations for mitigating light pollution and these should be built into one or more alternatives of the DSEIR. Further analysis and possible design features addressing dark skies should be built into one or more alternatives.

Mule Deer

The Casa Diablo Mule Deer Herd is already impacted and constrained by the existing Mobil Mart, deli, and projected hotel and restaurant development. The 395 and 120 highways are known high conflict areas for deer collisions with vehicles. Although deer regularly visit the existing Mobil footprint to browse on the lawn and aspen leaves, the surrounding open space and undeveloped sagebrush between the Mobil development and highway 395 provide connectivity and habitat for the species to move freely along their migration route.

The County should consider the case study at Convict Lake Resort where deer grow habituated to humans and become increasingly docile, losing their fear of motor vehicles. The result is increased vehicle collisions, and human and predator encounters. The issue of deer collision is also a matter of public safety and extends to other wildlife as well. Although the EIR lays out a possible mitigation plan, the reality of deer following a "Open Space-Preserve", crossing Highway 120 at the intersection of Highway 395, and then navigating a proposed deer passage is not consistent with deer movement patterns or based on the best available science of migration behavior. The County should work with CDFW biologists to complete a mitigation plan that truly benefits the species and require the project proponent to fund implementation of the mitigation plan.

Lee Vining Schools

An analysis of the impact on Lee Vining schools is needed if the workforce housing is to support housing for an additional 300 people. This could effectively double to school enrollment. The elementary school and high school do not currently have the

infrastructure or staff to support such a transition and the County should consider this as part of their analysis.

In summary the community of Lee Vining and the public lands that surround the proposed development deserve to be considered in the formation of this project. The project proponent should be encouraged to reach out to residents and discuss alternatives and foster an environment where we can come together and reach agreement. I am not opposed to this project and recognize the critical need for workforce housing in Mono County but I would like this development to be something that honors our world-class destination and what it represents.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/ Jora Fogg
107 Bruce Street
June Lake, CA 93529

Michael Draper

From: Linda Friar <lindafriar@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 5:14 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Mono lake development

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The proposed development adjacent to Mono Lake is entirely unnecessary and will have a negative impact on the area. My husband and I are quite familiar with the area and its surrounds. We have spent time in the area for many years.

There are many accommodations available in the area, so there is no real demand for more tourist availability. Mammoth Lakes has an abundance of properties and hotels in the summer time that are in easy reach of Mono Lake and Tioga Pass. In the winter, Tioga pass is closed, and there is little need for accommodation.

Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierras are treasures that California should preserve against the relentless push for development. It has been a real struggle to rehabilitate Mono Lake. Tioga Pass is a fragile entry into Yosemite.

I encourage you to listen to the environmentalists and leave well enough alone.
The intersection already has been sufficiently developed/

Linda Friar, Ph.D.
John Friar, Ph.D.
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Michael Draper

From: Celeste Fuechsel <celestefuechsel@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 13, 2019 10:01 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Save Tioga Pass

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I love Mono Lake and have visited there many times throughout my life. I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite.

This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,
Celeste Fuechsel

RECEIVED
AUG 22 2019
Mono County CDD

5354 Sandra Way
Livermore CA 94550
August 16, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper:

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposed "Tioga Inn" development project (Specific Plan Amendment #3) because of the harm and disruption it would bring to the wider Lee Vining community. If approved, we believe this project would negatively impact local services, draw down slowly recovering water resources, interfere with resident and migratory wildlife and degrade the extraordinary natural beauty of the Mono Lake area.

We visit Lee Vining frequently for activities associated with Mono Lake, and we think the proposed additions (two-story hotel, restaurant, convenience store, workforce housing village and wastewater treatment facility) would be garish and incompatible with the area generally and Lee Vining in particular.

We urge you to deny this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Jeff & Carol Garberson

Michael Draper

From: Forrest Galt <forrestgalt@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 9:24 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Mono Lake Hotel at Mobil Station

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The proposed hotel near the Mobil station in Lee Vining is a TERRIBLE idea.

Mono lake is a beautiful place, a treasure, and no one wants to see the gorgeous landscape destroyed for decades for commercial use. It will be very unsightly and invite even more development in the future.

I am not against hotels. They should be in a discrete place. People can go out for the view.

Thank you,

Forrest Galt
Windsor, CA

Michael Draper

From: Garfield, Elizabeth (Betsy) <GarfieE@losrios.edu>
Sent: Sunday, July 28, 2019 9:42 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: LeeVining proposed development

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

My grandmother ran for mayor of her small town in Ohio in the 50s and won. A first.

She worked very hard to install a freeway going through her town. For a long time she was very proud of this.

On her deathbed she said it was a horrible mistake.

The character of Lee Vining will be ruined by a large development.

Please don't let this happen.

Betsy Garfield

The goal of a quality education is to get students to walk across the threshold of complexity without walking across that space with them. - unknown

Michael Draper

From: Ruth Garland <rockttn@cruzio.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 5:51 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Draper,

I urge you to decline the current proposal for the Tioga Inn project with work force housing.

It is ill considered, considering the reason that so many people come to the Mono Basin and Lee Vining.

They/we come to see and experience the wild scenic beauty night and day with out gross development in sight.

I understand their may be reasons to develop but the development must be done with extreme care and thoughtfulness.

The Mono basin and Lee Vining are a jewel that must be protected from excessive development.

I urge you to protect what we have and be skillful in allowing growth in an environmentally and scenically respectful manner.

Thank you,

Ruth and Glenn Garland

Michael Draper

From: smgsmb@verizon.net
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 12:23 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To, Michael Draper

Hello, My name is Steve Garmize, I live on the east coast in Maryland. My wife and I have been visiting Lee Vining and Yosemite for quite a while now. We recently learned of the Tioga inn project and are very concerned. This is just not something that will fit into this unique area. Lee Vining is a quiet and charming place, it is the Ma and Pa businesses that make it that way, Mono Mrkt, Murpheys Motel, Nicely's, and all the others. The environmental impact, the light pollution, the waste water and the additional traffic all will be the end of one of the jewels of the Eastern Sierra. Not to mention the Tioga road entrance to Yosemite is only open for 5 month max out of the year. I can not imagine coming down the 120 from Yosemite and seeing this eyesore interrupting the view of Mono Lake. With Topaz Lake to the north and June Lake and Mammoth to the south, all of which are already well developed, I can not see any logical reason for development like this in Lee Vining. Please make every effort to keep this project from moving forward. Sincerely, Steve Garmize

August 21, 2019

John and Andrea Genette
P.O. Box 6074
5895 E. Carefree Mtn. Dr.
Carefree, Arizona 85377

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper:

We are writing as longtime visitors to Mono Lake to express our concerns about the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and Associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

The Tioga Inn Project would have significant visual impact. Of particular concern to us is preserving the integrity of the classic, beloved viewpoints – South Tufa, Panum Crater, and Hwy 395 south of Lee Vining. These wondrous views attract visitors and spur your economy; ironically, they are part of the reason you need more housing in the area. Why subvert your own interests and bite the hand that feeds you?

In addition, we are concerned that the SEIR does not include a plan to mitigate the inevitable increase in vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife. The safety of your residents, visitors, and native creatures deserves more attention.

Of greatest concern is that you have already approved the planned hotel and restaurant and are now considering the environmental impact of the proposed expansion as a separate entity. The visual impacts will be cumulative and should be evaluated in their totality.

Please give more consideration to the multi-generational value of preserving the scenic beauty of the Mono Basin. We urge you to look at alternative approaches to the proposed expansion that could mitigate impacts on viewpoints, vehicle safety, and wildlife.

Sincerely,



John Genette



Andrea Genette

Michael Draper

From: Reinhold Gras <reingras@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 5:10 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Workforce Housing Village

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper.

My husband and I are regular visitors to the Mono Lake Basin. We are drawn time and again to the overwhelming beauty of the place, its wildlife, the quiet, starlit nights, the sense of removal from urbanity and the encroachment of us humans on the natural wonders of our beautiful California. I was reading with dismay about plans to vastly increase the size of the Foodmart development to a point where it will have a significant impact on how visitors will perceive the Basin.

We strongly and kindly urge you to reconsider the plans under discussion now. Mono Lake deserves better.

With regards.

Reinhold Gras & Chris Barnett
San Francisco

Michael Draper

From: DEBORAH GREEN <watermediaservices@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:24 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Concerns about the Tioga Inn project as presented in the Draft SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department,
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper:

As an ecotourist visiting Mono Lake, I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan & Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Mono Lake is the gateway of Yosemite National Park and is a gorgeous site. It is also one of the key interior shorebird breeding and migration sites in the Western United States. In summer, over a hundred thousand phalaropes descend upon the lake, where they complete their molt before continuing on to wintering grounds in South America. Islands within Mono Lake support 50% of California's nesting population of California Gull, as well as Caspian Tern and Snowy Plover, the latter maintaining one of its largest California breeding areas.

As currently proposed, the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village development will be highly visible from many classic viewpoints including South Tufa, Panum Crater, and Highway 395 south of Lee Vining. The sudden, dramatic, scenic appearance of the Tioga Crest, welcoming travelers traveling north on Hwy 395 as they enter Lee Vining will be spoiled by multiple, two-story buildings breaking the skyline and interfering with this scenic, gateway view of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

Further, the development will have significant impacts on the prized dark night skies throughout the Mono Basin. It will adversely affect the Lee Vining community, deer migration, and possibly Mono Lake itself, which as mentioned is a critical bird breeding and migration site. The number of units in this proposal does not fit with the need (a hotel approved 23 years ago but not yet built). Is there another purpose for this housing? Is there any guarantee of affordability if it indeed is workforce housing? A drastically smaller proposal carefully sited could avoid changing the character of the Mono Basin, through visual impacts, increased traffic, and more than quadrupling of population of the town of Lee Vining.

I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Green

203 Honeysuckle Lane
Longwood, FL 32779

Michael Draper

From: Harmony Haney <harmony.haney@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 13, 2019 12:09 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: NO TIOGA GAS MART!

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Michael Draper

I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,

Harmony Haney, RN

JEFF HANSEN
P.O. Box 181
Lee Vining, CA 93541
(760) 647-6346

August 20, 2019

mdraper@mono.ca.gov.

RE: Response in regards to the Tioga Workforce Housing Project DSEIR

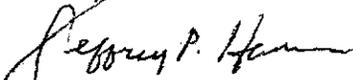
I just finished reading my wife's letter in total approval for the Tioga Workforce Housing proposed project. The letter was filled with many facts and seasoned with a lot of emotion. I offer this communication meant to be short, sweet and to the point. Emotions should play no part in this decision. The earlier meeting was fraught with emotions and little relevant matter.

The proposed project has already addressed most of the requirements in place at the time of submittal and the applicant (Dennis Domaille) is obviously prepared to accept the additional needs as identified and authenticated and to add them to his proposal.

There is an indisputable critical need for housing in the Mono Basin, This project addresses the needs to the highest degree. As the project takes place on private property with proper zoning there seems to me to be little left to address. My "vote" and your vote should be to go ahead prudently using facts, logic and the applicable legal requirements to be added to or subtracted from the application. Emotion plays a big part in life but your ideas don't necessarily have to be mandated on others.

Dennis Domaille has an ideal plan to address any number of critical needs. Now let him begin the work and let the hand-wringers come up with their own plan on their own private property!

Submitted by:


Jeff Hansen (70 + years resident)

August 21, 2019

Mono County Community Development Department
Attn: Michael Draper
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing you in regards to the Draft Tioga Inn Specific Plan Proposed Amendment #3. Thank you, in advance, for taking the time to read my concerns.

I hope that you won't immediately put my letter in the "not in my back yard" pile, (though, full disclosure, the project, will be in direct view of my back yard) because the way I see it, what the DSEIR brings up is a really exciting moment for Mono County leadership to choose to do what's right for our county.

I am the Communications Director for the Mono Lake Committee, in which capacity I have had the privilege of seeing hundreds of letters sent to you (and shared with us by community and Committee members) on this project. I cannot possibly add to the carefully-considered and researched specific points people have made regarding the shortcomings of the DSEIR document.

However, the point am writing to ask you to consider is what side of this issue do you want to be on? To require a better proposal, with more thorough and specific options for mitigating irreversible impacts—this is what we entrust our leaders to do. Asking for better does not mean you're saying no to workforce housing. It does not mean a win for nimby-ism. It does not mean you're saying no to new development, growth, or progress. When you ask for better, you balance out the scale of needs, and you raise the bar for everyone.

If you can help get this project on a better trajectory, it will pay off for years and generations to come.

You have the power to steer this project in a direction we can all be proud of—one that showcases the fact that humans can enhance, not only subtract from, the places we love. I like to imagine walking around the grounds of the Tioga Inn someday and telling people the story of what we all did to make it a place we still like to visit.

Thank you for your public service in this regard, and for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Arya Harp

1408 Wakefield Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48103

690 East Mono Lake Drive, Lee Vining, CA 93541

aryadegenhardt@gmail.com, (760) 647-1004

Michael Draper

From: barbara harriman <barbharriman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 11:17 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: COMMENT on Draft SEIR for Tioga Inn project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael and all others concerned,

I have been visiting the Mono Lake Basin for the past 25 years on an annual basis. I am highly concerned about this Tioga Inn project and in particular, phase 3 of the plan. I have many questions:

- 1.) The visual impacts are significant. I find it confusing as to why there are rules for proposed new signs for this project stating that they need to blend in with the natural environment - made with materials which complement the natural environment - while these proposed highly visible buildings may be of the same siding and roof materials and colors as what has been used for the existing facility. Can you explain this logic?
- 2.) I am disturbed that the night pollution will be greatly impacted by the placement of buildings on the hilltops. Why not build at lower levels with an environmentally friendly viewing platform on the hilltop?
- 3.) I am concerned about the waste which this proposed facility will generate. Is there a copy of the waste treatment system spoken of in the report? I understand using the gray water, but how will the existing leach lines handle a facility of this size? How will the human waste be handled? Septic tanks? How many tanks? How many leach lines?
- 4.) From where will the water for this facility be obtained? My understanding is that there are two wells on this site. Where are the reports describing the number of gallons per minute? Water quality - presence of absence of bacteria and E Coli? Mineral content? Will the water be obtained from the ground water? Significant testing should be done if this is the case. We have been experiencing an increase in drought years and taking water from the water table can have significant adverse consequences.
- 5.) Speaking of water, my understanding is that they are planning on rebuilding the existing water storage tank. My understanding is that they are not planning on building additional water storage tanks. Where are the reports to show that the water demands will be met with the existing tank?
- 6.) Again, speaking of water, what is the water requirement for fire protection. Building at the top of a ridge increases the fire damage risk. Have you seen proof of insurance for this facility? Are there fire protections building codes? Water sprinklers for all new buildings? Fire hydrants installed on premise? From where will the water come to satisfy these requirements?

Please address the placement of buildings in regard to fire danger, light pollution, landscape vistas, and migrations of wildlife.

Please address the origination of water, the use and quality of water, the disposal of waste water (gray water and other), the availability of fire protection water.

Please address the aesthetics of materials used (siding and roof) as related to the natural landscape.

Please address the impact on the light pollution to our cherished star-filled night skies.

The reason visitors come to this beautiful area is to commune with nature. While comfortable facilities can enhance their experience, these facilities should compliment the natural surroundings and be built with the highest standards of low environmental impact.

Be deliberate in your approval of this facility. Don't make decisions which you later may regret.

Sincerely,

Barbara Harriman

Michael Draper

From: jenny harriman <jennyharriman13@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 12:29 PM
To: Michael Draper; arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Micheal and team,

I have been visiting the Mono lake Basin multiple times a year since I was young. I love this are because it is peaceful, full of animal life and it is a beautiful get away. I recently heard about the Tioga Inn Project, and I would like to contest this project. Although a good idea in theory, the Tioga Inn Project will significantly impact the Mono Lake Basin Area in a negative way. I am concerned about the visual impact, the night pollution, the amount of waste that will be created.

I urge you to re-think this project and to keep things how they are. Mono Basin is a very special area. It is one that has not been ruined by night pollution, one where there are endangered species that are able to thrive and one with very little waste. Please address the placement of buildings in regards to fire danger, light pollution, landscape vistas and migrations of wildlife. Please also reconsider this project, as it is likely to backfire and deter frequent visiter's such as myself from visiting.

Best,
Jenny Harriman

August 17, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono Lake Committee

Re: Proposed Tioga Inn project

Dear Mr. Draper,

I came to live on our ranch (Colfax Springs) on the Big Oak Flat Rd, 3 miles east of Buck Meadows in 1937. This was primitive start at the age of 6 with no electricity, running water or bathroom. However, this meager upbringing brought me in direct contact with the old Big Oak flat and Tioga roads.

The early resorts were small and quaint and generally screened with pines and oaks. Some of the remaining structures; Groveland Hotel, Buck Meadows Lodge White Wolf Lodge and Evergreen lodge (on Evergreen Rd) are examples of design that blend into the landscape.

Today the modern gateway resorts of Rush Creek Inn and Tenaya Lodge represent design and timber screening that blends with the surroundings and has substantial light emittance reduction.

The proposed Tioga Inn accommodations lack forest screening and therefore need substantial design modification to reduce the visual impact. Therefore, I urge the County to review and accept the meaningful plan alternatives offered by the Mono Lake Committee.

Yours in Preservation,



Donn Harter, Chair
Fish Camp Town Planning Advisory Council
(and weekly visit to Hwy. 120)

Michael Draper

From: Patricia Haskins <yosemitepatriciahaskins87@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 8:02 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga In

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Hi mono basin,
I declined that Tioga Inn. I voted turn down.
Leave landscape alone and keep beautiful landscape
Stop greedy !! Leave alone landscape ! Stop Greedy!!!

Thank you for your consideration.
Patricia Haskins

Michael Draper

From: Cathie Haynes <afsp@sonic.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 5:20 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

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August 17, 2019

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P O Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

As a frequent visitor over the past 30+ years often staying for a month, I have come to love the Mono Lake Basin and its pristine natural beauty. The night sky with a full moon rising over Mono Lake from Picnic Grounds Road is one of my all time favorite experiences. Another is seeing coyotes romp through the snow near the closed Mobil Station in late November. Yet another, is a massive eagle taking care of the carion on the roadside (Highway 395). This massive development will impact all of this!

The sudden, dramatic, scenic appearance of the Tioga Crest, welcoming travelers traveling north on Highway 395 as they enter Lee Vining will be spoiled by these multiple, two-story buildings breaking the skyline and interfering with this scenic, gateway view of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

And furthermore, one of the draws to come enjoy the Mono Basin is to see the stars (and full moon) in the dark night sky. In looking at the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project I see that impacts on light and glare are identified as some of the 6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts. I find it hard to believe that there are not more things that can be done in order to preserve this special resource. I urge you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

In addition, this project will have a cumulative adverse impact to migrating deer. There is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife in the Mono Basin who call this place "home."

The proposed multi-unit, two-story construction of a 100-unit/150-bedroom Workforce Housing Village will, if approved as is, fundamentally change the experience of the wild natural beauty of both Mono Lake and Mono Basin. Mono Lake, Mono County, and the scenic highway and gateway to Yosemite National Park deserve better. Please see that this happens.

Gratitude,
Ms. Catherine A. Haynes,
R.N., M.S.

August 17, 2019

RE: Comments on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan Draft SEIR

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

This letter is in regards to the request for Lee Vining community input about the Tioga Inn Specific Plan and Draft SEIR. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to weigh in about this project and its possible impact on life in the Mono Basin. I am a 23-year resident of the Mono Basin. I currently work in Mammoth Lakes and have my own small health care practice there. While I have no argument with the concerns about limited housing availability in the Mono Basin specifically and Mono County in general, I have many questions and concerns about the Tioga Inn development as currently proposed.

First of all, this project proposes to be “workforce housing” for a 120-unit hotel that was approved in 1993 and has yet to be built. Building this large development and doubling the size of the town of Lee Vining before we are even sure that the hotel will actually be built is what my mother would have called “putting the cart before the horse.” And, while we are doing some plain-talking, lets call this project what it is, a new proposal of a large, market-rate rental housing development on a scenic highway and entrance to an iconic national park. The misnomer of “workforce housing” needs to be removed as it implies that the units will be low-cost and/or subsidized housing and that the 100 units of housing is necessary to meet the current employee housing needs of our Lee Vining community.

As proposed, I have concerns about the project.

1. Size. The proposal does not require that the hotel be built near the same time as the housing or be built at all. It is not clear that 100 units, 150 bedrooms would be needed to house hotel employees if it is actually built. While Lee Vining needs more employee housing, it does not need this many units. In the SEIR, the Department of Finance projects that that the populations of Lee Vining and Mono City will increase by 52 and 41 people, respectively by 2040. This means that most of the residents of the housing project would likely be employed outside our community.
2. Unmitigable impacts. As proposed, the project doubles the size of Lee Vining and will affect many aspects of the quality of life in our sweet, little town.
 - a) The volunteer fire department has said that they are not staffed and equipped to serve a development this large.
 - b) The pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle traffic increase will need to be addressed and will likely be at the taxpayer’s expense.
 - c) As proposed, the development will be seen from Scenic Highway 395 and likely have a negative visual impact (housing sprawl vs pristine alpine terrain). The light impact despite county and state codes will be significant,

changing the character of our dark night skies. Night sky photography is a big tourism draw here and around Mono Lake.

d) The impacts to plant and wildlife (especially deer migration) of this proposal needs to be addressed.

3. Using Lee Vining to meet Mammoth Lake's housing needs. There are many problems with using our community to meet Mammoth's housing problems. Among them are: lack of engagement and commitment to our community and the impact on local services such as fire, police and schools. Mammoth Lakes needs to address its own housing issues. I can tell you personally that commuting to Mammoth is no picnic –it's costly, time-consuming and in the winter, dangerous.

My suggestion is to “not recommend or select” the current project proposal due to the unmitigable impacts mentioned above and the lack of need for this much market-priced rental housing in Lee Vining. I would not be opposed to considering a smaller and/or phased-in project of 20-50 units. I would propose that any new housing project be built to blend with the landscape, have roofs that are not reflective and are neutral colors. I would suggest that this project have water and equipment on site for fire protection, that another fire road be added so there isn't only one good way in and out. That whatever project is built that a percentage of the units be subsidized by the developer as affordable housing. I would still want the project developer and the county to better address the impacts on our community and the cost of additional services to the Mono County taxpayers.

Thank you for the opportunity make comments on this proposal.

Sincerely,
Connie Henderson
PO Box 284, Lee Vining, CA 93541
760-914-1218,
monoconnie@icloud.com

Michael Draper

From: Bob <rhilgeologist@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 9:37 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Draper,

My family frequently visits the Lee Vining/Mono Lake area. The reason we go there is for the small town atmosphere and scenery, including the geography, geology, history and wildlife. The presence of an expanded Tioga Inn would, in my opinion, significantly impact the area negatively. There are few places like Lee Vining and Mono Lake on the east side of the Sierra Nevada that are still desirable places to visit with the absence of large crowds. Most visitors who will stay in the Inn will be travelers on their way to other destinations. I have been to Lee Vining often enough over the past 60 years to observe the people who want to visit the local area for its solitude, beauty, wildlife and history as compared to those who are just passing through. During Winter months, there aren't many travelers to the area, except for those who truly appreciate its beauty and intrinsic values. I would ask and hope that the local planners would reject the proposed Tioga Inn or its expansion.

Robert L. Hill, geologist
15 Healdsburg Ct.
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-375-2501

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

RECEIVED
AUG 23 2019
Mono County CDD

08/19/2019

Dear Michael Deiper,

I hope I'm not too late to voice my surprise and dismay that a large development is to be undertaken at the Mobile Mart site. As a long time visitor to the Mono Lake Basin, I am curious why a virtual "city on the hill" could not find a more suitable and less visible location. Please be careful with this development. Do not let the monied interests make a permanent eyesore here.

I am told that there are several businesses in keelining up for sale. Wouldn't making use of all existing structures and creatively upgrading keelining be a better strategy?

Thanks for finding a wise solution,

Leonard Hill

P.O. Box 2223
Mariposa CA 95338

Bruce Horn
207 Ridgecrest Dr.
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546-1692

August 21, 2019

Dear Mono County Community Development,

I'm writing, along with many others, to comment on the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn project and the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report, with the Specific Plan Amendment 3.

As a resident and homeowner in Mono County for over 25 years, I chose Mono County for the beauty, unspoiled nature, and vibrant community on the East Side. The Mono Basin is specifically important to me since I have been involved with the Mono Lake Committee for many years, and the founders of the Committee are personal family friends. Mono Lake and the viewsheds around the Lake, especially toward the Tioga Crest, are national treasures, and attract visitors from all over the world.

The project at the Tioga Inn would damage the Mono Basin substantially. The project documents as written don't provide adequate alternatives or mitigation to maintain these critical natural assets in the Basin. These changes would be permanent and detrimental to the area, and detract from visitors' experience in the Sierra.

If this project is to go forward, it absolutely must be modified to reduce any visual impacts to an unnoticeable level from important locations in the Basin, such as South Tufa, which attracts many visitors, or from Highway 395. Incidental brief views of the project driving up 120 toward Tioga Pass may be unavoidable.

The impacts of this project demand that the proponents go back to the drawing board to change the project so as to preserve the viewsheds which visitors and residents enjoy every day. Although Mono County apparently gave previous approval for permanent negative visual impacts to an earlier proposal, these decisions should be revisited and the projects revised so that there is no adverse visual impact. The residents, visitors and environment deserve no less.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Horn

August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
Mammoth Lakes Office
437 Old Mammoth Road, Ste 220 (formerly Ste P)
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Sent via email to: Mdraper@mono.ca.gov

RE: Comments on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment Subsequent Environmental Impact Report

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment. My family has been visiting Lee Vining and camping at Big Bend several times a year over the past 50 years.

A. Notice of Preparation

1. NOP comment period was from October 17, 2016 to November 25, 2016; with the scoping meeting October 27, 2016. This was 3 years ago and significant project changes have occurred since then, along with changes to OPR CEQA guidelines.
 - a. The NOP comments are not based on the current project.
 - b. The NOP should have been updated and recirculated to the public for complete public disclosure and meaningful comments.
2. “During the NOP review period, a public scoping meeting was held at the Lee Vining Community Center inviting interested agencies, individuals, and organizations to discuss the range of issues, alternatives, and potential mitigation measures to be addressed in his Draft Subsequent EIR.
 - a. Again, the comments that were received were based on a project that has since significantly changed. Therefore, the range of issues and alternatives that were discussed are not the same as current version of the project.
 - b. A new scoping meeting should have been held to discussed correct project.
3. In recirculating the NOP, the EIR should have included the updated CEQA checklist, including a full analysis of energy, wildfire, and a separate analysis of TRC.

B. Visual Impact Assessment

1. Appendix O. *Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment. Tioga Workforce Housing Project. Prepared by: Bauer Planning and Environmental Services, Inc. June 14, 2018*, states that: “The considerations outlined in this Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment, in combination with additional information provided in the Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment Questionnaire and Responses, provided in SEIR §5.12, indicate that visual impacts of the proposed Tioga Workforce Housing project will be noticeable and the average response of all viewer groups will be moderate to low.” Please justify the statement that the average response of all viewer groups will be moderate to low. How was this determined?
2. The Subsequent EIR has an inadequate analysis of visual impacts.
 - a. The visual impact assessment follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in March 1981. This is an outdated document. The analysis needs to be redone using the current FHWA guidelines dated January 2015.

https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_topics/other_topics/VIA_Guidelines_for_Highway_Projects.pdf

- b. A visual impact assessment can not be completed without visual simulations and photographs of the existing conditions from several viewpoints. None of these were found in the 2018 *Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment*.

C. Project Location

1. It is admirable that the workforce (low income) housing has been expanded; it is needed in this area. However, the identified greenfield site is not the proper location for this development. Based on the Mono Basin Community Plan (see above goals and policies) the County specifically states, several times, that orderly growth of Lee Vining should take place adjacent to the existing community, not way out by SR 120. Leapfrog development has consistently been proven to be a poor planning strategy. Isolated developments in rural exurban areas, far from the built-up lands, that will not be incorporated into the contiguous built-up urban area for decades, if ever, specifically meets any definition of urban sprawl.

By extending infrastructure to this location the County would encourage future development and promote urban sprawl, habitat destruction, nighttime lights in areas that should be preserved for nature.

2. Tioga Road (SR 120) and US 395 would have a significant increased in pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and possible fatal accidents as people walk along the side of these fast moving highways. There are no sidewalks until you get closer to town, and then there are very narrow sidewalks until will inside Lee Vining. Residents in the workforce housing would need to walk a mile to the nearest, and only, grocery store. Children would need to walk along a high speed highway with no protection from speeding cars, trucks, semis, and freight haulers. Pedestrian safety would be a significant impact.

The developer or county would need to construct off road bicycle/walking path from the development to town to ensure the safety.

D. Nighttime Lighting

1. Mitigation Measure BIO 5.3 (d-1) Shielding of Night Lighting, is inadequate. This measure requires compliance with an existing regulation: Chapter 23, Dark Sky Regulations, of the General Plan (Mono County Outdoor Lighting Ordinance). However, there are exemptions to this ordinance which should not be permitted for this dark area.
23.40 Exemptions.
A. The following are exempt from the provisions of this chapter:
 1. seasonal displays using multiple low-wattage bulbs (approximately 15 lumens or less), provided that they do not constitute a fire hazard, create a nuisance, and are maintained in a safe and attractive condition.

Seasonal displays, no matter how safe and attractive, generate significant nighttime light and should be prohibited, not exempt from the lighting restrictions.

2. The Mono County Outdoor Lighting Ordinance was not written with consideration for wildlife and is outdated. This greenfield development should be required to comply with the International Dark Sky Model Lighting Ordinance¹ to ensure dark skies are maintained and that wildlife is not impacted.

¹ <http://darksky.org/our-work/lighting/public-policy/mlo/>

E. Alternatives

Five project alternatives in the SEIR are:

- No Project
- 1993 Alternatives
- Reduced Development
- Modified Cluster Design
- Modified Apartment Design

1. The 1993 project alternatives are completely irrelevant for the 2019 project, because the 1993 project was completely different.
2. The discussion of alternatives is completely inadequate. For a project of this large size each alternative should have a site plan to help the public understand the difference between site layout, mix of uses, reduced development and cluster development. A vague description does not fully describe the project alternatives.
3. The project alternative must ‘avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.’² EIR Chapter 7 does not list the ‘significant effects of the project’ so how can it possibly identify project alternatives that would reduce those impacts. However, Chapter 7 does include the irrelevant and unrelated ‘potential significant adverse environmental effects’ of the Draft RTP/General Plan Update; not the Tioga Workforce Housing Project.
4. ‘the lead agency must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives.’³ There is no explanation for the reason each of the project alternative were selected. They are just modifications of the project and not related directly to reduction of impacts.
5. ‘The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project.’⁴
 - a. There is no discussion or even a general analysis of the impacts of each alternative. I understand that CEQA permits the Alternatives analysis to be a less detail than the proposed project, but there is no analysis or discussion of how these alternatives reduce significant impacts.
 - b. The ‘meaningful evaluation and analysis’ is limited to a numbered list (page 7-6 Section 7.5.3, paragraph #3) or a partial sentence (Section 7.5.4 ‘...alternative would reduce impacts on biological resources [compared to the proposed project],...)
 - c. A matrix table is not an analysis, its just a summary of findings. Findings that should have been discussed and evaluated in the text.
 - d. Each significant impact should be discussed, and the alternatives evaluation should show how they avoid or reduce the specific impact. This evaluation did not occur in the SEIR; therefore, the alternatives discussion is inadequate.
6. Alternatives to the 1993 Project are invalid because they don’t relate to the 2019 project; the no project alternative is informational only; and Alternative 4 and 5 were both rejected and should not have been included in the project alternatives analyzed. Therefore, EIR Chapter 7, in reality, only

² 14 CCR 15126.6 (a)

³ 14 CCR 15126.6 (a)

⁴ 14 CCR 15126.6 (d)

includes one Project Alternative. Unfortunately, one alternative does not provide a ‘reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation’⁵

7. EIR Chapter 7 does not provide enough information or meaningful evaluation for the County to approve one of the alternatives if so desired.
8. ‘The discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location ... even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.’⁶ There is no valid reason why the project is required to be located at the SR 120/ us 395 intersection. Since there is only one valid alternative (not a reasonable range), the SEIR should include an alternative location closer to Lee Vining. This would reduce several significant impacts.

F. Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Section 7.3.1, page 7-2 identifies the following 5 significant project impacts:

- Volcanic Hazards (volcanic eruption)
- Biological Resources (migratory species)
- Public Safety (pedestrians and cyclists)
- Traffic (turning movements)
- Visual (scenic resources light and glare)

Section 9.2, page 9-1 identifies the following 7 significant and unavoidable impacts:

- Risk of Mudflow
- Interfere with Wildlife Movement and Migration
- Impact on Police, Fire, School
- Noncompliance with Plans and Ordinances
- Traffic impacts
- Impacts to Scenic Resources
- Significant new Sources of Light and Glare

Then the matrix in Chapter 7 has a whole different set of 5 significant impacts and something questionable (question marks). The SEIR is not consistent throughout the document and does not provide clear and understandable information that is useful to the public or decision makers.

⁵ 14 CCR 15126.6 (a)

⁶ 14 CCR 15126.6 (b)

AVOIDANCE OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS							
Volcanic Hazards	+1	+1	0	0	+1	0	0
FAA Obstruction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pedestrian Hazards	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Visual Impacts	+1	+1	0	0	+1	+1	-1
Traffic Impacts	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0
OTHER?? Bio??	+1	0	0	0	+1	0	0
SUBTOTAL	+4	+2	0	0	+2	+1	-1
TOTAL	+3	-3	-4	-3	0	+2	-4

G. Domestic pets

Domestic pets, especially dogs and cats, are expected with the new housing tenancy. It is unrealistic to expect that these animals will be restrained and wandering pets will be a significant new predator in the area. Cats, for example, could extirpate the Brewer’s sparrow population and dogs could harass badgers and mule deer and cause collisions with trucks and cars on SR 120 and US 395.

The SEIR finds that the following mitigation would reduce domestic pet impacts to less than significant. MITIGATION BIO 5.3(a-5) (Pet Enclosure, Pet Leashing, Eviction for Noncompliance): Tenants wishing to have pets shall be required to construct and pay for a fenced enclosure, as approved by property management, to prevent their pet(s) from entering undeveloped portions of the property and (unfenced) adjacent lands. The tenancy agreement for all units will include a common rule requiring the leashing of all pets whenever they exit the housing units or fenced enclosure. Enforcement of the enclosure and leashing requirements shall continue through the life of the project. The penalty for violation of this regulation shall include eviction following two advisory noncompliance notices by the housing manager.

Mitigation measures must be fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally binding instruments.⁷ This measure can not be enforced unless there is a ‘no pets’ restriction or pets are registered and tagged with GPS locator to monitor their movements. This impact should be found significant and unavoidable.

H. Archeological & Tribal Discoveries

Mitigation Measure CULT 5.4(a) Discovery of Archaeological Resources. To avoid in the field decisions, and/or disagreements over procedures and processes, I suggest setting the ground rules up front so archaeologists, Tribal members, monitors, and construction workers all know what to expect. This can be done with a mitigation measure that requires preparation of an Archaeological Monitoring Plan in coordination with County staff, developer, qualified archaeologist and Tribe.

Suggested Mitigation Measure clarification text:

1. To reduce impacts to previously undiscovered buried archaeological resources, following completion of the final grading plan and prior to any ground disturbance, a qualified archaeologist shall prepare an Archaeological Monitoring Plan.

⁷ 14 CCR 15126.4(a)(2)

- The County shall retain a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (48 Federal Register 44738-39). The archaeologist must have knowledge of both prehistoric and historical archaeology.
- The Archaeological Monitoring Plan shall include:
 - Extent and duration of the monitoring based on the grading plans
 - At what depths monitoring of earthmoving activities shall be required
 - Location of areas to be monitored
 - Types of artifacts anticipated
 - Procedures for temporary stop and redirection of work to permit sampling, including anticipated radius of suspension of ground disturbances around discoveries and duration of evaluation of discovery to determine whether they are classified as unique or historical resources
 - Procedures for maintenance of monitoring logs, recovery, analysis, treatment, and curation of significant resources
 - Procedures for archaeological resources sensitivity training for all construction workers
 - Accommodation and procedures for Native American monitors
 - Procedures for discovery of Native American cultural resources
- The construction manager shall adhere to the stipulations of the Archaeological Monitoring Plan.

I. Tribal Consultation

'Following a request for notification under AB 52, the County sent formal AB 52 letters on 27 April 2018 to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and to the Kutzedika'a Tribe.' Nowhere in Section 5.4 *Cultural & Tribal Cultural Resources* does it state that the formal AB 52 letters (Tribal project notification) were sent via certified mail return receipt or FedEx as is standard practice, so there is an official record of receipt by the Tribe. Based on the information on page 5.4-10, obviously this did not happen. Additionally, there is no mention that official AB 52 consultation was concluded. This can only mean that compliance with AB 52 requirements was not completed.

Consultation can be an ongoing process. Consultation ends when either: 1) Both Parties agree to measures to avoid or mitigate a significant effect on a TCR. Agreed upon mitigation measures shall be recommended for inclusion in the environmental document. PRC § 21082.3(a), or 2) A party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. PRC § 21080.3.2(b)(1)-(2); PRC § 21080.3.1(b)(1).

The archaeological site survey and analysis cannot and should not replace government-to-government consultation. Which of the two consultation conclusions occurred?

J. Tribal Mitigation Measure (Tribal Agreement)

'Because there is a possibility that one or more undocumented Native American burials could be encountered during grading and excavation, Mitigation Measure 5.4(c) was developed for the protection of tribal cultural resources. This Mitigation Measure is consistent with the California Native American Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Sites Act, and with California Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and Public Resources Code §5097.98,

which regulate the treatment of human remains discovered during construction. The measure is also consistent with written guidance provided by the Native American Heritage Commission.

The only Tribal mitigation identified is 'Mitigation Measures –Tribal Resources and Human Remains' which concludes that 'all potential project impacts associated with cultural resources on the site would be reduced to less than significant levels through adoption and implementation of the mitigation measures ...'

This mitigation measure only covers human remains and is based on compliance with existing regulations (California Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and PRC §5097.98). Compliance with existing regulations is not mitigation and not what the Tribe would have agreed to. Based on the language in the mitigation measure, Tribal agreement on the mitigation measure may not have occurred prior to circulation of the CEQA document.

K. Tribal Cultural Resource Impacts

Human remains are not the only Tribe-related finds that may be unearthed during grading or utility trenching. Tribal cultural resources are defined as sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a tribe. These items must be listed, or determined to be eligible for listing, in the national or state register of historical resource, or listed in a local register of historic resources. Additionally, a TCR can be a resource that the lead agency determines, is a tribal cultural resource.

Neither of these definitions were discussed in Chapter 5.4, and a determination of TCR impact was not identified.

Conclusion

The SEIR is inadequate and the proposed project would result in way too many significant unavoidable impacts. The Mono County Board of Supervisor should not, in good conscience, certify the SEIR or approve the project. Please give thoughtful consideration to all the comment letters and save the beautiful Eastern Sierras. This is a good project, but not in this location.

Alice Houseworth

Mono Lake – Tioga Inn development project

August 7, 2019

5

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with dismay that we read about a huge building complex proposed for our beautiful Mono Lake, Lee Vining, California on east side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

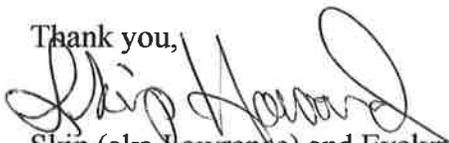
My husband and I have loved this area ever since we first saw it 34 years ago. We love the isolation it provides. It is a place of reverence, a place for our souls to mend, a place that should be a part of the National Park system, it is that beautiful and special to us. We cannot imagine more development and more population in this pristine area such as this proposal would bring.

Our primary concerns are the increased population, the increased traffic, and the unsightliness this mini-city would bring. We believe it will have a negative impact and be intolerable. The area is too fragile to tolerate the added construction and development this proposal brings. Lee Vining is currently cute and manages quite well with the tourists and truckers who visit and drive through. The increased population this proposal will bring is an impact the area cannot tolerate. It is too fragile.

However, if it must happen, please consider putting in electric charging stations rather than gasoline tanks. Gas tanks can leak, as happened several years ago all over the country when tanks were buried underground. Above ground, they are unsightly and create a complete blight on the landscape. They can even be a draw for terrorism. Additionally, the very near future will not include fossil fuels; it is electricity for cars that will be needed in the future. In fact, the need is here now! We would encourage the addition of charging stations at the Mobil Station location, and at all current service stations in Lee Vining. That is what the future needs, and the area could tolerate this addition.

Please consider the fragility of Mono Lake and the character of Lee Vining, and reconsider the approval of this development project.

Thank you,



Skip (aka Lawrence) and Evelyn Howard

1143 N. Karen Ave.

Clovis, CA 93611

559-326-0935 home

559-260-0233 cell E.

559-392-5714 cell S.

Michael Draper

From: Ron Hunter <Ron.Hunter@patagonia.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 9:07 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: comments on Tioga Inn SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Dept.,

My name is Ron Hunter and a current resident of Truckee, CA . I am someone who loves and visits the Mono Basin/Tioga Pass region many times a year for all the beauty and solitude the area has to offer. I am writing you today to offer comments on the Tioga Inn project's draft SEIR. My main apprehensions about the project (as I understand it after reading the draft SEIR) are as follows:

1. The current draft project does not include alternatives that mitigate the impacts so a more reasonable project can be considered. I ask you to consider making additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the wild and stunning nature of this special area. I believe Lee Vining and Mono County deserve a more balanced project design than what is currently on the table.
2. The project documentation lists the following potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts: interfere with wildlife movement or migration; impacts on police, fire, schools, and other services; impacts associated with intersection hazards; impact scenic resources and visual character; create new sources of light and glare. Regrettably, the proposal lacks meaningful design options that reduce or eliminate these impacts. Again, I believe the County can do better than the current plan.
3. The previously approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the applicant has requested the County to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will affect highway 395 travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day. All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, all at once and not in a piecemeal fashion.
4. The proposed project seems out of scale with the community of Lee Vining; the Tioga Inn development would be a separate community with no connectivity to the existing town, with no pedestrian and or bike access.

I fully realize that I do not live in the Lee Vining community, and I am commenting on the draft SEIR as a visitor only. But as someone who has lived in a mountain community (Truckee) for over 25 years, I'd hate to see Lee Vining make some of same mistakes as Truckee has over the years. Please be careful, you cannot put the genie (of bad development) back in the bottle.

Thank you for considering my comments on the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Sincerely,

Ron Hunter
PO Box 807
Truckee, CA 96160

Ron Hunter | Patagonia Environmental Programs | 775-746-6824
8550 White Fir St, Reno, NV 89523

Michael Draper
Mono County
Community Development Department
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93514

August 20, 2019

Dear Mr. Draper,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Subsequent EIR for this significant project. I am a Mono County resident and frequently visit the Mono Basin for photography, birding, camping, and occasionally kayaking on Mono Lake.

I always try to visit local businesses in Lee Vining (including Mobil Mart), and am concerned that a 200-seat restaurant will have negative consequences for other similar establishments in Lee Vining. In general, I think this project at full build-out is too large for the existing community, and I would encourage Mono County to scale back the amount of workforce housing (as described in Alternative 3), and the size of the proposed 3-story restaurant.

There need to be additional feasible alternatives in the Final SEIR that include alternatives that reduce visual impacts to a less than significant level. Visual and aesthetic impacts, which include lighting, are not addressed adequately. As a photographer whose images are used occasionally in the Mono Lake Calendar, I am especially concerned about the significant visual impact from South Tufa State Reserve that this project will ultimately have. I urge the proponent and the county to mitigate these impacts and/or reduce the size of the project from the beginning.

I would also strongly urge the county to prohibit the proposed addition of a gas pump island and associated fuel tank. Making petroleum products more available to travelers sends the wrong message, and does nothing to slow down the emission of greenhouse gases. Going forward, gasoline should be harder to find and purchase, not easier. Mono County should take the issue of greenhouse gas emissions seriously and should not still be encouraging additional fossil fuel infrastructure. What the proponent should do is install electric vehicle (EV) charging units. And Mono County should strongly consider making such charging stations contingent for project approval. I applaud the use of solar panels to cover at least some of the power used by this large project, but EV charging should definitely be a part of this proposed project. Making destination chargers available to motel guests (in addition to those for other short-term visitors) would only add to the project's appeal from both tourists and project opponents. It would also help make Mono County become the progressive county it needs to be.

I would also urge Mono County to adhere to the proposed mitigation (pre-disturbance monitoring with follow-up avoidance measures) for construction during the breeding season for Green-tailed towhee and Brewer's sparrow (a special status species), as well as timely surveys for active American badger dens.

Mono Lake, the community of Lee Vining, and the Scenic Area deserve a better project design, and additional alternatives to those currently proposed. The Mono Basin is a world-class

destination, and the visual and aesthetic impacts of this project should be addressed seriously and mitigated effectively. Given that there are six unavoidable (new) significant impacts associated with this project, it seems reasonable for the proponent to present alternatives that mitigate these impacts to a less than significant level. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Stephen Ingram

August 20, 2019

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

We are writing concerning the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn project and associated specific plan amendment # 3.

In the 1960's my father purchased a lot in Mono City when I was a teenager. Our family built a cabin together during several summers while staying in a trailer in Lee Vining. This has been a wonderful gathering place for our family since then and now the grandchildren are also bringing their families to enjoy the unique unspoiled area.

We are all very concerned about the visual impact of the current plan and would like to see alternatives that would reduce visual and aesthetic intrusion for the area. It should not be visible from South Tufa or Hwy 395 south of Tioga Pass junction. We are also concerned about the affect of wild life with this expansion.

Everyone living in the area and the many visitors from around the world deserve a better project design than the current proposal. The unspoiled natural undeveloped feeling visitors experience is why Mono Lake draws so many people from so many places. Please do not make this another Mammoth Lakes which has been overbuilt and does not have the unique feeling that the Mono Lake area has been able to maintain over the decades.

Please try to balance the needs of the project with maintaining the unique, wild and beautiful nature of the area.

Sincerely,

Frances and Jon Iverson

Michael Draper

From: gabrielle johnck <gabriellejohnck@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 3:25 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Bob Gardner; Jennifer Kreitz
Subject: Tioga Inn Project DEIR Comments

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Draper,

Please consider this email as our comments to the DEIR on the Tioga Inn Resort that is being proposed on Tioga Rd near the Town of Lee Vining, California. We are homeowners at 50 Paoha Drive in Lee Vining where we purchased land in 1992. We are concerned about the negative impacts that this project will have on the Town of Lee Vining and the Mono Basin Scenic Area. Rather than the County focussing on overriding considerations for the project's negative impacts, it is our hope that the County will, in good faith, identify what, if any, benefits the project will bring to the Town. Upon our review of the proposal, we are concerned that this stand-alone and massive development contradicts the environmental health of the Mono Basin Scenic Area.

We appreciate that Supervisors Gardner and Kreitz attended the Community meeting in Lee Vining August 15. As the District Spervisor for Lee Vining, Mr. Gardner's presence was reassuring and noted by the attendees.

Brielle Johnck Former Environmental Commissioner of Menlo Park
Steve Schmidt Former Mayor of Menlo Park, California

INFRASTRUCTURE

1. increased project-generated traffic may require new traffic controls at ingress and access points, specifically at the SR120 driveway and the SR120 intersection with US395.
2. One ingress and egress may be inadequate for emergencies.
3. Improved pedestrian access amenities to & from established destinations in Lee Vining and the project are needed and must be provided and maintained by owner/project.

HOUSING UNITS

The discussion regarding the housing portion of this development is vague and open to any number of changes at the will of the owner/developer.

1. Uncertainty as to *whether* any will be built
2. Uncertainty *when* any will be built
3. Uncertainty as to *who* the target demographic will be
4. Uncertainty as to whether Lee Vining employees will have *priority* for a percentage of the units
5. Needs deed restrictions to prevent housing units become market rate open to public (retirees, AirBnb, sublets, etc.)
6. There must be a requirement that before the restaurant and hotel are granted a building permit, a certain number or housing units must be completed and certified ready for occupancy.
7. Mono County should consider requiring a certain percentage of the housing to be designated for low-income residents of Lee Vining.

SAFETY

100 housing units and 200 room hotel need integrated self-supported fire protection considering the town only has a volunteer Fire and Emergency Department whose membership is small and not adequate to serve both the town and a 200 seat restaurant, 100 housing building and a 120 room hotel. Developer should be required to purchase a fire truck that has capability to reach 2nd floor of hotel and housing units.

1. An up to date fire truck must be kept on site, maintained by owner/developer and ready for use.
2. If owner/developer contracts with the Lee Vining Fire Department, he should be required to have 2 full time employees undergo training and be members of the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department.
3. Project must have to access/egress points for emergency evacuation
4. Project needs its own water storage unit for fire suppression

SEWAGE

Project must provide capacity upgrade to LV sewage treatment facility or its own waste water treatment facility that meets regional water quality standards.

WATER

In coordination with the Lee Vining Public Utilities Department the project will install water meters and be billed based on measured use. must be required of this project The existing flat rate billing for water encourages consumption while rates based on measured consumption encourage conservation.

SITING & MATERIALS OF BUILDINGS

Solar access can be maximized by careful site orientation of all buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF BUILDING'S MATERIAL, GLASS AND ROOF DESIGN

1. Building needs a design that minimizes the visibility from US395, SR120 east and Mono Lake 1. building siding compatible in color with the surrounding landscape
2. windows must be designed to be low glare and employ bird-safe glass
3. roof materials should not be highly reflective, but instead should be of a color similar to the surrounding landscape.
4. Owner should be required to minimize the negative effects of light pollution and visual intrusion into the natural landscape, both of which are widely held concerns of visitors to the Mono Basin.
5. The use of low glare glass and roof materials, earthen berms, vegetation and careful building orientation must be employed to shield buildings and nighttime light from Mono lake and its environs, with particular attention to visibility from US395, SR120 east and South Tufa State Park.

VISUAL IMPACTS

1. no night flood lights that interfere with the night sky
2. subdued lighting that focusses on the building's signage no higher than 4 ft
3. all lighting needs to be pointed down

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Any and all requirements imposed on the project must have a well-defined monitoring and enforcement mechanism in place before any permit entitlements are granted. Since Mono County is granting the permits, it should be the responsible agency for defined monitoring systems.

The hotel & restaurant must be operated on a year-round basis.

Michael Draper

From: Owlsnest <owlsnesttwo@att.net>
Sent: Saturday, July 27, 2019 6:21 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Planned development for housing at Whoa Nellie Deli

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings:

We have been coming to Lee Vining for many, many years, usually more than once a year. We are very, very much opposed to this development. The town of Lee Vining should remain small & compact. A project of this magnitude, would interfere with wildlife, would increase use of water, waste, increase traffic, etc. A typical Sunday night at Whoa Nellie draws a very large crowd of locals, tourists from Yosemite & elsewhere as it is.

Please do not allow this project to go forward.

Much thanks.

Ralph y Marcia Johnson
Sebastopol, CA
95472
owlsnesttwo@att.net

Michael Draper

From: Venita Jorgensen <kvenitaj@att.net>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 9:19 PM
To: Michael Draper; arya@monolake.org
Subject: Proposed Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: Kirke C Jorgensen, 4435 Mission Inn Ave, Riverside Ca 92501 kvenitaj@att.net

Dear Mr. Draper:

If the Tioga Inn Project is approved, I am concerned for the merchants in Lee Vining, who rely on the Hwy 120 Yosemite traffic for their livelihood. I fear the hotel will sequester guests who will not have the opportunity to visit Lee Vining, enjoy the restaurants and tourist shops, the Mono Basin Visitor Center, Mono Lake Committee Center, etc. I propose, that if the Inn Project is put forward, the hotel be required to provide daily shuttle service into town. This would allow the hotel guests to support the town and enjoy the eastern Sierra even more. A free shuttle could run say from 9am to 5pm hour on the hour. This would also alleviate traffic and parking problems in Lee Vining.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kirke C Jorgensen

Michael Draper

From: Sue Jorgenson <lilithm@juno.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 6:31 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Opposition to Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello, Mr. Draper:

I'm Sue Jorgenson, nearly 63 years of age, a Mono Committee member and a frequent visitor and participant of the committee's workshops since 2012.

I am deeply opposed to the proposed Tioga Inn and the expansion of the entire area around the Mobil gas station for these reasons:

1. Lee Vining is a small town and therein lies its charm and draw. The traffic on 395 flows quite well with no need for stoplights, and an increase in traffic from the proposed lodgings would beget an equal increase in traffic difficulties. Do we really want another Mammoth? Or more dead deer thanks to more careless drivers? I think not.
2. The dark skies are extremely important, not only in view of light pollution and the scarcity of such areas, but also because of the nighttime photography workshops offered through the Mono Committee and elsewhere. I have taken about five or six nighttime photography workshops at the lake, in Bodie and by Tuolumne Meadows (all offered by Dave Gubernick) and it is just amazing to be able to capture the Milky Way, or the South Tufa by the full moon - and no artificial glow in the sky interfering with the photography. I live in Southern California where the night sky has been irrevocably lost to us. I do not want to see this happening to the Mono Basin. Most photographers I know come here for this very reason.
3. Lee Vining and the Mono Basin have a special magic to them that is very hard to put into words. I can tell you what they are not. They are not tourist traps and that means the world to me. I've eaten at the Whoa Nellie Deli and it is iconic in its own right. The fact that it is a restaurant connected with a gas station makes it interesting and cool - but attaching hotels to that will remove its iconic status. I love to turn onto Hwy 120 to head up to Poole Power Plant Road, and the unspoiled drive puts me into a happy, relaxed mood. So also driving up to Tioga Pass and into Yosemite. I don't have to struggle with traffic, and we come back to traffic again. Putting hotels there will increase traffic...and pollution...
4. The special magic includes ALL THE SCENERY. Unspoiled scenery. In one photo workshop, we did a dawn photo shoot in the parking lot above the gas station. Let me tell you, that dawn was pure magic - there were clouds and the dawn was a blazing red and orange, fading to many shades of pastel pink, yellow and peach over the lake. Had that area been populated with a hotel, we would not have had that fantastic dawn photo shoot.
5. That unspoiled scenery brings photographers and artists and MONEY. We love and cherish the Mono Basin for the gorgeous vistas whether from above the 395/120 junction or Panum Crater or elsewhere, and we capture the scenery through camera, paint and other media.
6. I am equally concerned about the impact on the wildlife - flora and fauna - with the unbridled construction and increase in traffic, etc. This is their home.

7. I have taken countless other workshops (I lost count after 12 or 15 workshops) because I love the Mono Basin and its unsullied beauty - and I hope to retire in a decade to Lee Vining or maybe Bishop, because it feels like home to me in LV. I think Bridgeport would be a better site for further construction. It is bad enough that the local government approved a hotel and a restaurant and is not considering the environmental impact. Look (again) at Mammoth. That is a closed-loop scenario where there is no national park over a pass but it is heavily congested. Do we want that for Lee Vining and its environs?

From what I am reading and seeing, the planners and developers and bureaucrats are not seeing the big picture or considering long term environmental impacts, or what will be left to future generations. Please understand that: future generations. These future generations, who are children now or as yet unborn, deserve to appreciate and cherish what we have appreciated and cherished - with thanks to David Gaines, among many others.

Don't destroy the magic of Mono Basin. What is being proposed WILL destroy it.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Jorgenson
538 West Amerige Ave. Apt. C
Fullerton CA 92832
714-616-2994 (text only as I'm hearing impaired)
Mono Committee member #90027

Michael Draper

From: Nancy Kamalski <nancykamalski@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 2:21 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: action@monolake.org
Subject: proposed development behind Mobil gas station

Categories: Tioga Inn

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We have stayed in Lee Vining four or five times in the last decade; before that, we would come from Tuolumne Meadows on our way to Bridgeport for the Fourth of July celebrations. We would always visit Mono Lake. One of our favorite memories is the ranger talk on stars we went to at Mono Lake; it was incredibly beautiful and we had never ever seen so many stars.

I understand the need for worker housing - is it for workers from Yosemite or Mammoth Lakes or somewhere else? Could you reduce the number of units, or at least hide them with planting of trees native to the area? Could you use lights that don't diminish the Dark Sky status of the area?

Please make your decisions based on more than the bottom line...

Nancy Kamalski

Michael Draper

From: Alison Kaplan <alikap11@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:48 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comment re Draft SEIR for Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I'm writing to share my concerns regarding the draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn project here in Lee Vining. I live in Lee Vining seasonally and work for the Mono Lake Committee. I moved to Lee Vining because I was so inspired by the Mono Lake story--a bunch of young people saw that this lake was threatened and spent 16 years fighting DWP (who at the time were probably one of the most powerful and rich entities in the state) to protect this lake, and against all odds they won. Naturalists, hikers, climbers, environmentalists, and more cherish the Mono Basin because of its natural beauty but also because it reminds us of this story. The work done here at Mono Lake has set a precedent across California and inspired thousands of people--we have 16,000 members because the Mono Lake story gives people hope. It saddens me to see that the Tioga Inn plans involve so many "unavoidable" adverse impacts that would hugely affect the scenic nature of the Mono Basin and let down the people who have fought to protect this place for so long.

My main concern with the draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn is that it claims certain impacts are "unavoidable" when in fact they could be avoided or significantly lessened with effort and thought on the developer's part, particularly in regard to the light pollution. If you've ever swam in Mono Lake under a new moon you know that the sky is so dark and the lake so reflective that you can't tell where one ends and the other begins. It's something I've never experienced anywhere else in the world and the glow of 100 housing units in addition to the already approved hotel at one of the highest points in town would mean that future visitors will never have that experience.

Light pollution could be significantly reduced if the housing village was moved to a different part of the property that wouldn't be visible from all over the basin, or if the project was downsized or screened better--in fact, it seems to me that many of the impacts could be avoided or lessened simply by downsizing the project.

I'm not against development in Lee Vining--we could use more housing and some revitalization here and I think many members of the community would agree on that point, but I'm sure many people have also voiced their concerns about who will end up living in this housing. If the housing village ends up housing Mammoth employees that get bussed out every day and won't be able to actively participate in our community, then the development won't really benefit Lee Vining in any way. Lee Vining's housing shortage could probably be solved with just 10 units, so a village of this size is totally out of proportion to our needs. This project jeopardizes some of the things that are most special about this place, and it's not fair to call the impacts unavoidable when they could easily be avoided by downsizing the housing village.

Please remember that the Eastern Sierra is valued by people from all over the world for its vast and undeveloped landscapes. The Mono Basin has been an example of an environmental victory for over 20 years now, and they won in the 1990s by compromising with Los Angeles and finding a solution that balanced the needs of the Mono Basin with the needs of Los Angeles. I hope that Mono County can do the same by requiring alternatives that mitigate the impacts of this project.

Thank you,

Alison Kaplan
Lee Vining, CA

Michael Draper

From: Lewis Kemper <lewis@lewiskemper.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 12:47 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Michael Draper, Community Development Department

I am writing to voice my opposition to the expansion of Tioga Inn project in Lee Vining. As a professional nature photographer, I am objecting on aesthetic, artist and environmental reasons. I can not imagine standing at South Tufa at sunrise and aiming my camera at the Sierra Nevada and seeing the hotel structure in my viewfinder. Or standing there at night photographing the Milky Way over the mountains only to have my view obliterated by the light pollution from the hotel and housing area. There are very few places left in California with dark skies and people come to the Mono Lake Basin from all over the world to take advantage of the dark skies this area has to offer, and this project will greatly impact that experience.

I am also concerned about the disruption to the deer migration up and down the canyon, and the traffic on highway 395, especially through the town of Lee Vining.

Please consider a more environmentally friendly footprint that takes these impacts into consideration.

Lewis Kemper

Lewis Kemper
800 Saverien Dr
Sacramento, CA 95864

lewis@lewiskemper.com

None of these views would be the same once this project is complete

Michael Draper

From: Duncan King <nosmog@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 2:48 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn comments

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Michael - I have attached my comments under a series of headings to make them easier to read.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The scale of this project is such that it will totally overwhelm the Mono Basin. The number of permanent residents on the site, 300+, will dwarf the population of Lee Vining and swamp the infrastructure of roads, parking, and local services such as police, fire, medical, and schools.

Mono County has Dark Sky ordinances which will also be trashed by the light and glare from hundreds of windows, street lighting, vehicles transiting local roads and the site at all hours, and illuminated signs.

The increased footprint of the project will create a huge sprawl outside of the well defined Lee Vining boundary, contrary to the Mono Basin Community Plan.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

As a concept this is meaningless. It has no basis in law, and is ill-defined in the document. It does not appear to be the same as 'Affordable Housing' which is well defined, and a limited number of units of which might be welcomed in the community.

Also, although Mono County has a 'workforce' housing problem, this is a far bigger issue in the town of Mammoth Lakes than in Lee Vining. This solution in search of a problem is way misplaced 30 miles to the north especially in winter with Deadman summit over 8,000 feet.

MONO BASIN SCENIC VALUES

The project is outside the Mono Basin Scenic Area (JUST) but will be very visible from within it. This will be to the detriment of the experience of the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come to recreate in the Mono Basin every year.

Highway 395 is also labelled as a Scenic Highway, a designation put in place on June 5, 2000. When the original entitlement for this project was approved by the county in 1993 therefore, this designation was not in place. One might be forgiven for wondering whether the approval would have been given had this designation been in place. This extra development will clearly detract from the scenic value for anyone travelling along this section of 395.

The project will be clearly visible from the South Tufa area of Mono Lake, especially when lit up at night. Visitors to the area (170,000+ every year) include many star gazers and photographers who appreciate the dark night sky without unnatural light pollution.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this unwelcome development proposal,

Duncan King

Michael Draper

From: ek95014@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 12:24 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Proposed Tioga Inn project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

First, I understand that the hotel and restaurant components of the project were approved some 26 years ago and therefore are not subject to review at this time. However, I am concerned that the proposed "footprint" of this revised project is considerably larger than what was originally proposed and approved. It seems to me that enlarging the footprint goes beyond a "supplemental" document and warrants a more thorough review under the CEQA process.

I also have many concerns about the workforce housing proposal. The buildings will be visible from many points in the Mono Basin, which is revered by locals and visitors alike for its unspoiled views. They are also directly in the path of fires that start further up canyon and are blown eastward by the prevailing winds, and there is only one access road. Fire equipment and fleeing residents would have to use the same road, creating a dangerous situation. Even in non-emergency situations, the amount of traffic entering and exiting the site will create congestion, and the impact on the already-dangerous junction of Highway 120 and Highway 395 will be exacerbated.

Also, the term "workforce" is never clearly defined in the proposal. There is no guarantee that workers at the Tioga Inn site will be given priority to be able to live near where they work, nor is there any stipulation that rents will be set so that the housing is affordable to those earning a service industry wage. Also, there is no stipulation that prevents subleasing. It is possible that the site will contain residences that purport to ameliorate the housing shortage in Mono County while in reality are being rented by short-term visitors.

This project will also have significant impacts on the neighboring community of Lee Vining. Residents and visitors alike resonate with its small-town quiriness. Change is, of course, inevitable. But poorly-planned change does not have to happen.

Mono County proudly presents itself as "Wild by Nature". Our growing tourism-based economy is testament to the drawing power of this beautiful and relatively unspoiled area. It is undeniable that the County faces a shortage of housing for the workforce that keeps its economy functioning. However, the proposed Tioga Inn project and its placement in a key viewshed area for visitors heading to and from Yosemite National Park are not the answer.

Ellen King
Mono City resident

Michael Draper

From: Kevin K <kkman2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 10:04 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: comments on DSEIR Tioga Inn expansion

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Mono County Community Development Department

Greetings,

I am a long time Californian and visitor to the Mono Basin. I have been informed of a large proposed development by the Mobil gas station and deli and am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number 3.

It is striking to me how significant the impacts would be if this project is approved as proposed and that the DSEIR does not propose any meaningful attempts at mitigation the impacts or offer any alternatives.

I visit the Mono Basin to get away from the SF Bay Area where I live and see the beauty of Mono Lake and surrounding area. I go to the vista point near the Mobil deli and Mono Vista overlook for views of Mono Lake, and to South Tufa and Panum Crater for views of the Sierras. All of those views would be degraded by the proposed 2 story Workforce Housing village development.

I also visit to view the stars because of the absence of city lights. A 100 unit/150 bedroom development would definitely degrade that view.

Other parts of the development have already been approved, but this DSEIR only covers the additional proposed developments. There needs to be an environmental impact report that covers the total development and its total cumulative impacts.

A 150 bedroom development probably will add 50-100 more motor vehicles and likely a number of wildlife accidents – has that been considered and addressed?

As the gateway to Yosemite National Park, Lee Vining (and I and other visitors) deserve not to have this beauty degraded. I urge you to make a National Park worthy effort to reduce the impacts I've described.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kingma

2367 Alva Ave. El Cerrito, CA 94530

Michael Draper

From: Yoel Kirschner <yoelkirschner@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 10:04 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comments on Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I write to you to comment on the 2019 Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment and Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). Allow me to summarize my professional background for context. I am currently a Natural Resources Officer with the US Agency for International Development and formerly a Biologist with the US Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, and have traveled extensively in the eastern Sierra Nevada.

The proposed Tioga Inn development should not be allowed to be implemented because of its unavoidable negative impacts to the landscape and character of the Mono Basin. The "No Project" alternative should be accepted rather than the so called "Environmentally Superior Alternative," which would more than double the population of Lee Vining and impact wildlife and the experience of tourists. People come to the Mono Basin from around the world to enjoy the lake and learn about the Mono Lake Committee and its role in saving Mono Lake from environmental ruin. The town of Lee Vining embodies the very spirit of this struggle for preservation--historically, development in the area has been approached with great restraint.

Another aspect of the proposed development that should disqualify its passing is the issue of "workforce housing." The approved hotel on the site may never be built, negating the need for "workforce" housing. The fact that anyone would be able to live in this so-called workforce housing may also mislead the public. This is simply a proposed housing development next to a proposed hotel.

I recommend that the project as proposed in the SEIR be rejected (i.e. "not recommended or selected"), along with the Clustered and Apartment Design Alternatives, because as the SEIR states, these three alternatives include significant negative impacts that cannot be mitigated. These proposals would forever change the character, nature, and quality of life in the Mono Basin and Lee Vining through the following impacts identified by the SEIR:

- Significant visual impacts. Any approved project should reduce aesthetic and visual impacts to an insignificant level. Visual impacts should also be considered cumulatively along with the impacts of the approved hotel and gas station, and not piecemeal (the visual impact will not be piecemeal)
- Significant, cumulative impacts on deer migration. Any mitigation for this would be contingent on outside agencies and not the developers; as such, the mitigation is unenforceable and not guaranteed, which is unacceptable.
- Impacts on public safety and traffic. Mitigation of these factors likewise depends on uncertain funding and approval from outside agencies, and is likewise unenforceable and not guaranteed.

To summarize, I recommend the following to be included in the Final SEIR:

- Reject (i.e. "do not recommend or select") the current project proposal, the Clustered Development Alternative, and the Apartment Development Alternatives because they have too many negative impacts that cannot be mitigated.

- Modify the stated project goals to strike reference to “sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel...” Re-word the project goal to be to provide a reasonable amount of general rental housing as needed for the Mono Basin/Lee Vining community.
- Take the disingenuous word “workforce” out of the project title. Replace with “Rental Housing.”
- Re-consider the Reduced Development Alternative (at a 50% reduction in housing level) considering the project as a simple rental housing development for current real housing needs, and not as housing for the theoretical future hotel.
- Consider a Reduced Development Alternative 2 in which the amount of housing is reduced by 80% to 20 units.
- Consider a Phased Development Alternative in which 15 units are allowed to be built immediately, but the remainder of housing development is contingent on actual workforce need at the site.
- Justify in the Final SEIR why the development proposal was increased from 80 to 100 units; if there is no reasonable justification, please drop the proposal back to 80.

To conclude, the circular reasoning of this proposal is bizarre, with the housing development being justified by a hypothetical hotel that has been approved for decades and not yet been built. The amount of housing requested is also completely out of sync with the character of the local community. Can you imagine a proposal that in one fell swoop doubled the size of June Lake, Mammoth Lakes, or any other town to be met warmly by the local community? This proposal, as currently defined, would without a doubt forever change the character of the Mono Basin, through visual impacts, increased traffic, and negative impacts on deer, as well as the more than quadrupling of population of the town of Lee Vining (the SEIR states that 89 people currently live in Lee Vining). The Mono Basin and Mono County deserve an honest and straight-forward proposal that does not try to justify an inappropriately scaled, destructive rental housing development with an imaginary “workforce” at a hypothetical hotel.

Sincerely,
Yoel Kirschner

Michael Draper

From: Sue Lacko <retiredsue@me.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 8:41 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: ahouseworth@placeworks.com
Subject: Proposed 73 acre project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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We have camped on Lee Vining Creek for fifty years. One of the highlights of our trips have been coming into town for a few forgotten groceries, some worms from the sporting goods store and a Mono cone. Sometimes while driving down Tioga Pass we pretend we are early pioneers seeing the lake as a fresh water lake for the first time.

If this future building takes place it will put all three of these stores out of business.

This does not even touch on the environmental issues that would be impacted. Please think twice before approving what would change the quaint town of Lee Vining forever.

Melinda Sue Lacko
17132 Foley Drive
Yorba Linda CA 92886

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. Desmond Tutu

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

August 20, 2019

File: Environmental Review

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite P
Minaret Village Mall
Post Office Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Comments on the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Project; State Clearinghouse No. 1992012113, Lee Vining, Mono County

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, (Water Board) staff has reviewed a Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Project (Project) recommending adoption of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project. Water Board staff requests that the following comments be addressed and incorporated into the final EIR for the Project. This letter describes various permits that may apply to the Project. The letter also discusses post construction stormwater measures such as Low Impact Development (LID) to minimize impacts to receiving waters. The proposed treatment plant must attain an effluent concentration not to exceed 10 mg/L total nitrogen to protect against groundwater quality degradation.

Project Summary

The Project proposes the construction of up to 100 workforce housing units to accommodate employees of the previously approved hotel and restaurant, plus the addition of a third gas pump island, replacement of an existing septic system with a new wastewater treatment plant tied to a new subsurface drip irrigation system for disposal with associated infrastructure, expanded propane storage, replacement of the water tank, realignment of an interior road, and changed parcel boundaries and acreages.

Authority

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the Water Board regulates discharges of waste in order to protect water quality and, ultimately, the

PETER C. PUMPHREY, CHAIR | PATTY Z. KOUYOUMDJIAN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

beneficial uses of waters of the State. State law assigns responsibility for protection of water quality in the Lahontan Region to the Water Board.

Permits

Activities associated with construction of the Project may require permits issued by the State Water Board or Water Board.

1) A Clean Water Act (CWA), section 402, subdivision (p) stormwater permit, including a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Stormwater Permit, State Water Board Order No. WQ 2009-0009-DWQ may be required for land disturbance associated with the Project. The NPDES permit requires the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and implementation of best management practices (BMPs).

2) General Waste Discharge Requirements for Small Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems, State Water Board Order No. WQ 2014-0153-DWQ, or individual Waste Discharge Requirements, will be the likely regulatory measure for the new packaged wastewater treatment system and wastewater disposal.

3) If the use of recycled water is intended as a proponent of the project, then Water Reclamation Requirements for Recycled Water Use, State Water Board Order No. WQ 2016-0068-DDW, or an individual order, may be used as the regulatory measure.

4) Streambed alteration and/or discharge of fill material to a surface water including areas associated with washes or other drainage features, even if currently dry, may require a CWA, section 401 water quality certification (WQC) for impacts to federal waters (waters of the U.S.), or dredge and fill Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for impacts to non-federal (State) waters, both issued by the Lahontan Water Board.

Information regarding these permits, including application forms, can be downloaded from the Water Board's web site (<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/>). If the project is not subject to federal requirements, activities that involve fill or alteration of surface waters, including drainage channels or other stormwater improvements, may still be subject to State permitting.

Potential Impacts to Waters of the State and Waters of the United States

Surface waters include, but are not limited to, drainages, streams, washes, ponds, pools, and may be permanent or intermittent. Waters of the State may include waters determined to be isolated or otherwise non-jurisdictional by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). We request that the EIR identify and incorporate measures into the project to avoid surface waters and the project be provided with buffer zones where possible. If the project alters drainages, then we request that the project be designed such that it would maintain existing hydrologic features and patterns to the extent feasible.

Low Impact Development Strategies and Storm Water Control

The project description stated in the EIR should identify features for the post-construction period that will control stormwater and prevent pollutants from non-point sources from entering and degrading surface or groundwaters. The foremost method of reducing impacts to watersheds from urban development is "Low Impact Development" (LID), the goals of which are to maintain a landscape functionally equivalent to predevelopment hydrologic conditions and to minimize generation of non-point source pollutants. LID results in less surface runoff and potentially less impacts to receiving waters, the principles of which include:

- Maintaining natural drainage paths and landscape features to slow and filter runoff and maximize groundwater recharge;
- Reducing impervious cover created by development and the associated transportation network; and
- Managing runoff as close to the source as possible.

Please identify and state in the EIR both on-site and off-site stormwater management strategies and BMPs that will be incorporated into the planning process and project for both pre-and post-construction phases of the project. Please state in the EIR project-incorporated measures that will be used to ensure that stormwater generated by the project is kept clean and properly managed both during and post-construction. Please state in the EIR who will be responsible for ensuring post-construction BMPs and required maintenance.

Avoidance and Impact Analysis

Please clarify in the EIR how spills will be avoided and cleaned up if they occur. Describe how spills from the plant or pump station will be prevented and addressed if they do occur. Also describe how leaks from trucks and equipment, or other chemicals used onsite will be contained and managed.

Water Quality and Wastewater Re-use or Disposal

The scope of work proposed for implementing the new wastewater treatment plant is to decommission the existing septic tank while retaining the existing septic leach-field. The proposed packaged wastewater treatment plant will be sized to treat wastewater to meet USEPA secondary standards. Furthermore, the effluent from the proposed plant should not exceed 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L) total nitrogen. The proposed project must produce the highest water quality achievable so that any percolation of these waters may not adversely degrade the groundwater quality.

The proposed plant will use the treated wastewater effluent for a sub-surface irrigation system. A letter by the State Water Board, Division of Drinking Water (DDW) must be issued providing approval of a California Code of Regulations (CCR), title 22 Engineering Report, or a letter issued to the Discharger stating the irrigation system does not need to meet CCR, title 22 recycled water requirements. The supernatant from

the proposed packaged wastewater treatment plant will seasonally discharge to a new drip irrigation leach-field at a rate of 40,800 gallons per day (GPD) during the spring, summer, and fall. When the flow decreases during the winter months, the effluent discharge will be diverted to flow to the existing leach-field at a rate of 22,000 GPD. The EIR must include a description of the disposal of solids generated from the treatment process. Also, the EIR must justify that the minimum distance to groundwater is at least 40 feet wherever the percolation rate exceeds 5 minutes per inch at the new leach-field. The EIR must discuss the construction of upgradient and downgradient groundwater monitoring wells at the leach-fields to assess the groundwater quality from the effluent discharge of the proposed wastewater treatment plant.

The EIR must state how the project will comply with the Recycled Water Policy, as it describes measures for wastewater re-use, in a safe and protective alternative to potable water for such approved uses. The EIR must analyze alternatives and control measures available for use of the recycled water and identify any mitigation measures to address future increases in salinity, which are expected to occur in groundwaters as a result of the project.

Closing

Please note that obtaining a permit and conducting monitoring does not constitute adequate mitigation. Development and implementation of acceptable mitigation is required to minimize project impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed project. If you have any questions please contact me at (760) 241-7366 (john.morales@waterboards.ca.gov), or Jehiel Cass, P.E., Senior Water Resource Control Engineer, at (760) 241-2434 (jehiel.cass@waterboards.ca.gov).



John Morales, P.E.
Water Resources Control Engineer

cc: State Clearinghouse state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov
Jehiel Cass, P.E., Lahontan [Jehiel.cass@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:jehiel.cass@waterboards.ca.gov)
Sandra Bauer, Bauer Planning & Environmental Services, Inc. sandra@bpesinc.com

Michael Draper

From: Laurie I <lauriel1@earthlink.net>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 5:50 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

I am a frequent visitor and long-time lover of Mono Basin. It would break my heart if this project were to go forward as proposed.

The development as proposed is utterly inappropriate for the location chosen. It is not an extension to the community; it is an unrelated community in its own right. Although and because it is unrelated, it will have a significant, over-arching negative impact on the community and the environment of Mono Basin. The potential results could be overwhelming for a small community like Lee Vining.

The plan refers to the Mono Basin Community Plan, 2012. on 5 points: “(1) Small, compact communities with a clear edge between developed and natural areas; (2) Safe, friendly communities where people interact and feel connected, (3) A sustainable economy with diverse job opportunities that offers year-round employment and competitive wages.

(4) Recreation opportunities and access that highlight our exceptional outdoor venues.

(5) A healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies.”

Although the proponents claim this development will be in keeping with these points in the Community Plan, I would disagree.

1) It is hard for me to see how this is “small, compact”. From the renditions it looks immense when compared to what is currently there. And at full occupancy, won't it pretty much equal the population of Lee Vining itself? That's huge. 2) I suppose “friendly” is meant to refer to the people actually located in the development, but, I feel it will have unfriendly consequences for the town. I think it is important to consider one's neighbors. 3) This economy I assume refers to the hotel business supporting the workers. Since there is very little winter visitation, it's hard to imagine the jobs will be ongoing, local jobs. 4) With the added crowding and significant traffic increase, I think it will be even more difficult to access these outdoor opportunities. 5) This proposal seems to not understand what “scenic grandeur” and “dark night skies” mean. They will both be seriously and permanently disrupted.

The listing of the “6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts” on p. 324 on the Supporting Documents on the Mono County Planning Division website underscore my points above and provide some additional points of concern.

I have my own few additional concerns: 1) I'd like to feel more confident about the water sources for such an enormous development. Will there really be enough in this time of uncertainty about water availability? Groundwater and aquifers are at risk in many places in the world. 2) Do we have a sense of how affordable the housing that is already in place actually is? The unverified rental figures I have heard do not seem so affordable to me. 3) I believe I read that the proposal includes 4 monument signs. I view these as additional intrusions on the scenic beauty of the basin. 4) It seems logical to assume that this development might likely have negative impacts on the businesses that already exist in Lee Vining.

Thank you for your consideration. I am absolutely opposed to the proposal in its current form.

Sincerely,

Laurie Lawrence

Eureka, CA

Marissa Leonard
PO Box 519
Lee Vining, CA 93541
marissaleonard95@gmail.com

I am a resident of Lee Vining, and I am writing to express my deep concern for my home. The proposal for the Tioga Inn and its subsequent housing village is a threat to the future of the Mono Basin. If the plan moves forward as proposed, the impact will be irreversible. I am strongly urging Mono County representatives to reject this amendment.

I am no stranger to the housing crisis in Lee Vining and Mono County. It was not possible for several years for me to build my life here, despite my strong desire to do so. It is extremely difficult to find a place to live in Lee Vining, and the nearby towns aren't much easier. Building more housing in Lee Vining is a great concept. On the surface, the proposal for this workforce housing village looks promising.

Unfortunately, the amendment states that these new units would be rented out at "market rate." How, therefore, can they possibly be passed off as "workforce housing?" Most of the workforce will not be able to easily afford \$1,000 studios. Building expensive apartments – which are likely to be the only option for housing in Lee Vining – does absolutely nothing to remedy a housing crisis. It only perpetuates the issue by creating a monopoly in which the proponent will be able to control the pricing of the rental market as they see fit. This is not beneficial for Mono County.

Furthermore, the number of units proposed is unnecessarily high. If the proposal to change the Tioga Inn from a two-story hotel to a three-story has been dropped, why has the proposal for workforce housing increased in number? Downsizing the hotel while adding 20 extra workforce housing units raises several questions. 150 beds will not be required to maintain staffing for a moderately-sized hotel and restaurant. This is still the case even with families living in the units. It has remained unclear who, specifically, these extra units will then be rented to. What is the definition of the "workforce?" The proponent needs to clarify.

The county should shy away from approving a proposal for housing on this scale under the guise of it simply being for the proponent's staff. All appearances point towards this being an attempt to capitalize on the housing crisis for the surrounding areas. It doesn't appear to have much to do with the Tioga Inn hotel project. As it was stated in the public workshop in Lee Vining that the hotel does not need to move forward for the housing village to be built, it seems to be unrelated. If there is any intention to rent to those who would hold employment elsewhere, it must be considered as its own project rather than an amendment to a dated permit.

Realistically, if the proponent is able to fill the units in the winter, the vast majority of the tenants will be commuting to Mammoth for work. Even if the Tioga Inn project moves forward, there is no tourism traffic to Lee Vining in the winter. The hotel will very likely be either completely seasonal or will need to downsize its workforce once Tioga Pass closes each year, forcing those in the housing to seek employment elsewhere. Because winter employment in Lee Vining is already scarce, this will not benefit the local economy in any way.

Lee Vining doesn't make sense as a ski town suburb. It is too far removed from employment and services. During the winter, the commute over Deadman Summit can be anywhere from dangerous to impossible. I was working for Mammoth Mountain and living in Lee Vining this past winter, and there

were many days where I was completely unable to get to work. If I did manage to make it over before Highway 395 closed on storm days, I was then stranded in Mammoth until the storm passed and the roads were cleared – at the worst, this was for days at a time. Other times, the drive could take several hours. It is unrealistic to expect tenants to want to take on this commute.

The carbon footprint of the daily commute from Lee Vining to Mammoth is also not insignificant. According to Map My Emissions, a 5 day per week commute to Mammoth is responsible for releasing about 780 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere per month. Assuming that about 100 people from this housing village would be doing the same, over a winter season (Nov-Apr), their combined carbon footprint would be roughly around 470,000 pounds or more of CO₂.

For these reasons, transportation from Lee Vining to Mammoth must be provided if the proponent intends to rent the units to those commuting. They must be held responsible for setting up and maintaining a partnership with a public transportation agency to accomplish this. Additionally, they should consider providing incentives for tenants to carpool or take public transportation, such as reduced rental rates.

However, it must still be taken into account that road closures may frequently make travel impossible for tenants, putting employment and personal safety at risk. Because of this, it is not out of the question that many of the units will become vacant for the winter. Therefore, they are unnecessary at the proposed scale.

Ultimately, the proposal must be downsized. This project is the first stepping stone towards an unrecognizable Lee Vining. The housing village has the potential to double the population of the town. This will increase demand for services because of Lee Vining's remote nature. Our market, our schools, and our fire department will not be able to meet demands. Action must be taken to ensure that our community is not overwhelmed. Future construction, with a large potential for severe environmental impact, is an unavoidable future otherwise.

Finally, the original permit from 1993 was issued in an era when the Basin was not yet fully protected. As we all know, the State Water Board did not make the final decision to protect Mono Lake until 1994. It needs to be shown that the groundwater that would be necessary to sustain the hotel and the housing village would not impact Lee Vining Creek or Mono Lake in any way. If this cannot be proven, the proposal must be rejected. With Mono Lake finally recovering from the low point brought on by the drought, an SEIR also must consider future drought conditions. Is there truly enough water to spare in the Mono Basin for this project when the lake still has approximately 20 years to go to reach the mandated management level? All conditions and possibilities in future water years must be considered. If the SEIR shows any impact whatsoever on Mono Lake and its tributary streams, Mono County needs to reconsider the overall validity of the permit in the present day.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. I encourage the proponent to reach out to the concerned community so that we may all collaborate on this project. Reducing the Mono Basin to an income opportunity with little regard for its integrity is unacceptable, but we can come together to ensure that this moves forward with respect and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marissa Leonard

Michael Draper

From: Naomi Lidicker <lidicker@berkeley.edu>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 7:49 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: action@monolake.com
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Dear Mr. M. Draper:

I believe the already-existing specific plan which was approved in 1993 is already too large for the area. It will really change Lee-Vining and Mono Lake. At the moment it is wonderful to have the feeling of being in the Mono Lake Basin which is almost isolated and mysterious. I love the dark nights and will worry about the wild life present. That will change unless studied carefully and mitigated.

Where will the Donailles get the water necessary for a work force of 100 and the people who will come to the hotel and restaurants? How are they obtaining the water necessary for their current operation?

I believe that beside the water issue, the natural beauty of Mono Lake and Mono Basin will be disturbed. We will lose the present scenic highway and gateway to Yosemite National Park.

The project will have impact on the dark night skies throughout the Mono Basin. I worry about deer migration, Lee Vining communities and more. To the end, there must be mitigation to screen Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village. The final SEIR needs to include alternatives that reduces the visual and aesthetic impacts. This should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 39.

Don't forget the deer. They are important. There **must** be immediate and enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional impacts with deer and other wildlife.

The Tioga Inn Project is so terrible as depicted now.

Sadly,

Naomi Lidicker

Michael Draper

From: Philip Lindsay <fotophil@pacbell.net>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:58 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: PHILIP LINDSAY; Arya Degenhardt; Jr. Malcolm Mosher
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

Please delay your approval on the Worker Housing Portion of the Tioga Inn Project. I have been photographing and enjoying the Mono Basin for many years and I am very concerned that all of a sudden this proposed project has grown way beyond the scaled-down concept previously agreed upon. The addition of the 100 House Workers Village has an enormous impact on the visual aspects of the project. I understand that the proposed scope of the hotel and restaurants was reduced in accordance with previous planning meetings but the recent proposal to add so many "Worker Accommodations" needs careful consideration and should be reviewed as a separate project. The footprint of the proposed Worker's Village is of the magnitude of the towns of Lee Vining or Mono City and thus represents a tremendous physical expansion of the overall project. Please consider the go-ahead for the Hotel Project and delay the Worker Village for further analysis..

Thank you

Phil Lindsay
570 Ridgeway Drive
Pacifica CA 94044
August 20, 2019

August 21, 2019

Dear Mr. Draper and the Mono County Development Department,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment #3 and SEIR, a project which will potentially alter my beloved community in a myriad of ways and affect my life directly. I believe that successful communities work together to plan new developments to enhance the lives of *all* in the community, rather than of few, with the changing future in mind. I appreciate that my voice can be heard.

I have lived in Lee Vining for 11 years and have been very proud to call it my home. I have worked here as a biologist for Point Blue Conservation Science for three years, a Mono Lake Committee intern for two years, a barista at the Latte Da for a summer, a cashier at the Mono Market for a year, and work currently as the Lead Naturalist Guide for the Mono Lake Committee. I chose to move to this community permanently because of its small-town character, the scenic grandeur, the dark night skies, and to leave the depressing over-development of the Bay Area (and the rest of the world) behind.

I am concerned that the Draft SEIR does not provide solid alternatives and mitigation for the permanent impacts the project would create. My main concerns are as follows:

- Community impacts
 - As a member of the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department, **I am concerned that the sheer number of people added to the community with a 150-unit village will add strain to the ability of the volunteer fire department to respond to emergencies.** It is not guaranteed that enough residents of the workforce housing will volunteer on the department to make up for that. *Possible solutions are including a small staff of medics/firefighters on site of the hotel and housing units, providing incentives for employees and tenants to volunteer on the fire department, subsidizing the salary of more than one full-time fire-fighter/medic based in Lee Vining, and reducing the number of units built.*
 - It was hard for me to find affordable housing when I first moved here without provided housing from my employer. I camped in my pickup truck one season and lived in my boss's spare room in exchange for housework for another season. I am lucky to have found my current apartment. **My concern is that the document does not have a specified written statement that guarantees that a percentage of the workforce housing would be reserved for or priority given to people who are working in Lee Vining specifically, and would be affordable for those who do.** If this does not happen, it could ignore or exacerbate Lee Vining's housing problem rather than fix it. *Possible solutions are requiring a certain portion of the housing to be deed-restricted to maintain affordability, giving priority to Lee Vining residents, and moving some of the housing to available lots in town.*
 - I've seen gruesome car accidents at the intersection of Highways 395 and 120, and increased traffic to that intersection will undoubtedly cause more. I understand it would be up to CalTrans to choose whether to and when to build a traffic circle or install a stoplight. **I am concerned that there won't be enough state/district funding to complete this project in a timely manner and we will have more accidents and fatalities.** *I think the plan needs to incorporate privately funding a traffic circle into the project for safety reasons.*
 - **I am concerned about the plan relying on grants for funding mitigation and the lack of grant assurance.** *I believe these funds should be required of the developer, as the need for them is a direct result of their development. If that is not possible, there must be language in the plan that holds the developer accountable if mitigation does not occur within a certain time period (i.e. promptly).*
- Visual/Scenic impacts
 - I drove to Tahoe recently and while driving over Kingsbury grade I saw a few large hotels on the crest of the mountain and felt disgusted by the sight. My first feeling in the area was disgust, and it altered my experience with Lake Tahoe, which is a precious scenic landmark that has been overwhelmingly

overdeveloped. I came to the Mono Basin for its scenic views and dark skies, and I know millions of people stop and stay here for the same reasons. **I am concerned that people visiting the area will see the housing units, restaurant, and hotel before they get a chance to take in the pure magic of the mountains behind them and it will turn them off.** Visitors arrive in Lee Vining and see a quaint mountain town with character, beautiful views of Mono Lake and the Sierra, unspoiled by sprawl and the big-is-best greedy attitude of our capitalist society. *Possible solutions are reducing the size of the workforce housing units, creating natural berms to screen the housing from view of the road and land beyond, and moving some of the housing to the town of Lee Vining.*

- This project will be visible for miles, and will have severe visual impacts on many of the areas that visitors come here to see and experience. **Most importantly is South Tufa, where the project lights will be extremely visible (even 5 miles away) and will detract from the unique dark night experience.** Many of our visitors (as well as locals) are night sky photographers and dark sky enthusiasts. Having an excessive development visible at night from locations around the lake with greatly impact the visitor and local experience. **Since there are no mitigations for this impact, the project should be rejected unless mitigation is possible.**
- General comments
 - From what I've read, the plan for executing the project seems scattered at best, with little indication on what will be built first and how it all will fit together. Since the whole project has been spread out between over 25 years, it is confusing what is actually going to happen. **There needs to be a clearer phasing plan if this development is built.**
 - The original project was approved in 1993, and while I understand that this particular comment period is for Amendment #3, I would like to raise the point that **the community has changed since the original approval of the hotel and restaurant, enough that it seems absurd to allow a project of this scale to go forward without contemporary comments from our community on the future of this project that affects us all greatly.** *I feel that there should be time limitations on development project approval (5-10 years).*

Most important is that there needs to be alternative scaling for the entire proposed developments in the amendment. Let's get creative! It could be smaller, which would make it easier to conceal, easier to maintain, and less impactful. **I am deeply concerned about the development and how it will negatively impact our charismatic and unique community. I believe there is a balance of sustainable economic development, especially in small towns, and this project weighs heavily on the wrong side of the scale.**

I want our community to thrive, and I know that means growth and change, but I also know that bigger is not better in the long run. Communities like ours can build development solutions in a planned and productive way that won't jeopardize the heart and soul of this town, negatively impact the people and wildlife that reside here, and drastically change the visitor experience.

Thank you for your time,

Nora Livingston

P.O. Box 371

Lee Vining, CA

93541

no.livingston@gmail.com

August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Subject: Comments on the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn Project

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing to comment on the draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) for the Tioga Inn Project. Thank you for your work on this project and for the opportunity to provide comments.

As a 14-year Mono County resident currently living in Mono City and working full-time in Lee Vining, I care deeply about the Mono Basin community and the Mono Basin's world-class scenic values. The proposed Tioga Inn Project does not adequately take the Mono Basin Community Plan into consideration, would not meet the Mono Basin's actual housing needs, and would result in unavoidable negative impacts—most notably visual impacts—that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the DSEIR.

Mono Basin Community Plan

CEQA requires the project to be consistent with the Mono County General Plan and the Mono Basin Community Plan. While the DSEIR purports that the project is consistent with the Community Plan, the project would not actually advance any of the goals of the plan.

Community Plan Goal 10: Maintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural, small-town character of communities by managing growth, ensuring high-quality aesthetics, and providing for community development to enhance the quality of life for residents. The project as proposed would degrade the Mono Basin's natural values and drastically change the small-town character of Lee Vining by nearly doubling the population in one fell swoop.

Community Plan Goal 11: Grow a sustainable local economy with diverse job opportunities that offers year-round employment and wages that reflect the cost of living in the area. The project as proposed does not guarantee year-round employment nor offer diverse job opportunities—hotel and restaurant work already exist in Lee Vining.

Community Plan Goal 12: Build a safe, friendly community where people feel connected, work together to resolve community issues and are involved in community activities & events. The project as proposed does not address connectivity between the Tioga Inn and Lee Vining except as deferred and uncertain mitigation through a potential grant.

Inappropriate housing proposal

Lee Vining and Mono County need affordable, workforce housing. The Tioga Inn housing development is not the kind of workforce housing that Mono County needs because as proposed, it is simply more market rate units that the proponent "intends" to be for the workforce.

Because Mono County's affordable housing ordinance is not currently in effect, there is nothing that can be applied to ensure the proposed housing would actually be affordable for the workforce. Therefore, it

would not meet the actual housing needs of Lee Vining, the greater Mono Basin, nor any employees who may work at the eventual hotel and restaurant.

Despite the expressed intent of the project proponent, without deed restrictions administered and enforced by Mono County that remain attached to the project through any and all changes of ownership, the housing will be rented at market rate.

At a minimum, term “workforce” should be removed from the DSEIR so that it accurately refers to the housing development as what it is—a rental housing development. A better option would be a revised proposal that includes a lower density and a guarantee of deed-restricted units.

Visual impacts

The DSEIR identifies significant direct and cumulative impacts to scenic resources and light and glare. In an area where world-class scenery and dark night skies are the most important economic driver for tourism, these impacts are unacceptable. The project is located near the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the Highway 395 Scenic Byway, and the internationally-significant eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park. But the proposed project uses these scenic resources for the benefit of the future patrons, residents, and proponent’s bottom line at the expense of visual integrity valued by millions of visitors.

The DSEIR’s proposed mitigations for visual impacts lack clarity and are not effective. The use of substantial earthen berms, different grading options, LEED certification, underground parking, one-story housing, clustered housing, less housing, and alternate site locations for the housing could all help to truly mitigate the project’s visual impacts. The DSEIR should provide a better analysis of these alternatives.

Please note that the concerns I have raised above are by no means my only concerns about this project. I am also concerned that:

- The DSEIR proposes footprint and density increases far above what was approved in the 1993 FEIR.
- Instead of improving upon the visual, aesthetic, and wildlife problems identified during the 2016 scoping process, the DSEIR proposes changes that exacerbate those problems.
- The project will put an immense strain on public services like the Lee Vining Fire Department and mutual aid departments, Mono County emergency medical services, and Lee Vining’s two schools.
- The DSEIR says that six mitigation measures would be the responsibility of other agencies or possible only through grant funding. This approach is to inappropriately move the burden of mitigation from the project proponent, who has caused the need for mitigation, to taxpayers. Negative impacts from private projects should not be mitigated by the public; the project proponent should be responsible for these measures. Mono County should establish mitigation funding mechanisms to help ensure that the developer’s mitigation responsibilities are fulfilled.

The Tioga Inn Project, as proposed, is in conflict with the goals of the Mono Basin Community Plan, does not meet the housing needs of the Mono Basin, and would seriously damage the scenic values that power all of Mono County economically. For these reasons, the proposal should be denied.

Thank you,

Elin Ljung
690 E Mono Lake Drive
PO Box 373
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Michael Draper

From: john ljung <jrljung@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:41 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project and Specific Plan Amendment Number Three - Comments

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Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I have numerous comments on the Tioga Inn Project SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

Adverse Impacts:

By designating "6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts" as the responsibility of other agencies, the county is conceding a monetary benefit to the proponent that would be paid for by the tax payers. This is unjustified and unreasonable. The 6 measures should be mitigated in the following manner - create 6 accounts, held in escrow, funded by the proponent at the time of the initial added impacts of the project - the start of construction. The dollar value of each account should be the estimated cost of the project added impacts based on county staff research. Funds should be held in interest bearing accounts until the "other agency" proceeds with their project. At that time, the funds should be used on the agency project. If Sustainable Community Grants are awarded, funds in those separate accounts can be returned to the proponent at the start of construction of that specific project by the "other agency". The project documents should describe the details of the Sustainable Community Grant process : who, what, where, when, why and how, eg. who - the developer applies, how - at the developers cost, when - at the conclusion of this amendment process. For more than two decades the proponent has avoided responsibility for added impacts of his businesses on the 6 areas of concern. That needs to change with the start of the additional impacts of the project he is proposing. The added impacts need to be funded by the proponent.

Housing:

Housing, unless deed restricted, will not benefit the community of Lee Vining.

I have other comments I plan to submit at a later date.

Sincerely,

John R. Ljung
P.O. Box 415
Lee Vining, Calif. 93541

cc: Bob Gardner, bgardner@mono.ca.gov
Fred Stump, fstump@mono.ca.gov
Stacy Corless, scorless@mono.ca.gov
Jennifer Kreitz, jkreitz@mono.ca.gov
John Peters, jpeters@mono.ca.gov

Michael Draper

From: Mary Ljung <mary.ljung1112@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 8:35 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Amendments to the SEIR for the Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing with serious concerns about the SEIR which proposes to amend the previously approved project known as the Tioga Inn Project. I live in Mono County for half of every year, and consider myself to be a responsible, concerned resident. I volunteer at the elementary school, the library, and the Mono Arts Council, and support the many fund raisers which take place for the benefit of sports teams, theater programs, and art classes. I recognize Lee Vining as a close knit supportive community that I am a part of.

The proposed amendment enlarges the footprint of the original project significantly. More important than measurements are the locations and visual impact of the additions. The proposed buildings will be visible from South tufa, Navy beach, and travelers along highway 395. The document includes no mitigation to offset this adverse impact. The county must require screening, berms, plantings, and/or other strategies to prevent two story buildings from impacting the outstanding Sierra crest and Dana crest views we now celebrate.

Let's face it: Lee Vining's economy depends on visitors. Visitors come for the scenery and to visit Mono Lake. "The scenery" means wide open spaces, free from the built environment. The designation National Senic Area proves its importance. The county should not interfere with, or override the clear intention to protect the incomparable Mono Basin and Sierra crest viewshed.

To call the proposed housing units "Workforce housing" is meaningless, as the document stands. There are no provisions to meet the county's suggested low income housing provisions for any new project, no legal requirement to maintain the housing for local workers, nothing to prevent short term vacation rentals. As it stands this housing proposal is an empty promise. Lee Vining is desperately short of local affordable housing, but this project is not the answer.

Any project approved by the county will influence its surroundings, and its community, forever. This is bad planning on many counts. I urge you to reject the proposal as submitted.

The SEIR document is massive. The county-sponsored meeting to answer questions about it was held just three weeks ago. I will continue to study it and intend to send you further comments in the future. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Sincerely,

Mary Ljung

P.O. Box 415

Lee Vining, CA 93541

cc: Bob Gardner, bgardner@mono.ca.gov

Fred Stump, fstump@mono.ca.gov

Stacy Corless, scorless@mono.ca.gov

Jennifer Kreitz, jkreitz@mono.ca.gov

John Peters, jpeters@mono.ca.gov

To whom this may concern,

My name is Edgar Llamas. I am writing to you as Manager of Mono Cup Coffee LLC, a small coffee shop located on 34 2nd St in Lee Vining, CA. I am writing you today to address our concerns regarding the proposed Tioga Inn plan expansion. As a contributing member of this community, I am deeply concerned about the long-term affects this proposed expansion would have on the entire town of Lee Vining. There are many concerns, but today I will focus on what we believe will ultimately affect Lee Vining's image and, therefore, economic success. It is our understanding that the plan for the 150 unit hotel and restaurant have been approved since as far back as 1993, and there isn't much we can do about that even though our concerns are tied mainly to that already approved plan. The proposed expansion to the plan, which requests approval for what is being called "work-force housing", is what is bringing this community together to hopefully put a stop to all of this. I want to address the problems that the approved plan, as well as the plan expansion claims to be able to remedy, but explain to you how it, not only doesn't fix those problems, might just make them worse.

I, along with many Lee Vining residents and business owners, acknowledge and believe that there is definitely a shortage in affordable housing in Lee Vining. I completely understand the enormous benefit affordable housing would bring to our town. Often times we find ourselves struggling to fully staff our businesses because there isn't always somewhere to live in or near town. This makes working in Lee Vining inconvenient for many, and so they choose to find employment elsewhere. A lot of us are lucky enough to be able to provide work for most, if not all, of the local residents; including high school kids on summer vacation or seasonal workers who manage to find employee housing at one of the many provided in town and choose to live here through our busy season which is typically only while Hwy 120 West is open, granting access to Yosemite and bringing tourists to our area. That brings me to the second problem this plan and plan expansion claim to be able to fix, lack of business. The approved hotel and restaurant claim to be able to bring an enormous amount of business to our area because it's based on the idea that the main reason more people aren't coming to our area and staying, is because there are not enough accommodations for them. It is their understanding that if a hotel the size of almost all of the existing motels combined, is built, then more people will be inclined to come visit our area. I do agree that more people coming to our town would be great for business all throughout Lee Vining. I also agree that what we need is for Lee Vining to be rejuvenated. For too long, too many buildings in town have been boarded up and have made the town look sad and cold. We do need life to be brought back into town. These are some of the problems we have in this town and these are the problems this plan expansion claims to be able to fix. Unfortunately the plan will not fix any of these problems.

While I can see how one might look at this plan proposal simply and assume it can solve all these problems, if looked at in it's entirety, they'd see it's only going to make our problems worse or even create new ones. First, the proposed "workforce housing". This housing was at first presented as being solely for the employees of the proposed hotel, the new restaurant, and the already established Mobil mart. When concerns were brought up about how the town needed more housing for the general public, it was then, only verbally, changed to being housing for any and all "employed" mono county and Yosemite residents. This is of great concern to many of us. What this tells us is that there is an opportunity present for other communities like Mammoth Lakes to take advantage of some if not all of these housing units to house their mountain employees. We already know that it is a major issue they face year after year, and the last thing I would want is for their burden to be offloaded on us. While it is good to help your neighbor, we would see little to no benefit from this sort of arrangement. The resources these new temporary residents would require would put an enormous strain on the already stretched-thin services we have now. One might argue that perhaps those temporary residents could help contribute to those services, like joining the volunteer fire department, but there is nothing obligating them to do so. There are times when there aren't even enough volunteers to handle two jobs in the same town, let alone try to deal

with any situation at the Tioga Inn. Housing in this community is not a bad thing, but housing in this community that isn't for the community it's in, would be a slap in the face to the residents of the town that has helped make the Mobil Mart what it is and that has helped even make this proposed plan a possibility. Housing can be done in this town but should be done the right way, with the town and it's businesses, residents, and it's many many visitors' best interest in mind, and not to create a chance for another communities problems to be absorbed by us. The other issue discussed above is the lack of vibrancy in Lee Vining. This is another issue I don't believe is what the Tioga Inn is intended for, nor would it accomplish that if it were it's purpose. From what I can understand, it's believed by the developer that building a hotel will bring more visitors to this area. The assumption is that more travelers don't come to Lee Vining only because there isn't enough lodging for everyone. That is completely wrong. Speaking as Assistant Manager at Murphey's for the last six years, I can say confidently that we do not have a sufficient enough shortage of lodging in town to warrant a hotel the size of three of our motels combined. If the hotel moves forward with it's approved plan and is in fact constructed, it would almost certainly make competing with it's prices and convenience impossible to match by any of the motels in town. All of the local motels are owned and operated by families and are directly affected by the way business goes in town, unlike a large chain hotel that could absorb some of the deficits it might take. It's not a pessimistic view I'm taking, simply a realistic one. There are not enough travelers, nor will this hotel bring enough travelers to provide enough business for everyone. After all the local motels have had to close due to the lack of business within town, the large hotel will still not be able to sustain itself through the slow winter months. As everyone knows, our town's economy is entirely seasonal. Once Tioga pass closes, almost all our business immediately slows down, and then shortly after, once it snows, virtually all business comes to a stand-still. I know the plans for the hotel and restaurant have both been approved long ago, and that my letter is to address the concerns we have with the proposed expansion, I believe they are both to closely tied to not involve one with the other. If the hotel and restaurant are both likely to first cause the failure of the other businesses in town, and then fail itself, then there truly is no need for the "workforce housing" proposed in the expansion. There is no point in having "workforce housing" if you no longer have a workforce.

While capitalism is what allows Mono Cup Coffee to stay competitive and thrive in this town, county, and country, and gives the Tioga Inn every right to be built and therefore it's housing built; that same capitalism may be exactly what brings the entire town, and all of it's long-standing businesses, businesses built by the families of some of the very first people to inhabit this area and to contribute to it's long and rich history, all crumbling down. Please look at these plans, take into consideration the entire town's best interests, review it all carefully, and see why I and so many others in this community are against these plans. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Edgar Llamas
Manager
Mono Cup Coffee

Michael Draper

From: Lucas Fred <fredclucas@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 9:17 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Hello Mr Draper,

I have had the great pleasure of visiting the Mono Basin for 60 years, which is to say since I was 9 years old. It is a very special place to me. My late mother considered it one of her favorite places on Earth.

I hope you will allow the Tioga Inn project to be developed in a way that preserves the incredible vistas and atmosphere of Mono Lake. There are so many other places to go to see city lights, etc. But there are so few where one can go to get away from that and experience one of the world's great places. Mono Lake is one such place.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Fred C. Lucas

Michael Draper

From: karolinabellybrass . <karolinabellybrass@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 8:24 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: NO TO THE TIOGA GAS MART EXPANSION!!!
Attachments: Mono .jpg; Mono1994.jpg; 12108818_825121532987_8303411530868943701_n.jpg; 12144741_10154370206709408_6152610145807742295_n.jpg

Categories: Tioga Inn

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To: Michael Draper

I am a life-long, part-time resident of Mono City. I grew up as the daughter of a Forest Service employee which meant that my summers were in at Mono Lake and my winters in San Francisco. My earliest memories are of the solitude and peace of the Mono Basin. I have memories of learning to meditate in Lee Vining Canyon, going through grief and loss under the Jeffrey Pines, learning to be a better person in the calm of the granite, and hoping to bring my children here some day to experience the same. I also run a dance camp for women seeking similar experiences in the summer. Every year we trek up Lee Vining canyon, hike, bond, and these women leave feeling more powerful thanks to the natural beauty and serenity of the space. The thought of a mini-mall going in in this pristine gateway to Tioga makes me ill. This is the last thing this place needs.

I STRONGLY oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This massive corporation doesn't care or know anything about this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

The pictures below are from my camps, and times with my family treasuring this place...
Save what makes this place special!
Thank you for your time,

Karolyn Wyneken

--

Karolina Lux

Award-winning Theatrical Dance Artist

<http://karolinalux.com>

SEPIATONIC

Live and Electronic Music, Variete, & Dance!

<http://Sepiatonic.com>

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Post Office Box 246 Lee Vining, California 39541

20 August 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

RE: *Tioga Inn DSEIR Comments from the Lee Vining Fire Protection District*

Dear Michael and Company,

First, thank you for taking the time to meet August 20th on the project site. Thank you also for providing the printed plat maps as requested.

As noted in Table 3.7 – *Use of this Subsequent EIR by Other Agencies* the Lee Vining Fire Protection District is shown as a local public agency tasked with the “Inspection or review of plans for conformance with fire safety regulations.” This requirement presents a major burden for a small, volunteer Fire District. That being said, the Lee Vining Fire Protection District welcomes inclusion into the review of this proposed project. The following comments reflect the District’s review of the DSEIR as presented.

To begin, we must reiterate our concern as expressed in our letter of 1 August 2019 that the document as written does not adequately reflect or convey the concerns of our Fire District. In particular, our Chief does not feel that the attributed statements presented in the document as substantive conclusions accurately reflect what he considered a cursory and somewhat informal consultation in July of 2018. References to required fire flows attributed to the District should be taken as advisory only as the project must comply with actual Fire Code regulations. Pre-construction compliance, as well as ongoing monitoring compliance with these regulations is discussed below.

The District’s Chief does not recall being shown maps or documents in the reported July 2018 meeting that match the 100-unit housing complex as displayed in the current document. The ongoing flexibility of the project description and elements has made it difficult to fully comment on potential impacts and applicable mitigations.

Fire Infrastructure Review, Subsequent Permitting and Phasing – As discussed at our August 20th project visit, we request the County require experienced professional review of any and all project components prior to issuance of any subsequent project documents and permits¹.

As written (see Section 4.4.4.2 Polices 2b(1-4)), the document places the burden of compliance assurance and monitoring with California Fire Code onto a small volunteer Fire District. As

¹ Language requiring experienced professional review and regular (at least annual) compliance monitoring of fire and public safety related infrastructure paid for through a mitigation fund should be added to Policies 2b(1) and 2b(2),(3) and (4) in section 4.4.4.2

described this project is nearly as large or larger than the current population served by the District. Placement of such a regulatory burden on a small, volunteer District is both unreasonable, as well as an unfair burden to the taxpayers who support and rely on our small cadre of volunteer firefighters. The burden for compliance review and monitoring must be borne by the project beneficiary – i.e. the project proponent. To address this need, the DSEIR and subsequent documents should require a public safety mitigation fund be established and funded annually by the proponent to cover the costs of retaining adequately licensed and experienced professionals to aid the District and County in project review and regular (at least annual) compliance monitoring. Creation, funding and utilization of such a public safety mitigation fund should be included as a project implementation measure in Section 4.4.4.2 at *Policy 2 – Ensure that there is an adequate fire prevention management program*. An adequate fire prevention management program requires adequate professional capacity; meaningful professional capacity requires ongoing funding.

As noted in 3.15.13, “project elements are required to have an operational water system before building permits are granted...[and] new project elements will be required to meet all current CalFire and LVFPD standards.” For the Lee Vining Fire Protection District, Mono County, other agencies and the general public to be assured that a legally-compliant operational water system and other project public safety and fire elements are constructed as envisioned and approved a project condition should be included requiring construction of these fire and safety elements, as approved by a licensed professional funded via a public-safety mitigation fund, as the initial Phase 1 of any new construction. While the document states at 3.8 that “infrastructure will be constructed to meet the development sequence of approved uses,” given the project’s history of deviation from approved phasing in past iterations, requiring public-safety and fire related compliance elements to be constructed first, prior to any additional building, will provide assurance that these elements will be constructed as envisioned.

We do not feel waiting for an overall professional review of project design until a building permit is pulled adequately ensures the safest, most-up-to date project design. We encourage a review of the project *in it’s envisioned totality* be funded and conducted at this stage – prior to legal-acceptance of the final SEIR. Once the SEIR is accepted and deemed adequate changes to project design would trigger additional CEQA review. To ensure the projected is designed as best as possible now, before the ‘ship has sailed’ so to speak, is in the best interest of the proponent, the public and the authorizing agencies who will be signing off on and legally-certifying this project as presented in the current DSEIR.

Emergency Plan – Mitigation SFTY 5.7(d) refers to the creation of a public safety evacuation plan. Given the complexity of the project and it’s departure from the usual scope of projects locally and County-wide, we believe a project condition should be included to ensure this evacuation plan is created, reviewed and approved collectively by the various public safety agencies for the project as envisioned at full build out and full occupancy prior to any issuance of subsequent documents and permits.

Evacuation Route – According to District review of project plans there appears to be only one road in and one road out of the project – the main access road onto Highway 120. We feel a secondary emergency access road in and out of the project designed to handle the projected

traffic volume at full build-out should be required as a project implementation condition. If this route was constructed to access Highway 395 it could be constructed within the footprint of the proponent-owned parcel. Regardless of the location, a real solution to this emergency access problem should be articulated at this junction in the project planning. While the document makes note that “an informal dirt road links the site to SR120 through the southwestern-most corner of the property; this road is not owned by the applicant or approved for general use but would be available under emergency conditions” (DSEIR at 5.7.21), this dirt road, and a similar dirt road 200 yards to the north which previously accessed the project site, are both blocked with large boulders as reviewed and confirmed on 20 August 2019. As such, they are unavailable for use as emergency routes. Additionally, a one-lane dirt road cannot be considered adequate for an evacuation route of a project that may contain upward of 600 people at one time.

Emergency Medical Services – While the document at Chapter 5.7 reviews existing emergency medical capability and resources within Mono County, it does not disclose, review, analyze or attempt to articulate the potential impact of placing potentially upward of 600 additional people into housing, hotel rooms and a restaurant into “3,132 square miles [of] mountainous terrain, [where] fire and EMS providers are challenged to deliver timely fire protection and emergency medical services. All fire departments outside of the Town of Mammoth Lakes have volunteer staffing; the availability of first responders has an impact on Mono County Paramedics if medical first response is unavailable or committed to other activities” (DSEIR 5.7.3.3).

Meaningful disclosure, analysis and creation of potential mitigation measures needs to be included in the DSEIR and any subsequent documents and permit conditions for a project that envisions a potential new community with more than double the current population. This project will stretch not only our own volunteer first responder medical capacity, but also that of the professional EMS funded by Mono County. Taken logically, doubling the current population with a District – as the housing component alone could do - would, foreseeably, double the call for service volume in that District. This increase in calls for service and potential impact on emergency medical services must also be reviewed through the lens of reality, where in the winter months, response time from Mono County EMS can be upwards of one hour or more given the location of ambulances and road conditions. Given that the housing component alone could mirror or exceed the current size of the community of Lee Vining, we believe it vital that this project contain meaningful, funded and required provisions to ensure sustained public safety and medical response at least at the level enjoyed now across today’s developed landscape in the Mono Basin.

Contrary to the proponent’s recent statement to the effect that Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) would offset impacts to EMS by providing increased TOT receipts, it should be noted that TOT revenue would only be generated by the proposed hotel, not the housing which is proposed to be built first. The hotel was approved over two decades ago and remains unconstructed.

Onsite Equipment and Personnel – Given the placement of this development outside the existing community of Lee Vining and the extended response time from our volunteer department and staffed EMS personnel, we believe the interest of public safety could be best served by enhancing project conditions designed to enhance public safety. At a minimum project conditions should require each complex of housing, the restaurant, and each floor of the

proposed hotel to be equipped with an Automatic External Defibrillator with personnel trained in its use onsite at all times.

Additionally, project conditions should be included to require onsite personnel onsite 24-hrs a day who possess adequate training and authorization in the operation (and emergency shut down) of all facilities infrastructure, especially the water and other utility systems. These onsite facilities managers should provide an annual walk-through and training, as necessary, to the District's firefighters.

Thank you again for your thoughtful consideration of the District's input, and we stand ready to continue this ongoing discussion.

Respectfully,

Santiago Escruceria
Chair, Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Michael Draper

From: Ariana Madappa <gypsyeyedjester@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 7:55 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Gas Mart Expansion

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.
Save what makes this place special!
Thank you for your time,

Ariana Madappa

August 21, 2019

From: Ilene Mandelbaum
PO Box 89
Lee Vining, Ca 93541

To: Michael Draper
Community Development Department
Mono County
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
Via email: mdraper@mono.ca.gov

RE: Comments on the Subsequent EIR, 2019, for the Tioga Inn Project

I am a home owner and 35 year resident of Lee Vining, Ca. I have been very engaged in community planning issues as a member of the Mono Basin RPAC since its inception, as a Coordinator of the Mono Basin Community Vision and Plan (2012) development process and as a commenter on the Tioga Inn development since it was first proposed.

A NEW EIR AND SPECIFIC PLAN ARE REQUIRED

I continue to ask the fundamental question that has never been satisfactorily answered, in my opinion, in the original or in any of the amended documents: Is such large, all inclusive resort, and now added “workforce housing” complex- of such a major scale- an appropriate development for the Mono Basin and our community?

This latest document is fatally flawed because it does not consider the proposed Tioga Inn Project in its entirety; it assumes that the yet-unbuilt hotel and restaurant are a fete accompli when in reality that part of the project is highly speculative and unlikely to ever break ground. An up-to-date economic analysis would have revealed that the business model for this development cannot be realized because it is impracticable and infeasible. For the 2019 proposal, however, no economic analysis has been done.

The hotel and restaurant parts of the development were approved 27 years ago but never successfully marketed to investors or outside development interests. This is not surprising, since it appears that it is not financially feasible to keep the existing business, the Whoa Nellie Deli, open year-round. It is a given, however, that the Tioga Pass closes for more than 6 months of the year and geographic isolation, remoteness and limited access in winter forces Lee Vining to be a seasonal resort community only. The winter-time climatic challenges, even for traveling from the nearby ski towns of June Lake and Mammoth Lakes- when the highways can be closed for days at a time- create economic and logistical constraints that create hardships for local residents and close down all but one restaurant and two hotels for the winter in Lee Vining.

In winter, a commercial development of the size proposed would be severely challenged by the lack of clientele and by the cost of keeping the access road and parking lots plowed and cleared of snow and the facilities heated. The carbon footprint of such a development would be major. Skiing tourists who gravitate to Mammoth Lakes and June Lake would have little incentive to travel the extra distance over treacherous roads from the downhill ski areas. A substantial relocation of Mammoth Ski resort employees to this new workforce development would exacerbate the hazards of commuting in winter snowy conditions and tax the California Highway Patrol, Mono County Sheriff's officers, CalTrans crews and local emergency responders who are called out during these challenging conditions.

In summer, it is true that for a few months there could be an increasing glut of tourists drawn to an all-inclusive resort marketed as the Gateway Destination to Yosemite and Mono Lake. Environmental impacts aside, the question is- would any investors or developers in their right minds lay out the financial commitments to build, maintain and accept the losses of such a risky enterprise?

More likely, the proponent, realizing the futility of selling the original entitlement to investors or other interests, has decided that the potential profit to be made is in the creation of a large new workforce housing project, marketed as the solution to the severe housing shortage created by Mammoth Mountain and Yosemite National Park, a concept that would appear to largely bail out the jurisdictions of Mammoth Lakes, June Lake, Yosemite and the Mono Basin from needing to create more housing for employees and families in their own communities.

Otherwise, how can it be that the 2019 Specific Plan suddenly realizes a need for 100 housing units for the Hotel and Restaurant that was approved without significant housing in 1993?

The ramifications of creating a housing development hub far from the major centers of employment are many, including: transportation costs and risks, alienation of workers from their communities, a visual and light pollution blight that is detrimental to the spectacular natural setting that draws visitors to the Mono Basin in the first place and an increasing strain on essential services provided by the community of Lee Vining.

Over the decades the Mono Basin Community has struggled with a lack of control over its land base, with outside agencies and utilities imposing their facilities and developments on the landscape, as they are the ultimate decision makers. Mono County and the Mono Basin RPAC has over the years carried out housing surveys, parcel analyses, and looked at land exchange options, but not since 2009. Conditions have substantially changed since these efforts were undertaken, and certainly since the 1993 Tioga Inn project was approved. Now, Mono County approval of the creation of a company town larger than Lee Vining without revisiting other options appropriate to and within the community, would be an unconscionable decision that would forever change the "character" of the Mono Basin Community.

Furthermore, there is no commitment in the Specific Plan or a requirement by Mono County listed in the Subsequent EIR (SubEIR) mandating that any of the housing built would be “affordable.” In fact, Mono County continues to suspend development impact fees and affordable housing requirements for large scale developments, leaving the proponent or any developer off the hook for this community need, which has been consistently identified in our local planning efforts.

The Tioga Inn project could help to relieve a part of a local housing shortage, which would be an advantage for Lee Vining businesses, and provide further employment opportunities for those who are under-employed. But there is no guarantee under this proposal that such local housing needs would be given preference. Nor would the development provide housing security or the option of home ownership, which is a desirable goal for many Mono Basin residents.

Because the SubEIR fails to analyze the current economic setting of this proposal, and fails to look at the ramifications of the new proposal in the context of the entire development- built and as yet un-built- it sets up a false context for decision makers with false promises of benefits to the local community.

We have been down this road before. When Mono County approved an out-of scale, sprawling, speculative resort development for Conway Ranch, it created a costly scenario that the county is still paying for and hasn't come to grips with decades later.

Mono County should go back to the drawing board and provide in a new EIR, full and realistic disclosures of the environmental, social and economic impacts of the entire Tioga Inn development as proposed. A new Specific Plan should be developed with consideration of a range of Alternatives that are scaled down to fit within the sensitive setting of that location, that realistically align with the needs of the Lee Vining Community and provide true mitigation of impacts to the Mono Basin environment.

Mono County and the Mono Basin community need to undertake an up-to-date assessment of the housing needs and solutions for this community and tie it to incentives for a more diversified, stable, local economy and vital Main Street in Lee Vining.

CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED

A new EIR is required because many fundamental changes to the Mono Basin built and natural environment have occurred which would substantively alter the analysis of cumulative impacts and feasible mitigations, among them:

-the re-construction of Highway 395 from a two lane to a four-lane highway into and through the town of Lee Vining from the south. These changes have increased the speed of traffic through the community, and along with the increase in volume of traffic in the summer season, have greatly increased traffic hazards and pedestrian and biking challenges in negotiating crossing the highway and safe passage along the highway frontage.

-The construction of the Tioga Gas-mart, deli and convenience store, along with by-weekly live-music events in summer, have contributed to the increase in the volume of traffic, parking issues, intersection congestion at 395 and 120 highways, dispersed camping and illegal campfire impacts nearby. The traffic problem is acknowledged in the new document as a previously unrecognized impact- which is then dismissed from the cumulative impacts discussion of what requires mitigation-because it was unanticipated! That is certainly a flawed conclusion.

-The exponential increase since 1993, in fire danger and the acreage of landscape burned- to tens of thousands of acres in the Mono Basin, including a two mile swath extending from the current Tioga housing development upwards in Lee Vining Creek Canyon. These impacts are cumulative and many, including loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitat, alteration and slow recovery of plant communities and significant infestations of non-native plants, especially cheat grass. With global warming, the threat of fire is expected to worsen and the analysis and mitigations proposed in the latest documents are far from sufficient.

-Climate change was not anticipated or discussed in the 1993 document, not is it given the essential discussion in the 2019 documents that is warranted. Claims made in the cumulative effects discussion concluding a lack of effects are unsupported. The contribution to greenhouse gases by an overbuilt development, including traffic, lighting, heating and cooling, pumping water, solid waste disposal, etc., must be fully disclosed and compared to development alternatives of smaller footprint and less intensity.

-It is disingenuous for the SubEIR to suggest that the “workforce housing” would have no growth-inducing impacts because it represents a fraction of the General Plan’s built-out population projection for the Mono Basin. Actually, the project has the potential of at least doubling the Lee Vining population! It is unfair to the Lee Vining Community that the Specific Plan claims such population growth all for itself, a company town, with no certain contribution to housing security, nor to the diversity of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the town of Lee Vining.

-With regard to scenic impacts, there has been a steady decline of scenic values since the 1993 EIR. In spite of the fact that the Mono Basin has gained world-wide recognition as a National Forest Scenic Area with iconic views of the Sierra Nevada escarpment and Yosemite Crest, with some recovery of lake levels and the recovery of tree-lined riparian corridors along Mono Basin streams- various projects have changed the character of the scenic environment, and not for the better. These include: the four-laning of Highway 395 and the recent reconstruction of the SCE facilities south of Lee Vining, the expansion of the Mono County Airport in Lee Vining, the expansion of gravel mining on Rush Creek, the previously mentioned fire scars, and the light pollution of the current Tioga Gas-mart. How much degradation of our breathtaking scenic views and natural resources by development can be tolerated- before we kill the goose who laid the golden egg?

In order to evaluate the current preferred Alternative, decision makers need visual simulations from the many significant viewpoints in the Mono Basin that would be affected, such as: South Tufa, Panum Crater, the mouth of Rush Creek, and the top of Test Station Road.

ALTERNATIVES

-This proposed project in its entirety is way out of scale, and Alternatives which are much more modest in scope and intensity of development must be considered and not rejected arbitrarily. The SubEIR has the audacity to dismiss “environmentally superior” Alternatives without explanation except to say they do not meet the proponent’s latest objectives.

An example of a reduced Alternative would be to build on Parcel 1- rather than a hotel- a modest amount of housing where the parking lot of proposed hotel would have been and to expand the Deli interior (Parcel 5) to the north to accommodate another section of dining tables for that facility. Up near the flag pole, (Parcel 2) add a campground for seasonal workers, perhaps where the existing tiny shed housing is. There is a large segment of the seasonal "workforce" who don't want to pay rent, love to camp, and just might pay something for that opportunity (with a solar shower/bathroom?) close to town. We've been talking about this need in RPAC meetings for quite some time.

I am not sure that any Alternative which builds “workforce housing” in the proposed location, on the east-facing slopes of “Parcel 2” and the several significant impacts cited in the SubEIR can be mitigated to insignificance.

Lastly, the proponent needs to pay into mitigation fund program that provides compensation for the increase in essential services that will be required including fire, emergency medical, schools, recreation management and repair of resource damages.

I hope that the Mono County Planning Department, the Mono County Planning Commission and the Mono County Board of Supervisors will give due consideration to public concerns and comments on this proposal.

Thank you very much,

Ilene Mandelbaum

Michael Draper

From: Matthew Marcis <mr.marcis@icloud.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 9:23 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org; Kimberly Marcis
Subject: I am opposed to the current Mobile Mart plan

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Dear Michael Draper,

I am a resident of El Portal on the west side of Yosemite. I am also a teacher at El Portal School. Every 2 years we take a school field trip to Mono Lake to learn about the historical and cultural significance and environmental uniqueness of the lake and area. Additionally, our family of 5 are frequent visitors to Lee Vining and the Mammoth Lakes area in the summer as well as infrequent winter trips to June Lake. We are participants of the Granite Man event which has a run course up the Tioga Road from Lee Vining.

I am deeply opposed to the current Mobile Mart development plan. The project's visual impacts are significant and would destroy the grandeur and feeling of open space in the region. I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place.

Thank you,
Matthew Marcis
9760 Crane Creek Road
El Portal, CA
95318
209-626-9817

Michael Draper

From: Dave Marquart <marquart.dave@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 7:00 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn SIER

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Michael Draper, Community Development Department, Mono County, CA

I wish to comment on the draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn project.

I've been a resident of the Mono Basin since 1982 and own a home in Mono City. I have significant concerns about the proposed project coming up for consideration by the planning commission and the Board of Supervisors later this year.

Here are my specific concerns:

One of the unavoidable impacts of the development is the negative impact on scenic resources. The impact of sprawl around the entrance to one of the most beautiful natural treasures in the world cannot be minimized. We are not just *another* entrance to Yosemite but the least developed gateway to Yosemite and that wildness is precisely why so many people visit the Mono Basin before and after their visit to Yosemite. We must be mindful of the reasons the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve and Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area were created here as well as having a State Scenic Highway bordering the property.

I know that the Mono City Fire Department is unable to respond to some fire calls because of a lack of personnel and I'm aware that, at times, there are too few personnel from the Lee Vining Fire Dept that are able to respond to calls for the same reason. What will be the demands on the local departments with a significantly larger population base?

Another unavoidable impact is the impact on the night sky—a big one for me and it is one of Mono County's greatest natural resources. There may be few other people in Mono County who are more aware of the importance of the night sky to visitors from around the world having worked for a Mono Basin land managing agency for 37 years. I have had countless conversations with visitors prior to their arrival over the best places to go to capture that night sky. Most of those who photograph it do so at the South Tufa Area at Mono Lake's south shore. The proposed Tioga Inn development is directly in the line of sight from South Tufa.

Mono County's dark sky regulations (Chapter 23) are such that this project cannot be built without violating them.

Here is the language from 23.070 B:

"No outdoor lighting fixtures shall be installed, aimed, or directed to produce light that spills over into neighboring properties or the public right of way. Light trespass is prohibited."

Here is the language from 23.070 C:

“No outdoor lighting fixture may be maintained in a manner to cause glare visible from off site.”

There is more from the County’s regulations on the night sky but the County can access them as easy as I can.

Many residents are concerned that the housing proposed here will be snapped up by Mammoth residents that can’t find housing in Mammoth. It should be noted that Mammoth Mountain approached the owners of Lake View Lodge in Lee Vining asking if the Mountain could reserve a block of their motel rooms for Mammoth Mountain employees in the winter. I have not talked to a single resident here in the Mono Basin that is not concerned about the possibility that the proposed housing component will be used to provide Mammoth’s housing. We don’t want to be Mammoth’s housing.

I feel that the leap from what was approved by the planning commission in 1993 to what’s being proposed today is too big a leap for many visitors to the Mono Basin as well as those of us who live here in the Mono Basin.

The five unavoidable impacts of this proposed development are too significant to allow the project to proceed at the level being proposed.

I understand that landowners have a right to develop their land since I’m the owner of multiple properties throughout California and Oregon but I feel the scale of this development needs to be reduced. It is not appropriate for the site nor the Mono Basin. I highly urge the County to consider a phased development approach. Let’s start with something smaller and see how that goes. Can a reduced project meet the needs of the tourist economy, the land owner, and the desires of millions of people who call the Mono Basin a special place to them?

Mono County: “Wild by Nature.” Sound familiar?

Dave Marquart, PO Box 274, Lee Vining, CA 93541

27717 County Road 92F
Winters, CA
95694

August 19, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
437 Old Mammoth Road
Mammoth Lakes, CA
93546

By electronic transmission

Re: Tioga Inn Project DRAFT SEIR and Associated Specific Plan Amendment Three

Dear Mr. Draper:

This letter is submitted in regard to the Tioga Inn Project DRAFT Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and its Associated Specific Plan Amendment Three. I have been a frequent visitor to the Mono Basin/Lee Vining region since 1960, and for decades, in the company of friends and comrades, have extensively backpacked the trails between Mount Whitney, Tioga Pass, Virginia Pass and Sonora Pass. For the developer of Tioga Inn, this is an opportunity for profit, and for you this is an administrative responsibility. For me, and many like me, the Mono Basin is a spiritual home.

As the Department knows, more than two decades have elapsed since the County approved the original Tioga Inn Specific Plan & Final Environmental Impact Report, including a significant hotel and restaurant, gas station/convenience store, and workforce housing units. Partially completed, some of the other original project elements (the two-story hotel and restaurant) have not been built. Yet, unsatisfied with permitted development, the project owner now proposes amending the approved Specific Plan to add significantly – too significantly – to the already permitted project. The original project already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the developer seeks to expand the project, with the creation of significant additional impacts that will affect the community and visitors who are here precisely because those kinds of effect are currently absent. This site is an international gateway to Yosemite National Park. People don't come here from all over the world to take in a panorama of brutally insensitive, out of scale overdevelopment that can already be found in many other places - in California and elsewhere. Surely we can do better than this.

The DRAFT SEIR clearly demonstrates that the proposed extended development is unacceptably out of scale with the sensitive environment of the Mono Basin. The document also

demonstrates potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts in key areas of particular concern to the Mono Basin, including: interference with wildlife movement and migration; negative effects on scenic resources and the visual character of this precious place; creation of new sources of light and glare; impacts on social services such as police, fire and schools; and traffic hazards associated with intersections. The project documents clearly do not provide adequate mitigation for the permanent impacts the expanded Tioga Inn project would create, and do not offer a sufficient analysis of alternatives.

As proposed, the expansion of the Tioga Inn project is fundamentally inconsistent with the very first goal in the Mono Basin Community Plan:

GOAL 1: Maintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural, small-town character of communities by managing growth, ensuring high-quality aesthetics, and providing for community development needs to enhance the quality of life for residents.

That Goal and its supporting objectives and policies clearly point in another, better direction. Let us not deface our precious, wondrous Mono Basin with this unwarranted and unnecessarily intrusive blight.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

Thomas G. Matoff

Michael Draper

From: Viki Maxwell <eclectic@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 1:19 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

I am a frequent visitor to Mono Lake, Yosemite, and that section of Hwy 395 and Tioga Pass. I backpack, camp, birdwatch, do photography, and relax and rejuvenate in the mountains and next to the lakes at least a dozen times a year.

My main concerns about the Tioga Inn project as presented in the Draft SEIR are the following:

- I go to this area to revel in the the nature and the views. Driving Hwy 395 and watching the scenery change is an incredible experience. I worry that the sudden, dramatic, scenic appearance of the Tioga Crest, welcoming travelers traveling north on Hwy 395 as they enter Lee Vining will be spoiled by multiple, two-story buildings breaking the skyline and interfering with this scenic, gateway view of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

- I also love viewing (and photographing) stars in the dark night sky in Mono Basin. In looking at the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project I see that impacts on light and glare are identified as some of the 6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts. Despite Mono County's night sky lighting ordinance, the addition of so many downward pointing lights high on the bluff will create a glow visible for miles and forever detract from this world-class stargazing and nighttime photography destination. I find it hard to believe that there aren't more things that can be done in order to preserve this special resource, and urge you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

- There are cumulative adverse impacts to migrating deer with this project, and there is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife.

- South Tufa will be marred by this project. The iconic Mono Lake image of Mono Lake, tufa towers, and the Sierra Nevada, untrammled by human activity, will have over a dozen two-story buildings built into the hillside, peppered with reflective windows and surfaces. This will detract from the enjoyment of walking and photographing throughout the day at Mono Lake. This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.

The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level, and protect wildlife. I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place, and urge you to request alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts so that a good project can go forward.

Thank you for considering my concerns with the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Viki Maxwell
Oakland, CA

21 August 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

RE: *Tioga Inn DSEIR Comments*

VIA EMAIL

Dear Michael,

Thank you for accepting this letter as a brief comment on the current Draft Supplemental EIR for the newly proposed and re-imagined Tioga Inn project.

An initial concern is that the project objectives appear to be inconsistent with the project description. At 3-5 the project's objective is reported "to provide sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses." However in much of the remainder of the document and, in fact as repeatedly described by the proponent in numerous public appearances and statements, it is made clear that the project's proposed housing element is not directly tied to the remainder of the Tioga Inn development at all, but rather intended to be constructed and operated as standalone "workforce housing" for workers employed in other communities.

The proponent has regularly stated his intention to have this housing filled by employees of Mammoth Mountain – 37 miles and over Deadman Pass away from the project site – not as housing for employees at the hotel/restaurant complex approved over 25 years ago but still unbuilt today.

Given this clear discrepancy between the document's foundational logic and the working reality of the project, the DSEIR either needs to potentially include project condition restrictions to ensure people working on site live in the 'workforce housing' or the DSEIR should be modified and rewritten to address the reality that this project is a standalone multi-unit housing development. If, for example and as has been disclosed by the proponent, this is to be a housing facility for workers in Mammoth, the document needs to address the resulting increase in vehicle miles traveled and attendant impacts created by the construction of a new commuter community. These impacts include increased greenhouse gas emissions, increased pressure on highway infrastructure, increased accidents and resultant impacts on emergency services, etc.

No one (hopefully) disputes or disregards the very real need for attainable housing in Mono County, but the question posed by this development is if we, as a community, wish to address this housing crisis through sustainable developments consisting of a mix of deed-restricted ownership and rental opportunities integrated into our communities or through a company town approach designed to maximize commuting, limit upward mobility and unfairly tie people's housing to their service industry jobs. How this project is handled will set the stage for these discussions for years to come. We should get it right, but this project hasn't included the level of consideration and community involvement to ensure we do.

A troubling theme in the document's attempt to articulate mitigations for the significant impacts posed by this development is the displacement of the burden to fund and construct mitigations off of the project proponent and onto the public. The repeated notion that grants would be applied for to address significant impacts such as wildlife migration and pedestrian and vehicular safety does not rise to the level of a meaningful mitigation as required by our County's General Plan. This 'wish and prayer' approach not only attempts to address real problems with intangible solutions but does not articulate who would be required to identify, apply for, manage and implement these potential grant funded projects. Grants are not free money; they represent a very real capacity burden to the organization/agency administering them. Additionally, these 'grants' are, in reality, public

funds not intended to solve problems created by a private development. Solving problems created by private developments is what mitigations are for. The private party – in this case, the proponent – must not offload costs associated with mitigating their impacts onto the public, but rather be required to fund them as part of the cost of the development.

Project implementation conditions requiring real, tangible mitigations with timelines and private funding amounts need to be articulated for the significant impacts identified and disclosed in the document. The potential impacts generated by creating a new town and resort as large or larger than Lee Vining at the entrance to Yosemite National Park are very real; the mitigations required should be very real, as well.

Policy 4d: Prohibit unauthorized off-road vehicle activity was a very welcome inclusion. Thank you. However, this policy does not really address the ongoing problem which is the current ‘Mobil Mart’ has created an attractive nuisance as it has become a destination for illegal off-highway vehicle use. Already, off-highway vehicle users regularly illegally travel up and down Highway 120 or along and across Highway 395 to access the Mobil Mart for food or fuel. Additionally, use of the state highway adjacent to the development for staging these non-highway legal vehicles is an increasing hazard.

Use of off-highway vehicles on the property itself is a minor concern and one that can be easily addressed by the property owner themselves. The real issue is the increased off-highway vehicle use this project is creating as an attractive nuisance destination, as well as the potential increase in off-highway vehicles being staged on the property by residents and tourists which then illegally access public lands via state and interstate highways (on which off-highway vehicle use is illegal).

This policy should be re-written to address ongoing and potentially increasing use of the facility as a staging area and destination that facilitates illegal use onto public roadways. This could be addressed by modifying the Policy to ensure that no dirt access roads or trails leave the property other than the main paved access on Highway 120 and an additional Emergency Access Route and a proponent-funded pedestrian/bike path to town. Further, signage should be required noting ingress and egress from this development onto state- and county-maintained roadways is illegal under the California Vehicle Code and not allowed by residents or visitors.

There are many more ideas to be shared and issues to be discussed, but time is short. Going forward I hope the project proponent, County staff and consultants, and the engaged public will be able to place a greater emphasis on gathering and expressing meaningful public sentiment on this project. This public involvement does not need to be a fight. After all, this development is on private land and privately funded; the proponent has the right to pursue their own happiness, so to speak, within the bounds of the law and regulation. To date, the project’s history has strayed outside of those bounds – a case in point being the current, unauthorized ‘workforce housing’ on the property.

In my view, the goal of the CEQA process should be to establish a dialogue, however forced, between the proponent who will benefit from the project and the public who will live with the project. This dialogue should be an honest back and forth of real projects components that are intended to actually come to fruition as permitted, disclosed and analyzed impacts to the community, public infrastructure and the natural world, and finally real, tangible, funded and timed mitigations. We still have the opportunity to utilize this process to create a better project that works for the developer, the community and this place we call home.

Thanks for your time and consideration of these comments. Your work is appreciated.

Respectfully,

Paul McFarland
Lee Vining, California

Michael Draper

From: Maureen McGlinchy <maureenmcglinchy@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 7:55 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Development

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

Please accept the following comments on the proposed Tioga Inn development. I had wanted to write a more thorough letter, but unfortunately I haven't had the time to compose one. I hope these bullet points will get the job done.

1. I live in Mono City and have 2 children in the elementary school. The school serves the communities of Mono City, Lee Vining and June Lake. The proposed workforce housing could become a fourth community and potentially increase the school size by 30%. We have 6 classrooms and 6 teachers for 9 grades (K-8). So 3 classes have combined grades, which works well for the current school size. If the school size were to increase, the combined classes will be larger. I imagine more teachers will need to be hired and new classrooms created. While I don't doubt the school could adjust to a larger school population, I believe my children's education would be negatively affected in the interim.
2. I understand that Mono County has a workforce housing shortage. Will the project truly address this problem? Will the housing be affordable for those who need it? Does the plan dictate that the housing must be long-term, affordable rentals or once built, could it be converted to whatever use the owner desires? Just because the developer is using the words "Workforce Housing" does this actually mean anything? The County shouldn't be relying on this property as a solution to the housing shortage. It is the entrance to Yosemite National Park and sits in one of the most scenic views in the eastern Sierra.
3. I value the night sky of the Mono Basin. I know that Mono County enforces a dark sky ordinance but even under best conditions, the quality of the night sky will be diminished. I believe South Tufa will be especially impacted, as the development will be visible from the site.
4. The footprint of this project is so much larger than the originally approved plan. It seems like this project is being rushed through - more time should be spent evaluating the effects of this additional proposed development.
5. If the development must go through, I ask that the following ideas be incorporated into the plan:
 1. The buildings are designed to have the least visual impact on the viewshed up Lee Vining Canyon. This should include alternatives that would screen the development from the highway and further east.
 2. The design should include the best technology to avoid light pollution.
 3. Pedestrian/bicycle access be improved between the development and Lee Vining to promote public safety
 4. The inevitable increase in traffic is addressed preemptively
 5. The size of the development should be evaluated in relation to negative impacts. Each additional set of units increases the magnitude of the impacts; the mitigated impact of a smaller development should be investigated.

I value the Mono Basin and Lee Vining because of its small-town character and surrounding, wild environment. A development that could double the population of the town will have a major impact on both of these qualities. I ask that the Mono County Planning Commission thoroughly consider these impacts (and potential alternatives) before finalizing the SEIR.

Thank you,
Maureen McGlinchy

Comments on Tioga Inn Specific Plan Draft SEIR

August 16, 2019

To:
Michael Draper of Mono County Community Development Department

From:
Barry McPherson
905 NE 7th St
Newport, OR 97365
(760)965-6708
(503)708-8688
bdmcperson@coho.net

My Background and Reasons for Commenting

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Tioga Inn development in Lee Vining. I have deep roots in the Mono Basin, and deep concerns about this proposed development in the Basin. In November 2016, I submitted “Comments regarding Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Development” to the Mono County Community Development Department. I encourage you to look again at those comments.

I was born in Bridgeport in 1947 and grew up below Mono Inn, the resort that my Grandmother Venita R. McPherson operated from the 1920s until her death in 1961. After graduating from Lee Vining High School in 1965, obtaining a BS in Zoology at UCSB in 1969, and working at the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory on Convict Creek when it was a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility, I moved to Oregon in 1970. I earned an MS in Fisheries at Oregon State University in 1973 and spent a career as a salmon and steelhead biologist in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. I have been involved in human-caused global warming issues for over 30 years, including being a contributor to the “1990 Oregon Task Force on Global Warming Report to the Governor and Legislature”.

With my wife Denise McPherson, I inherited over 100 acres of historical McPherson property on Mono Lake below, above, and to south of Mono Inn in 1997 after both of my parents had died. We have managed the four rental houses on this historical property since 1997. We have spent time every year staying in motels in Lee Vining or trailer camping nearby and doing business with Mono County stores, restaurants, gas stations, contractors, and various Mono County government offices.

So it with these deep roots and current interest in the Mono Basin that I base my comments on the proposed Tioga Inn development. I hope my comments made in November 2016 and here today convey the overall theme that any development in the Mono Basin needs to be done in ways that sustain the unique natural beauty and ecological function of the Basin, and be done in ways that serve the community of people living in the Basin for past decades and far into the future. The Tioga Inn development could be a positive addition to Lee Vining and the Mono Basin if done carefully with this theme as the driving force.

My Comments

Due to many concerns that other commenters have brought up and that I brought up in my November 2016 comments, this very large proposed development for Mono Basin, and especially large for the town of Lee Vining, needs to move in reasonable stages over a decade or more. Contingencies at each phase need to preclude additional phases being built if problems arise. This would include problems in the areas of:

- community disruption and conflicts,
- services for safety, security, schools, and emergency medical situations,
- increased pedestrian safety and parking issues in the town of Lee Vining,
- excessive load on volunteer fire-fighters with equipment inadequacies for the new demand,
- air quality impacts from vehicles and heating of space and water within buildings,
- water table and streamflow,
- night-sky pollution impacts, especially from outdoor lighting at the development,
- highway safety, including vehicle/deer interactions,
- wildlife migration and population health (particularly mule deer),
- workforce housing needs within the basin,
- wildfire risks, and
- increased levels and frequency of extreme storm and climate conditions as forecasted global warming impacts become reality.

Local, state, national, and international development of technologies to reduce fossil-fuel dependence and reduce other greenhouse gas emissions contributing to the growing rate of global warming could permit faster construction of this proposed housing/hotel/restaurant development. The same applies to development of water conservation technologies.

I support the following phased development plan already submitted by at least one other commenter:
:

PHASE 1: 15 apartments are built, with preference given to Mobil gas mart and deli workers and residents of the Mono Basin.

PHASE 2: The hotel and/or hilltop restaurant is designed and approved by the Board of Supervisors, leading to actual completion of the facilities.

PHASE 3: An additional 15 apartment units are allowed, based on new jobs provided by the hotel (15 apartments) and/or hilltop restaurant (10 apartments).

PHASE 4: As time progresses, the need, occupancy, impacts on the town, impacts on traffic, impacts on deer migration, etc. should become more clear. At that point, which may be at least 10 years out, the situation is re-evaluated by Mono County and the local community with the possibility of more residential construction.

I agree with recent comments I've seen to the effect that using Lee Vining as a major housing area for Mammoth's workforce is unfair to the community and to the Mammoth workers. Long commutes burning fossil fuels, especially on icy roads over high summits like Deadman (the second highest summit to Conway Summit throughout all states traversed by Hwy 395), are counterproductive and

dangerous. The planners should try to enhance projects closer to the jobs in Mammoth. The proponent should reach out to residents of Lee Vining and the rest of Mono Basin and discuss alternatives to this very large and impactful development. It is clear to me that Mono County and the SEIR consultant should increase their outreach as the Final SEIR is prepared.

As I stated in my November 2016 comments, if the above issues can be adequately addressed, the Tioga Inn development could be a welcome development in the Mono Lake Basin. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Barry McPherson
August 16, 2019
(Contact information at top of page 1)

Ellery McQuilkin
P.O. Box 451, Lee Vining, CA 93541

August 17, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

Lee Vining has a special and unique community that we've worked hard to create. Building the Tioga Inn expansion as presented in the SEIR will jeopardize this special place.

Lee Vining does need housing, but for the community members, not seasonal employees who won't have time to contribute to the community, due to the short time they will live here. We need affordable housing on a smaller scale, that will actually benefit the community and prioritize our needs. This housing should not be visible from scenic places like South Tufa, as part of what makes Lee Vining economically successful is the natural beauty of the area. The housing complex that is being planned now will not provide any of these things.

The SEIR should include an alternative that assures housing is not visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 and has mandatory requirements that prioritize people working in Lee Vining.

As of now, the mobile mart is not safely accessible on foot, and the proposed Tioga Inn plan will only worsen this problem. This ultimately means that unless a safe pathway is built, the Tioga Inn will be an entirely separate town that is pressing in on Lee Vining. The SEIR recognizes that the current connection is dangerous, however the plan does not guarantee any solution. This means that if the plan were to proceed as presented even more people would be subjected to this dangerous connection. The final project plan must include a bike and walking path funded by the developer.

I'm 14 years old and I recognize that this community is a special place, and I would hate to have it torn apart by this project. I hope that you develop an alternative that is environmentally friendly and fully compliant with the Lee Vining Community Plan, so that my home will remain the beautiful and unique place that I've grown up in.

Sincerely,
Ellery McQuilkin

Caelen McQuilkin
P.O. Box 451, Lee Vining, CA 93541

August 20, 2019

Mono County Community Development Department
Michael Draper
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

My name is Caelen McQuilkin, and I am seventeen years old. I have lived in the Mono Basin for my entire life, which means that the core of my childhood experiences revolve around the community of the town of Lee Vining. It is because of this care and connection to the town that I am writing you to address the proposal for the Tioga Inn Specific Amendment #3.

The proposed construction of up to one hundred workforce housing units has the potential to triple the population of our little town. This would not just permanently change the dynamic and feel of our community, but it would drastically alter the town's functionality altogether. There are many issues associated with increasing a town's population by such a drastic amount, including (but not limited to) fire and emergency protection, and economic, traffic, and school impacts.

I have thoroughly reviewed section 5.5-24 of the draft SEIR document, which outlines the impact that the proposal will have on Lee Vining schools. I have attended Lee Vining schools since PreK and it is clear to me that critical information is missing from the document. This deficiency must be corrected in order to accurately evaluate the plan's impact on education in the town of Lee Vining. As a recent graduate of Lee Vining High School, and a student deeply involved in the school community, I hope to provide the Community Development Department with the information necessary to make the document more well-informed and accurate. Once this information is incorporated into the planning behind the proposal, I believe it will be clear the impact the proposed amendment will make on schooling in Lee Vining will be so significant that it will require mitigation.

Section 5.8 of the SEIR document states that the population of Lee Vining Elementary School will be increased by 34 students, and that the population of Lee Vining High School will be increased by 28 students. Given the small size of the schools, this change to the student body is

quite significant, increasing student enrollment in LVES by 1/3 and that at LVHS by 1/2 (5.8-8). The document states that “project impacts on school services would be less than significant, and no supplemental mitigation is required,” (5.8-9) a conclusion based on misinformation.

First, one of the largest strengths of Lee Vining High School is its low student-to-teacher ratio, which allows students to access one-on-one help almost whenever needed, and makes classroom spaces more interactive, personal, and interesting. Currently, only five teachers are employed at the school full time, and educating 50% more students would significantly hinder these teachers’ abilities to provide the same quality education that LVHS students are fortunate enough to receive today. And because the funding for Lee Vining High School is not determined by the number of students attending, it is not reasonable to expect the school to have the resources to provide more teachers.

Extending beyond education received in the classroom, Lee Vining High School provides a large number of opportunities for its students, all of which are made possible by the school’s small size. These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Yearly place-based education trips to locations including Tuolumne Meadows (2016), Yosemite Valley (2017), Hetch Hetchy (2018), and Glacier Point (planned for 2019), where teachers incorporate their curriculum into the natural world. This is possible because transportation and all camping accommodations (tents, camping gear, food, hiking gear) can be provided and paid for when needed for such a small group of students.
- Sports teams that do not require tryouts, meaning that every student is able to play volleyball, basketball, softball, or run cross country if they simply decide they want to.
- Whole-school trips to plays including *Marry Poppins* (2016), *Of Mice and Men* (2016), *The Crucible* (2017), *Dreamscape* (2019) and Lin Manuel Miranda’s *In the Heights* (2019).
- College trips to a wide variety of campuses, including UC’s, Cal States, community colleges, trade schools, and art schools. All of our school trips are possible because transportation and lodging are affordable when only for such a small group of students.
- Open Advanced Placement programs, where any student who is willing to challenge themselves can enroll in the classes, which include AP Calculus, AP Spanish, AP Microeconomics, AP US Government, AP US History, AP English Literature, and AP English Language.
- A two-week period of expansive learning, where students choose between classes ranging from outdoor education to drama to robotics, and intensively focus on the elective-like class while learning and bonding with their peers (if you go to the Lee Vining High School Youtube channel, you can view some of the successful products of interm--school

plays including “Girl of La Mancha,” “Terror of the Swamp Thingy”, and “The Last Gladiator.”)

Further underscoring the importance of the unique educational opportunities LVHS offers students, a large portion of the school is made up of low income students, and an even larger part will be the first in their family to attend college. It is because of this that the school-wide trip to Yosemite may be the only trip to Yosemite that some students are able to take, because they cannot fund such a trip on their own. It is because of this that the open access to AP classes and teacher tutoring pushes many students to meet the 3.0 GPA requirement for Cal State University Admission. In a high school expanded by the proposed project to 84 students, administration could not fund, transport, supervise, entertain, or feed a school trip to Yosemite, nor could it provide such personalized, challenging and rich classes to students.

The small size of Lee Vining High School, and the education and opportunities it entails, produces tangible results for the students. Using data from the past two years that I attended LVHS gives you a glimpse at the

In just the last two years that I attended LVHS, these are just some of the accomplishments that can be attributed to the opportunities our school offers its students because it is small:

- From 2018-2019, seven students passed the AP Calculus test, one earning a four and two earning fives (the highest possible score for an AP test)
- In 2018, four students passed the AP English Language test, two of them earning fives and one earning a four
- In 2019, five students passed the AP English Literature test, three of them earning fives
- From 2018-2019, five students enrolled in 4 year universities, including UCs, Cal States, and the second-highest ranked small liberal arts college in the nation
- From 2018-2019, six students enrolled in 2 year colleges
- **From 2018-2019 (two graduating senior classes), seven students total became the first in their family to pursue education beyond high school**
- In 2018 and 2019, the school’s mock trial team made it to the California State Finals
- In 2018 and 2019, LVHS sent a student to the state Poetry Out Loud competition
- In 2019, LVHS sent a student to ISEF, the international science and engineering fair
- In 2019, LVHS sent a group of seven students to lobby for climate change action in Washington, D.C.

These opportunities are central to the culture of Lee Vining High School in most part because they are possible for teachers and administrators to achieve, unlike many other American high

schools where a high volume of students would make such a rich educational setting hard to make possible. Transportation and supervision work easily with a small body of students, and the funding for these activities benefits every student because there is enough money to go around to all. Here, it is important to note that **Lee Vining High School is not paid based on its student enrollment, so an increase in the student population would cause the school's budget to be stretched even more thinly**. So, with 84 students, many of the extra-curricular opportunities offered today would be removed from the school, only offered to a select group of students, or significantly reduced in quality.

These aspects of Lee Vining High School--its teacher to student ratio, extra curricular opportunities, and basic aid system where the school is **not** given funding based on average daily attendance--make it clear that the current education Lee Vining High School provides is only possible because of its small size. A 50% increase in the student body would drastically alter not just the school's quality of education, but its literal ability to accommodate such a number of students with such a small number of teachers and disproportionate funding.

Further than just Lee Vining High School, the impacts of this plan would drastically alter the functionality of Lee Vining Elementary School and Lee Vining preschool. I will not go as in-depth on these negative effects, but I do know that my younger sister just finished her second year in preschool, and she was lucky to get into the program, which is already popular and operating at maximum size. The building and resources available to the preschool certainly do not have the capacity to accommodate the increase in students that the Tioga Inn would yield--the predicted number of children of preschool age would at least double the class size the preschool holds today.

Thus, the impact that the Tioga Inn Specific Amendment #3 will make on the education provided to all students in Lee Vining and nearby communities is so significant that not mitigating that impact would be denying local students the opportunities and future they deserve.

If the Amendment #3 is approved, mitigation must be provided to the schools of Lee Vining. This mitigation would have to primarily include providing school with the funding to compensate for taking care of the additional students, and hiring and paying for another teacher and at one additional aid. Further, in order to help uphold the unique educational opportunities provided at LVHS, the mitigation should include things like purchasing more vehicles and other resources for the large student body. I'm sure that school administrators could provide a detailed list of needs, if necessary.

I recognize that my perspective is only a slice of the vast range of issues associated with the Tioga Inn proposal. I am also extremely concerned about the plan's lack of a guarantee that Lee

Vining workers and families would benefit from the additional housing, the light pollution the project would cause, its visual impacts that would impair the scenic Mono Lake views people travel across the world to see, the impact it would make on local businesses, and its lack of any plan for connecting to town with a walking or bike path.

Because of this, I would like to see a final proposal analysis that addresses all of my concerns in addition to the others raised by the Lee Vining community.

Thank you for addressing these matters.

Caelen McQuilkin

Michael Draper

From: Anthony Meade <antmeade@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 3:52 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Pertaining to the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Mr. Draper,

I would like to add my words to the pile of dissenting views of this gas station going in at the gateway to Yosemite. Looking back upon this decision a decade from now would show the negative effects of allowing a corporation with little to no regard for the environment it is building in, to divert resources away from the local economy that is comprised of individuals who do hold this incredible place in high regard.

The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place depends on not allowing corporate interests have stake in what they will not uphold.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,

-Anthony Meade
Portland, OR
Touring Musician and Artist

Michael Draper

From: Alayne Meeks <meekshoney@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 8:27 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Lee Vining development

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Michael Draper:

It's been brought to my attention that there is an 80 to 100 unit development proposed at the Mobil Station on Tioga Pass in Lee Vining. While housing for seasonal summer staff is needed, the goal of building a large hotel on a bluff that can be seen from any vantage point in the Basin seems incongruous with the beauty that embraces the area. Then there is a discussion of building housing for people who would work in a non-existent hotel. Doesn't the "cart before the horse" apply here?

The issue is what does Lee Vining need right now, and I would assume it needs housing for temporary summer staff of 15 to 20 people. This level of building, if not in the way of views and migratory animal routes, would be in keeping with the look and feel of Lee Vining. The difficulty of navigating building projects with development projects while maintaining the flavor of a community is a thoughtful process for a board to consider. But the job seems to be to maintain a community's identity while still allowing for the needs of the community, which definitely increases during the summer, but only during the summer. As most of us who frequent this area know, few people drive north of Mammoth Lakes in the winter months, meaning any large development could permanently change the community in negative ways, and with no way to go back if allowed to proceed.

I would encourage the board to look at the needs of the existing community, but do not take into account future plans that may or may not come to be. Taking things a step at a time also means that another project could be considered at a later date, that may be more in keeping with what changes this first phase creates. Travel this ground carefully, and remember that the original plan for Yosemite National Park included Mono Lake and this portion of Tioga Pass. The beauty that remains should be respected above development proposals that may not have the area's best interests at heart.

Thank you,
Alayne Meeks, longtime visitor to the Mono Basin and homeowner in Mono City

--

Please respond to meekshoney@gmail.com, my old account alayne@meekshoney.com no longer exists. Thank you!

Michael Draper

From: Craig Merrilees <craig.merrilees@ilwu.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 5:13 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Problems with Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Dear Mr. Draper,

I've been spending time in the area for over 55 years, and am deeply concerned about the Tioga Inn project. Simply stated, this project is too large and too intrusive.

I believe the project could be reconfigured, and suggest that the applicant should work with the Mono Lake Committee to develop a plan that will accommodate the workforce, but reduce the terrible scar this project, as proposed, would impose on the landscape and beauty that we all treasure so much.

Thank you for considering these comments and thanks for your work.

Craig Merrilees
Communications Director
ILWU-International Longshore & Warehouse Union
1188 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
415-775-0533, ext 113
510-774-5325 (cell)

Michael Draper

From: Karen Merritt <kmerritt@ucmerced.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 2:20 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Opposition to current plan for development above Rte 120/Hwy 395

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Planning Division,

As an annual traveler through Tioga Pass to the Eastern Sierra, I am distressed to read about the planned hotel and development above the Mobil Gas Station at the intersection of highways 120 and 395. The area is a beautiful and peaceful part of the entry into the Mono lake basin. I'm sorry to liken the concept to the worst of development that has scarred Mammoth lakes but it is difficult to see how a huge hotel and housing area will avoid making a beautiful bluff into an eyesore. What options are there to avoid making a beautiful area ugly and managing the expected increase in traffic congestion? Have you considered all the options for screening and managing development in that vicinity? As a Californian, I am appalled by and opposed to what you are proposing to permit.

Sincerely,

Karen Merritt
5879 Scarborough Dr.
Oakland, CA 94611

Michael Draper

From: Constance Millar <millarconnie@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 3, 2019 10:33 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Constance Millar
Subject: Comments on Tioga Workforce Housing DSEIR

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing in response to the Tioga Workforce Housing DSEIR project, which is proposed for Lee Vining, CA. I have been a Mono City homeowner since 1994; before that I visited and worked in the Mono Basin since 1977.

I strongly oppose all Project Alternatives except the No-Action Alternative. My primary objection derives from the extraordinary development and population increase the Project would impose on Lee Vining and the greater Mono Basin. With the potential to double or triple the population of Lee Vining, the housing development would manifest a sudden and overwhelming new town on the periphery of the current community. Not only would the spatial footprint represent an enormous expansion and sprawl to this currently contained rural town, but with the dramatic population increase in proportion to the current Lee Vining, the impact on the town would be overwhelming.

Beyond the effects on traffic, service demands, school requirements, etc., my main concern regarding the increased population is the likely impact on the culture of Lee Vining and other Mono Basin settlements. County Planners and Supervisors are surely aware that each of the towns in Mono Basin has a unique culture and demography, and residents settle in the communities on those bases. Mono Basinites choose to live here for the unique culture as well as natural beauty of the Basin. The culture reflects an affinity to the early settlement of the Basin, the native population, a focus on the lake and its ecosystem, rural and rustic harmony with nature, and an urge to conserve and protect the diverse natural and historic values, including small-town character. I believe that Mono Basin residents have a bigger landscape perspective than do residents of adjacent communities: the Mono Basin geographic watershed stretches our perspective to include not only the glorious Sierra Nevada at our back door, but the Bodie Hills, the Mono Craters, Cowtrack Mountains, and other Great Basin mountains and basins that embrace the Lake. Diverse backgrounds compose our current Mono Basin population -- some incorporating urban values, primarily northern CA, as well as many other elements reflecting diverse education, ethnicity, and economic status. Despite our differences, we are united with love for this landscape.

Given what has happened in the years since the Tioga Gas Market was developed, the population at those facilities has already forced transition to a very different culture than the communities of the Mono Basin. This I would characterize as a Mammoth-Southern California culture, with loud music, fast pace, dense crowds, focus on vehicles. In my understanding of the DSEIR, the influx that will result from the development of workforce housing will encourage more of this culture. With the enormous numbers of new renters relative to the Lee Vining population, a cultural influx would transform -- and, in my view, ruin -- the existing values of Lee Vining. I see nothing in the plan that would preclude Mammoth developments renting a large set of units at the Tioga Housing, and regardless, a majority of residents would likely derive from the Mammoth area, due to the proportionately large employment opportunities there relative to Lee Vining.

Quoting a headline article in the 8/1/19 Mammoth Times, Mammoth was described as "Southern California's mountain home." Lee Vining and the other Mono Basin communities are NOT described this way, and I strongly oppose a future where that culture dominates.

Other features of the DSEIR that I oppose include:

- Expansion of the parking area;
- Addition of 30,000 gallon gas tank;
- Addition of 3rd gas pump island;
- Addition of new traffic lane.

I was a participant to the Lee Vining Community Plan, a County-led project some years ago. I believe the Tioga Workforce House DSEIR proposed projects contradict the elements and the spirit of that Plan. Further, I believe the developments planned would seriously and adversely impact the values for which the USFS Congressionally-designated Mono Basin Scenic Area was designated.

Thank you for considering my comments.

--Connie Millar
28 Silver Lake Way
Mono City
millarconnie@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: sharon miyako <sharon.miyako@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:40 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comment on draft seir for Tioga Inn

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Hello.

I'm writing to express my interest in seeing more work being done around the draft seir for the Tioga Inn. While I know the need for increased housing and appreciate the revenue this might bring in for Mono county, I wonder what Mono county may lose in the process.

If seems like no alternatives have been presented to the draft, that might take into account light pollution, scenic vista alteration, or wildlife migration and habitat impact. Lee vining is one of the spots on the east side that visitors flock to because of it's remote feeling and views. It stands out from mammoth or bishop in this sense and makes it a destination in itself.

1. Please offer up multiple alternatives that will address the elements I mentioned above.
2. Please consider evaluating the entire project as a single project instead of the previously approved project plus this add on.
3. Please offer up alternatives to the view she'd impact. Right now visitors can use Lee vining as a star gazing spot. This is a resource more and more visitors have and continue to lose at home. Building out something lkke this will alter ngiht sky viewing significantly, and therefore remove another visitor attraction.

Thank you for reading my comments and I look forward to seeing how mono county will continue to care for the community's needs long term.



MONO LAKE COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 29
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Lee Vining, CA 93541

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Board of Directors

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Geoffrey McQuilkin

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90025-3634

On the Internet

monolake.org
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August 21, 2019

Via postal mail and email to mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Wendy Sugimura, Director
Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Comments on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project

Dear Director Sugimura and Mr. Draper,

The Mono Lake Committee is writing to provide comments on the scope and content of the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) for the Tioga Inn Project (Project).

I. Introduction

The Mono Lake Committee (MLC) is a non-profit citizen's group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem, educating the public about Mono Lake and the impacts on the environment of excessive water use, and promoting cooperative solutions that protect Mono Lake and meet real water needs without transferring environmental problems to other areas. Founded in 1978 and headquartered in Lee Vining, the Committee is supported by 16,000 members who are passionate about Mono Lake and the natural features of Mono County. MLC has played a significant role in achieving the ecological and scenic protections that are in place today for Mono Lake, its tributary streams, and surrounding lands, forming a foundation for the Mono Basin's vibrant tourism-based economy.

Scoping for the expansion of the Tioga Inn specific plan took place in 2016 and, along with many others, MLC provided a detailed comment letter dated November 21, 2016. During the subsequent two and half years the Project expansion was reshaped in response to concerns; for example, the proposed third story of the hotel was abandoned, presumably in response to fire safety concerns and visual impacts identified during scoping.

Unfortunately, proposal modifications were not made to address the visual impacts of the proposed expansion of the site development footprint onto the highly visible ridgeline at the east side of the property, 40+ feet higher than the existing development and located prominently above Highway 395 and boldly within scenic views from South Tufa and other popular visitor destinations at the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve and Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. As a result the Project studied in the DSEIR continues to create major visual, aesthetic, and wildlife problems—larger, in fact, than those identified during scoping. The DSEIR concludes they are significant and, as proposed, unmitigable.

The problems that would be created by expanding the site development footprint of the Tioga Inn were well identified in 2016. The proposal was not subsequently modified to craft solutions to these problems, leaving the DSEIR to study a constrained set of alternatives and mitigations that are unable to address these issues. As a result, even the DSEIR concludes that the No Project alternative is the only way to avoid serious damage to the scenic assets of Mono Lake, scenic highways, and the gateway to Yosemite National Park.

This means that Mono County decision makers like yourself, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors are being presented with project alternatives that do not successfully achieve the county's housing and economic goals while preserving the "Wild by Nature" scenic assets that are vital to Mono County's continued prosperity. Indeed, the Project as proposed is in direct conflict with almost every element of Mono County's vision for community development.

Because the visual, scenic, aesthetic, and wildlife concerns MLC raised in 2016 have not been addressed (as well as others) MLC is greatly concerned that decision makers will be confronted with false choices between housing and scenic protection. It doesn't have to be this way, and Mono County deserves better.

MLC knows that better design alternatives exist that could eliminate unacceptable visual impacts and substantially mitigate other impacts of concern. Given that our scoping comments on these topics were not addressed with suitable alternatives and mitigations in the DSEIR, MLC has necessarily asked our legal team at Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger to review the DSEIR and evaluate its adequacy for decision-making. Their letter, submitted under separate cover, identifies significant legal deficiencies that must be addressed by preparation of a comprehensive EIR or, at minimum, the creation of new problem-solving alternatives and mitigations and recirculation of the DSEIR.

MLC is well aware that Mono County has demonstrated a commitment to both following the specific legal requirements of CEQA and to achieving the spirit of the law by daylighting project impacts and crafting and implementing alternatives that preserve the environmental and community integrity of Mono County. More than any other development project in recent years, Mono County needs better alternatives and mitigations to be created for the Tioga Inn Project. A comprehensive EIR, new alternatives and mitigations based on comments and community engagement, and recirculation of the document are a path forward to achieving the high standard Mono County holds itself to—and to providing decision makers with viable options for a project that provides desirable benefits without imposing permanent unacceptable costs on the scenic Mono Basin, Lee Vining community, and Mono County economy.

In this letter MLC reviews the DSEIR and provides comments on the alarming visual and scenic impacts that will result from the Project, as well as other topics including wildlife, water, dark skies, and community plan consistency.

I. Comments on the Tioga Inn DSEIR

A. Visual, aesthetic, and scenic impacts

As noted in the 1993 Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), the only unavoidable significant adverse impact identified was the impact on visual resources. The proposed Tioga Inn specific plan amendment expands and intensifies visual impacts outlined in that FEIR and seeks, again, for Mono County to waive consideration of these impacts.

The DSEIR notes that, despite landscaping, construction, and design mitigation to minimize offsite views, the impact to Scenic Resources and Visual Character are a “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impact” and that Light and Glare Effects are a “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impact.”

MLC concurs with this analysis; however, the analysis should contain more information and analysis in order to describe the full extent of the project’s visual impacts. Finally, the DSEIR does not adequately consider siting and design mitigation or alternatives that could significantly reduce visual impacts.

1. Scenic resources and analysis

The proposed Tioga Inn Project is located at the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park, adjacent to world-renowned Mono Lake, the congressionally-designated Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, and neighboring the small, rural, community of Lee Vining. This project, as proposed, has the potential to propagate “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts” well beyond the Mono Basin when considering the economic connection with Mono County and the nationally significant profile of this Mono Lake and Yosemite gateway community.

The Mono County Economic Development, Tourism & Film Commission recently updated its visitor survey results based on a 2018 tourism study and presentation by Mono County consultant Lauren Schlau at the June Lake Community Center in June 2019. According to Ms. Schlau, Mono Lake is now the overall #1 attraction in Mono County with the largest share of “Total Visitors” at 43.2% and Mono County enjoys “high visitor satisfaction” mostly due to “scenic beauty perception.” The recognition that Mono Lake is now the overall #1 attraction in Mono County is an important, additional consideration in appreciating the extent of the scenic value placed on Mono Lake for all of Mono County.

The State Scenic Highway 395 which runs from Walker, California to the Inyo County line; the eligible State Route 120 and Tioga Pass; the nationally significant eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park; the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the first congressionally designated Scenic Area in the United States; and the “Wild by Nature” Mono County Tourism marketing of

Mono County all collectively reinforce what is well-established—that the Mono Basin is a location of exceptional visual quality.

The DSEIR states accurately: “In combination with the dramatic Sierra escarpment leading into Yosemite National Park, the otherworldly beauty of Mono Lake is among the outstanding scenic vistas of the world.” However, throughout the document evaluations of visual impact often understate and underscore the effects of the Project on these remarkable and unique scenic vistas.

There is no mention of the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve within the context of the Scenic Resources. The Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve is a State Park unit as listed in Section 5.5.3.2 under California Department of Parks and Recreation, encompasses the entire surface of Mono Lake, and water-based recreation (kayaking, paddleboarding, etc.) will be affected by the visual impacts, as well as from key locations on State Park land adjacent to Mono Lake. The DSEIR should specifically consider the visual impacts the Project will create within the State Reserve and mitigations. State reserves, as per the California Code, Public Resource Code § 5019.65 (2017):

“...consist of areas embracing outstanding natural or scenic characteristics or areas containing outstanding cultural resources of statewide significance. State reserve units may be established in the terrestrial or nonmarine aquatic (lake or stream) environments of the state and shall be further classified as one of the following types: (a) State natural reserves, consisting of areas selected and managed for the purpose of preserving their native ecological associations, unique faunal or floral characteristics, geological features, and *scenic qualities in a condition of undisturbed integrity*. Resource manipulation shall be restricted to the minimum required to negate the deleterious influence of man.”

2. Visual simulations are insufficient and do not convey the depth of impacts

Photographic exhibits in the DSEIR fail to sufficiently analyze existing site views. As stated in MLC’s Notice of Preparation letter dated November 21, 2016, “Visual simulations should be a major component of the DSEIR so that the true visual impacts can be represented to the public.” The exhibit images do show various site views of the project, but they do not include a view from the amphitheater porch of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center looking south toward the project area. These exhibits also do not include the view from the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve at the end of the boardwalk below Mono Lake County Park. Further, neither a representative view from Panum Crater, Lee Vining Canyon, or Mono City were included in the analysis.

Further, these images do not fully represent or include primary views that visitors will focus on when they first encounter the Project. For example, visitors to South Tufa do not take photographs or appreciate the view west in the middle of the day at the northeast corner of the South Tufa parking lot, as the DSEIR image does. Visitors typically are drawn down the path to the tufa and the lake where they focus on specific views and photography. The images taken from South Tufa (Mono Lake, tufa, and the Sierra Nevada crest are, by the greatest volume in

media, taken from South Tufa near the water's edge. Image Exhibit 5.12-5 in the DSEIR does not faithfully capture this.

Visual simulations should include three-dimensional models placed in the landscape to accurately portray the views from along the north and south-bound lanes of Highway 395 approaching and exiting Lee Vining. The simulations should also accurately communicate the scope and scale of the project from a wide range of perspectives (hiker and climber views from the Tioga Crest, flights into Lee Vining, etc.) and varied lighting conditions. The simulations should also convey valuable information about the relative height of buildings and the reach of roads and associated development fixtures.

3. Extent of impact on South Tufa, Mono County's iconic destination

South Tufa is the most heavily-visited day-use site at Mono Lake. With an estimated 176,000 visitors in 2018, South Tufa provides access to sweeping views of Mono Lake, unusual tufa towers, and the Sierra Nevada escarpment. Collectively, these elements form an iconic image that is frequently used to represent Mono County, Mono Lake, the Eastern Sierra, the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, and the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. This classic image location is highlighted on social media, travel brochures, articles, fine art photography books, calendars, and more, and represents a large volume of Mono Lake images highlighted on social media, including those posted by Mono County Tourism. South Tufa is even highlighted within Mono County's own documents, such as the cover of the Mono Basin Community Plan and on the Mono County Housing Needs and Residential Survey, October 2017.

The proposed Project site exists within these images. The DSEIR does not faithfully analyze the value of this site as a world-class—let alone flagship—Mono County visual resource. Countless visitors and photographers converge at all times of the day and night, in all seasons to experience a nearly completely undisturbed landscape in a wide range of lighting conditions and weather phenomena. There is no doubt, regardless of the distance of the proposed project, that grading scars, a wastewater disposal field and wastewater treatment plant effluent irrigation area, two-story Project lighting, solar panels, and nighttime vehicle travel in and out of the proposed project area will all contribute adversely and significantly to alter the experience of visitors at South Tufa. While the DSEIR acknowledges a “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impact” relating to Scenic Resources, Visual Character, and Lighting and Glare effects, the DSIER does not go far enough in describing the extent that these impacts will have for hundreds of thousands to millions of future visitors that value this classic Mono County destination. The diminished value of South Tufa is not easily calculated within the context of the tourism economy, but the DSEIR might consider evaluating the adverse impact here since this location is integral to the identity of Mono County to past and future visitors.

4. Extent of impact on dark sky resources in the Mono Basin

The Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra region is one of the remaining dark sky locations in California where visitors can appreciate stars and night-sky phenomena as they were seen

hundreds of years ago. Dark skies are a known asset that attract visitors and contribute to the economic success of Lee Vining.

The Mono Basin is particularly vulnerable to new sources of light pollution due to the unspoiled natural light landscape that has no major development projects. The towns of Lee Vining and Mono City are mostly a mix of small and medium-sized buildings, well shielded by mature vegetation, and positioned along the lower elevations of the Mono Basin relative to the new Project proposal.

The Tioga Inn development, and the cumulative impact of the Project will, due to its topographic prominence, size, scope, and position in front of and along the east-facing moraine above Highway 395, produce a more obvious visual distraction, and even cast shadows that a dark-sky adapted recreation observer could perceive at a distance. The project cascades down an elevated, east-facing promontory, extending south-southeast from the current viewpoint flagpole. This siting makes Mono County's dark sky lighting ordinance largely ineffective as shielded light will scatter out and below the development out across the Mono Basin, adding significant distraction where none was present before. Light pollution will be considerably greater than if the project was sited at the same elevation as Lee Vining. The elevated, east-facing position of the housing units, the number of lights necessary for a development of this size, and the night vehicle traffic with headlights that will move in and out of the development will dramatically alter the night sky environment across the entire Mono Basin. A new light source would be directly visible from Mono City, to the north shore of Mono Lake, to the Nevada State Line, Navy Beach, South Tufa, and Panum Crater, and the diffuse glow of the development would reach northbound visitors dropping into the Mono Basin from the south along Highway 395 from the "Sandhouse Grade."

The Mono Basin is a significant destination for night sky enthusiasts and photographers, and annually there are dozens of photography workshops that visit or stay in the Mono Basin to use South Tufa and other Mono Basin destinations. During the summer ranger-led, interpretive star-talk programs take place at South Tufa and hundreds of visitors are introduced to the panorama of the dark sky, many of whom are children, experiencing the true vibrancy of individual stars and the Milky Way for the first time in their lives. The Project will be highly visible, distracting, and alter the experience for future visitors. While there is no doubt that there will be a "Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impact" on Light and Glare Effects, the DSEIR fails to examine the extent these impacts will have on the visitor experience, tourism, and residents.

5. County Scenic Combining District conflict

The Project is located within the Mono County Scenic Combining District and is subject to the County's requirements (5.12-7). The Project is in conflict with these requirements, and new alternatives and mitigations must be explored to resolve this conflict.

Specifically, in regard to the County's Scenic Combining District Standards for State Scenic Highway 395, the Project is in conflict with Sections B, C, and F.

- Section B states: "*New structures shall be situated on the property where, to the extent feasible, they will be least visible from the state scenic highway. Structures shall be clustered when possible, leaving remaining areas in a natural state, or landscaped to be compatible with the scenic quality of the area.*" The proposed Project will be highly

visible from Highway 395 in south and northbound directions and will break the ridgeline view of the Tioga Crest, in particular, for northbound traffic. New proposed structures are two-story and are not clustered, but instead are designed in a cascading, amphitheater-like siting arrangement that appears to maximize views from the site across the Mono Basin while maximizing the views of the structures from various points in the Mono Basin, including from Highway 395.

- Section C states: *“To the extent feasible new subdivisions shall not create parcels with ridgeline building pad locations.”* The proposed Project creates building pad locations both along the restaurant ridgeline and in an adjacent natural, prominent swale above the highway facing east. This area will be fully built out and graded into the hillside from the ridgeline to the north, and will be situated with sweeping views to and from the project area across the Mono Basin and directly over Highway 395.
- Section F states: *“Light sources in exterior lighting fixtures shall be shielded, down-directed and not visible from State Scenic Highway 395.”* Despite planned compliance with Mono County Dark Sky lighting regulations, the elevated, exposed siting of the project will contribute light pollution downward and across the Mono Basin. Project light sources, including exterior and interior lighting, will be highly visible from Highway 395. The ridgeline location of the Project makes the impacts worse, as downward-facing lighting regulations do little to shield compliant lights placed 100 feet above the highway.

6. Scenic Highway visual impact scoring

The DSEIR conducts a Caltrans Visual Impact Assessment to determine the visual impacts of the project on State Scenic Highway 395 and State Highway 120, the Tioga Road, which Caltrans has highlighted as eligible for Scenic designation and Mono County has designated as a County scenic highway. After review of the Questionnaire and Response in Table 5.12-3 MLC believes the Project was inaccurately evaluated and scored.

Item 1 (“Will the project result in a noticeable change in the physical characteristics of the existing environment?”) should be scored as a “3” instead of a “2” given that “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts” are attributed to Scenic Resources and Visual Character, Light and Glare Effects. While the discussion mentions low-visibility project items like subsurface irrigation and road alignment, these in no way moderate the “High” score that should be given here due to the proposed construction of two-story buildings on the currently undeveloped ridgeline adjacent to the highway.

Based on community meetings, numerous requests for a comment period extension, the high volume of public comments on the DSEIR, and the significant local concern regarding the proposed Project, item 3 (“What level of local concern is there for the types of project features”) should be scored as “High Concern,” which results in a score of “3.”

Item 6 (“What is the potential that the project proposal will be controversial within the community, or opposed by any organized group?”) should be scored a “3” “Hi Potential.” The high volume of public comments on the DSEIR support this scoring.

Item 8 (“To what degree does the project’s aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies or standards?”) should be scored as “3,” “Low Consistency.” The project’s major visual impacts are not consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations or policy standards, and are in fact in conflict with several of them as noted elsewhere in this comment letter.

This revised scoring results in 25 total points for the Visual Assessment. Twenty five points places the Project scoring in the 25–30 point range, indicating “Noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. A fully developed VIA is appropriate that includes photo simulations. It is appropriate to alert the Project Development Team to the potential for highly adverse impacts *and to consider project alternatives to avoid those impacts*. See Directions for the Advanced/Complex VIA Annotated Outline.” (emphasis added)

Appendix O, which currently provides a “Minor Level Visual Impact Assessment” should be revised and a “fully developed” Visual Impact Assessment prepared. In addition to addressing the scoring above, this revision will address an apparent problem that the existing Assessment was prepared in June 2018 before the visual analysis of Section 5.12 was completed and the finding of “Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts” was established for Scenic Resources and Visual Character.

As emphasized above, the revised scoring means that the DSEIR should consider project alternatives that avoid these visual impacts. MLC agrees. The DSEIR must be revised to include alternatives that do not impose visual impacts on South Tufa, Mono Lake, and Highway 395.

7. Failure to mitigate aesthetic and visual impacts

The DSEIR concludes that the aesthetic and visual impacts of the project are significant, and our comments above show that the impacts are even greater than shown in the DSEIR. Due to these impacts and others the DESIR concludes that the No Project alternative is environmentally superior.

Surprisingly, the DSEIR does not contain well-developed alternatives and mitigations to solve these impact problems. This is a serious failing, as CEQA requires the document to contain feasible mitigation measures and alternatives to lessen or avoid such impacts, a topic covered in the accompanying letter from Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger. This poses a serious practical problem as well for Mono County: how are decision makers supposed to do their job when no alternatives that mitigate these visual impacts are provided for their consideration? The purpose of CEQA is to provide for informed decision making. The Project analysis should be redone and recirculated to include new alternatives and mitigations that solve these impacts. To assist in this effort MLC provides suggested measures later in this letter.

B. Hydrology and Project water supplies

1. Project water demand

Total annual water demand for the Project and the FEIR approval is not clearly delineated, and the “worst case” maximum daily demand further clouds the water consumption projected in the DSEIR. Two different figures are offered—40,800 gallons per day (gpd) and 60,000 gpd. The analysis should consider the total annual “worst case” or maximum potential use annually for both the FEIR and the Project. It is unclear as written at 5.2-20 how the Waste Water Treatment Package will simultaneously create an additional 50% demand while at the same time assuaging irrigation demand through subsurface irrigation.

This is an area where a LEED-certified design alternative would greatly assist with water efficiency and distribution on the property. This approach, adjacent to Mono Lake, and at the north end of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, would make a strong and thoughtful statement about how the landowner, Mono County, and California thinks about water efficiency. While the Project as a whole will be “efficient” in terms of recent building code and design standards, this is merely the baseline required for a development of this size in a situation where it is not connected to an urban supply or wastewater system. LEED certification, or at the very least, a design alternative that goes out of its way to demonstrate water efficiency, on-site treatment, and groundwater recharge at a higher design standard than the baseline, would enhance the value of this Project for Mono County, the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, and the Eastern Sierra.

2. Groundwater impacts on Lee Vining Creek and downslope springs

New California State Water Resources Control Board-mandated Stream Ecosystem Flows (SEFs) for Lee Vining Creek began in 2019 in order to better mimic the natural hydrograph in accordance with State Water Board-mandated stream restoration. These flows are supported by Mono Lake Committee, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and California Trout. The new flows are part of a larger settlement agreement, under the guidance of the State Water Board. In conjunction with the SEFs, winter base flows are reduced compared to previous flow regimes in Lee Vining Creek. The relevance of the DSEIR calculations converting the 0.23 cubic feet per second (cfs) daily effect on Lee Vining Creek into an annual percentage based on a 25 cfs flow are now obsolete. Pump test analysis and peer review should be reconsidered in light of this change. Lee Vining Creek can now fall between 10 cfs and 16 cfs for six months of the year from October through March (note the 25 cfs daily required minimum flow in Table 5.2-6), depending on year-type and Southern California Edison operations upstream. Consequently, the estimated potential effect on Lee Vining Creek is flawed. The study needs to take the decades-long efforts to restore the creek into consideration and be recalculated and analyzed for potential mitigation.

The lower reach of Lee Vining Creek is a transition zone between a gaining stream and a losing stream. Groundwater pumping could convert the reach from gaining to losing depending on pumping and season. This has implications for water temperatures (loss of gaining cooler groundwater) if the gaining/losing boundary moves significantly upstream. Studies of the Walker River have used fiber optic cables to measure water temperatures linearly along the river and

determine gaining/losing reaches. A similar study should be initiated because water temperature influences water quality (e.g. dissolved oxygen) and fishery conditions.

The actual impact to Lee Vining Creek would be determined by the change in the gradient of the groundwater surface elevation adjacent to the creek. Additional monitoring wells are needed to determine what the effect would be.

The cone of depression created by the wells is along the path between subsurface flow from the creek and the spring-fed tufa towers of Lee Vining Tufa. There is no discussion or analysis of the potential effect on down-gradient springs and wetlands at Mono Lake within the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve.

In summary, a more thorough and detailed area hydrologic analysis, beyond the pump test, is necessary to determine the impacts to winter flows in Lee Vining Creek and any downslope impacts on spring production, wetlands, and tufa formation at Lee Vining Tufa.

3. Groundwater impacts on neighboring properties

MLC is aware of concern in the community regarding impacts on wells on neighboring properties, in particular parcels 021130043 and 021130044. The existing Mobil Mart has reportedly had such impacts, and the significant proposed expansion could potentially cause serious problems with water supply at these residences. The document does not analyze this situation; an analysis should be conducted and possible mitigation, such as improving wells on neighboring property, presented if necessary.

4. Drainage and erosion

Page 5.2-18 states the design storm for stormwater facilities is 1 inch in 1 hour (20-year rainstorm). What happens to the stormwater from storms that exceed this rain rate? Page 5.2-18 goes on to say “all other flows will be allowed to enter drainages that flow to Mono Lake.” The paths of these flows must be disclosed. When the stormwater exceeds the systems’ capacity (especially the retention system on the steeper slope), does it erode the slopes below and flow across highways? An acceptable method of conveying water from larger events must be incorporated into the plan/design. These extreme events are becoming more common, they will happen, and must be planned for.

Page 5.2-19 states, “It must be demonstrated that the stormwater system is designed in such a way that when the retention capacity is exceeded, runoff leaves the site in keeping with pre-project drainage patterns, and will not cause the design capacities of any downstream drainage facilities to be exceeded,” however, those designs and calculations are not disclosed.

C. Biological Resources

The proposed siting and scope of the Project will be detrimental to the Casa Diablo Mule Deer herd. This herd is already impacted and constrained by the existing Mobil Mart, deli, and projected hotel and restaurant development. While deer regularly visit the Mobil Mart lawn and

can often be observed nibbling aspen leaves next to the building and grazing on lawns and landscape around the existing residential housing, these animals can currently safely retreat into surrounding sagebrush scrub and navigate substantial open space to the south. The original 1993 approval process found that there would be significant unmitigated impacts on the deer and the Specific Plan was allowed to proceed. Here the Project asks for more and proposes to add new, significant and unmitigated impacts on deer.

1. Extent of impacts on Mule Deer

Future development will further fragment and restrict mule deer habitat with additional roads and parking. Visitors' and residents' vehicles and pets, and residents traveling to and from workforce housing will force deer to scatter more readily, increasing vehicle impacts with deer on-site, despite the designation of "Open Space—Preserve" as shown in Exhibit 5.3-6. The designation of roadways as "Open Space—Facilities" appears to be an empty designation in regard to the protection of deer. While not a vertical obstacle to deer, paved roadways do create an open, unnatural barrier that deer are more hesitant to cross, and the traffic along these roads poses a significant hazard for the animals, even at lower speeds.

The deer issue at Convict Lake Resort poses an interesting comparison that should be analyzed for the Tioga Inn. At the Convict Lake Resort restaurant, lodging, and employee housing site deer encounter roads, buildings, and other human-constructed obstacles, but also find artificially placed lawns, aspen trees, and other landscaping forage. Deer linger, grow habituated to humans, and are occasionally hand-fed and encouraged by human activity. Deer become increasingly docile, lose fear of motor vehicles, and are easily hit on roads when surprised by evening traffic/headlights or chased into roadways by the occasional off-leash dog.

Deer will be increasingly constrained by the current proposed Project, yet it is also likely they will encounter additional forage opportunities. This difficult and unnatural situation may benefit some deer, but the overall effect could potentially lead to additional vehicle impacts with these animals along Highway 120, Highway 395, and within the project area as deer loiter unnaturally close to human activity and on roads. As the DSEIR states in Section 5.3.5, "Operation of the new workforce housing facilities could have impacts that will reach beyond the construction footprint, mainly due to expected changes and increases in human activity." A reasonable attempt to anticipate and analyze these impacts must be made.

2. Mitigation BIO 5.3(a-5) (Pet Enclosure, Pet Leashing, Eviction for Noncompliance)

This mitigation measure is impractical to enforce unless the lead agency can enforce or intervene directly. Both visitors and residents will have pets that occasionally escape. The site manager will not have eyes on up to 294 residents and their pets at all times. Concurrently, visitors and residents will be unable to be vigilant 100% of the time regarding pet restraint. There is no way to monitor compliance by the proponent in terms of effective pet restraint, nor is there any specific monitoring or oversight by the lead agency that would ensure compliance with this mitigation. The DSEIR states in 5.3.5, "Domestic pets, especially dogs and cats, are expected

with the new housing tenancy. It is unrealistic to expect that these animals will be restrained, and wandering pets potentially will be an important new predatory limitation that is imposed on the environment stretching for some distance beyond the project footprint... Dogs could harass terrestrial wildlife including American badger and mule deer, and cause increased crossings and potential for collision at US 395.”

3. Mitigation BIO 5.3(d-3) (Protected Corridor along US 395)

This is deferred mitigation with no performance standards to evaluate its success. There is no monitoring or evaluation plan for the “Open Space-Preserve.” This mitigation states, “Mule deer mortality along US 395 adjacent to the project site can be minimized by ensuring that the corridor between US 395 and all Tioga Inn Project elements (including the hotel, full-service restaurant, and workforce housing) remains entirely free of linear barriers, brightly lit signs, and new surface structures (excepting one new above-ground sewage/reclaimed water pump control structure with no more than 100 feet of building area), with no future devegetation of native plant materials. This mitigation measure applies only to lands owned by the project applicant and outside of the approved hotel and restaurant uses.” This is purely speculative mitigation, as there are no clear objectives and no baseline data to determine whether future monitoring (not described) will make this mitigation effective at all. It is possible that this proposed mitigation may have the opposite of the intended effect—exacerbating deer mortality by inviting deer to use open space in greater proximity to Highway 395, consequently increasing vehicle collisions with deer and other wildlife.

4. Mitigation BIO 5.3(d-4) (Waste Receptacles)

This mitigation is passive, and does not specifically state who will design waste receptacles, and how this design will be evaluated so that they are successful in preventing the bears and ravens from accessing them. Rental agreements are mentioned as a means to mitigate against unsecured food items outside residences and vehicles, but again there is no substantive description of how this will be enforced, who will enforce it, how the mitigation can be ensured to be successful through meeting specific objectives and monitoring.

5. Mitigation BIO 5.3(d-5) (Deer Passage; Cumulative Impact Mitigation Measure)

This deferred mitigation does not consider the increased development footprint of the new Southern California Edison (SCE) substation. There is no natural corridor immediately adjacent to Lee Vining Creek north of Highway 395 along the SCE property. The current culvert has no room for any deer movement unless the deer are capable of crossing long distances along a submerged creekbed composed of large granite rocks. Further, the culvert, if extensively modified and widened, would also require cooperation, concessions, and financial commitment from SCE to extensively augment the creekbed corridor through their substation development. This mitigation, while in the Project area, is widely separated by Highway 120. The expectation that deer would travel south and east of the Tioga Inn Project area, follow the “Open Space-Preserve” northwest, cross Highway 120 at the intersection of Highway 395, and then efficiently traverse beneath Highway 395 through a Deer Passage is unrealistic.

Finally, this deferred mitigation is potentially cost-prohibitive. The “applicant intends to collaborate with Mono County Community Development Department to submit a Sustainable Communities grant application under the Rural Innovation Project Area (RIPA) program. A priority use of program funds, if awarded, will be to develop a safe pedestrian and cycling access route between the project area and the community of Lee Vining. This access route will be designed to incorporate a deer passage along the US 395 culvert at Lee Vining Creek.” While it is clear that this is deferred mitigation, the fact that it is linked with pedestrian and cycling access could complicate implementation.

If the Project proponent and lead agency are sincere with this potential mitigation, the Project proponent should be required to contribute to a mitigation fund that will cover the cost of this project (with at least potential matching funds of 50% of projected cost in 2019 dollars). Further, additional crossing locations should be analyzed for effectiveness, for example, an undercross location beneath Highway 395, ¼-mile south of the junction of Highway 395 and Highway 120.

6. Significance after mitigation

The DSEIR states, “However, only Caltrans has authority to create a deer passage along US 395. There is no assurance that that Caltrans would undertake this measure, nor can it be assured that a grant application will be successful. The potential for increased deer mortality due to a project-related increase in unsafe highway deer crossings is therefore considered to be a *significant and unavoidable adverse project impact*” (emphasis added). MLC agrees with this finding, and this is a much larger impact than just on the deer. The potential for additional highway impacts would likely result in even further impacts to traveler safety and place further strain on the resources of the Lee Vining Volunteer Fire Department. This potential adverse project impact feedback loop is a hidden and unanalyzed project impact.

The conclusion here is flawed: “Implementation and enforcement of mitigation measures recommended above would reduce all other potential project impacts on biological resources to *less than significant levels.*” (emphasis added) A number of these mitigation measures, as outlined above, have incomplete descriptions of implementation and vague references to who would enforce them and how they would be enforced. The mitigation measures lack clear objectives and monitoring. Consequently, as written, the DSEIR does not sufficiently reduce all other potential project impacts on biological resources to “less than significant levels.”

D. Land use planning

1. Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area

While the proposed Project is not located within the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area (Scenic Area), it is located 1,000 feet from its boundary, and the scope and overlooking scale of the project has a number of direct visual impacts within this congressionally-designated, first of its kind, National Forest Scenic Area. As a result the development is in conflict with management goals and elements of the Scenic Area Management Plan.

Consideration of Scenic Area goals, given the Project's proximity to the Scenic Area, would show an intent to make the Project compatible with the scenic values of the Mono Basin and help mitigate direct impacts to visual character.

The Scenic Area Management Plan contains specific management direction that supports the overall legislative goals. Consultation with the US Forest Service would allow for discussion of these goals. Here MLC highlights that protection of visual resources is at the core of the Scenic Area Plan, as captured in the goal "Manage the Scenic Area to maintain and enhance the visual resource."

The Inyo National Forest assigns Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) for various areas in the Scenic Area. These are so important to the integrity of the Scenic Area that any action that deviates from a previously assigned value must obtain the Forest Supervisor's approval. If a visual resource at any time fails to meet its originally-assigned VQO, it must be rehabilitated. Special emphasis is given to foregrounds and middle-grounds of scenic corridors of travel routes, including highways officially designated by the State as California State and County Scenic Highways, which include State Highway 120 (West of 395), and US 395.

The DSEIR should include new mitigations and alternatives that eliminate permanent visual impacts, and the Scenic Area Plan should be used as part of the method to evaluate their effectiveness.

2. Physically dividing an established community

The DSEIR states in section 5.5.5: "The Tioga Mart development is located about one-half mile south of the community of Lee Vining. The site is physically separated from Lee Vining and from Mono Lake by US 395 (which defines most of the northern property boundary) and by SR 120 (which defines most of the western property boundary). Proposed uses would be integrated into the layout of existing and approved onsite uses and none of the proposed uses would have the potential to physically divide established community areas in other locations. No impacts have been identified, and no mitigation is required."

The DSEIR correctly identifies the separation of the site from Lee Vining and yet reaches a perplexing and incorrect conclusion. The DSEIR is incorrect to conclude that there are no significant impacts associated with LU 5.5(a). Instead, the document should identify that the project produces significant impacts and be revised to explore new Project alternatives and mitigations to reduce those impacts.

The existing Tioga Gas Station and Whoa Nellie Deli frequently demonstrate the physical divide already created by the project in Lee Vining. Social gatherings for live music and residents dining at the Whoa Nellie Deli necessitate driving out of Lee Vining to the project site (or walking/biking at peril to unsafe traffic exposure). The addition of a hotel, restaurant, and now workforce housing, and the resulting quadrupling of Lee Vining population will magnify this division and essentially create an entirely new, separate, and self-contained development with a high density of people and services separated by .63 miles of highway travel and no coherent

physical relation or connection to the town of Lee Vining except those assigned by political construct.

For all practical, common-sense description, the development site is “down the road” and not physically a part of the small, rural, town of Lee Vining. The project proposes to house the majority of the future community on its site, thus dividing the community by virtue of growing the community significantly on the other side of the existing divide.

3. Inconsistency with Community Plan

The Mono Basin Community Plan was approved in 2012 and is an Area Plan in the Mono County General Plan. CEQA requires that the DSEIR be consistent with the Mono Basin Community Plan. Unfortunately the Project as proposed has numerous serious conflicts with the Mono Basin Community Plan goals, policies, and actions. The DSEIR is incorrect to conclude that there are no significant impacts associated with LU 5.5(b). Instead, the document should identify that the project produces significant impacts and be revised to explore new project alternatives and mitigations to achieve Project compatibility with the Community Plan.

Although the DSEIR (5.5-17) states that the “Mono Basin Community Plan was developed by the Mono Basin RPAC,” it is more accurate to state that the RPAC supported the development of the Mono Basin Community Plan by the community members of Lee Vining through a focused collective facilitated process that included broad participation in multiple meetings, surveys, and detailed consensus-based drafting and editing to achieve a final plan that—for the first time—represents the goals the community of Lee Vining holds for itself.

As an integral part of the Lee Vining community, the Mono Lake Committee recognizes the Community Plan as a carefully crafted expression of the values of shared goals of the diverse residents. Consistency with the Community Plan is a critical ingredient to assuring community compatibility of any project, especially one as large and impactful as the Tioga Inn Project studied in the DSEIR.

In the following section MLC reviews the DSIER’s problematic evaluation of the Project’s compatibility with the Community Plan, and we provide suggestions of specific mitigations and alternatives later in this letter. However, MLC emphasizes that to evaluate Community Plan consistency it is critical that input from the many members of the Lee Vining community be carefully considered and MLC urges Mono County to thoroughly catalog community comments to create a complete and comprehensive roster of concerns that point out project inconsistencies with the Community Plan.

Compatibility with Community Plan Goal 10: Maintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural, small-town character of communities by managing growth, ensuring high-quality aesthetics, and providing for community development to enhance the quality of life for residents.

Plan Objective 10.A: Provide for the orderly growth of Lee Vining in a manner that retains the small-town character by directing future development to occur in and adjacent to Lee Vining.

The DSEIR claims that “the project would be consistent with the objective to pursue orderly development in and around Lee Vining, as well as the policies to prioritize existing built uses over new lands.” This claim is unsubstantiated and incorrect.

Because the Project proposes to quadruple the current population of Lee Vining, create Significant Adverse Impacts to visual character, and does not address pedestrian connectivity impacts that threaten the safety of residents and visitors, the project clearly does not “maintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural small town character of communities by managing growth, ensuring high-quality aesthetics, and providing for community development to enhance the quality of life for residents.”

In regard to Objective 10.A, the proposed Project is perhaps orderly in chronology, but it does not retain the small town character of Lee Vining. This proposed development is down the road and separate from the town of Lee Vining. The Significant Adverse Impact on pedestrian safety created by the Project’s lack of foot and bicycle connection to town is evidence that the Project does not constitute orderly growth “in and adjacent to Lee Vining.” The Project quadruples the population of Lee Vining—likely overwhelming school resources, fire protection, and emergency medical services—which is neither orderly nor consistent with small-town character. And despite the DSEIR’s claim to the contrary, the very purpose of the Project being studied is to convert ridgeline land placed off limits to development in 1993 into a housing project, which is clearly in contradiction to the Community Plan’s interest in avoiding new land development.

Plan Objective 10.C: Encourage building types, architectural design compatible with scenic & natural attributes of Mono Basin.

The DSEIR states regarding Objective 10.C, “New uses will incorporate the colors, materials and rustic design elements of the existing Tioga Mart development. The siting of new uses incorporates recommendations of the project biologist as well as visual perspectives gained from the schematic renderings. Green energy will be integral to project infrastructure. The workforce housing will be designed as a residential community located inside a commercial development. All project lighting will conform with dark sky regulations that were enacted after the original Specific Plan was approved.”

While the proposed Project partially satisfies a few elements of Objective 10.C, it is in obvious conflict with the majority of the Policies and Actions listed under Objective 10.C. This is true for the current FEIR and the DSEIR. The following are notable Policy and Actions conflicts:

- Policy 10.C.1: While there is a clear edge and division with Lee Vining, and the Project is partially enclosed by a thin margin of open space, the Project brings significant adverse visual impacts to visual character of the area.
- *Action 10.C.1.a*: Project dramatically expands existing footprint of FEIR and does not preserve open space in the true spirit of the intention.
- *Action 10.C.1.b*: Project is a high intensity use and it clearly adversely impacts the area’s scenic resources and natural (mule deer) resources as per the Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts outline in the DSEIR.

- Policy 10.C.2: While the DSEIR states that green energy will be integral to the Project infrastructure, the Project is, in no way, as proposed, protective of scenic vistas. The Project does not follow Mono County’s ridgeline design guidelines and the Project has Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to visual character in large part related to its prominent siting exposure on the moraine facing east across the Mono Basin.
- *Action 10.C.2.a*: Project does not preserve scenic vistas with its current siting and visual impacts.
- *Action 10.C.2.b*: Project is not visually connected to the community from any perspective, and while there is no known “public view corridor” designated, the project creates adverse visual impacts along the Highway 395 Scenic Byway.
- *Action 10.C.2.d*: The current business does not promote recycling, and there is no mention of expanding recycling in the DSEIR.
- Policy 10.C.3, *Action 10.C.3.a*: While the Project proposal is required to comply with Dark Sky Regulations, the siting of the project high on the ridgeline, facing east, creates a Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impact to Light and Glare. Dark Sky compliant lighting is not sufficient to overcome the aggregate, additional light pollution that the Project will bring from a prominent site over the Mono Basin.
- Policy 10.C.4, *Action 10.C.4.a*: Project does not improve the visual appearance of Lee Vining and it brings Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impact to Visual Character and Light and Glare. Mono County guidelines, including Mono County Ridgeline Design Guidelines and the County’s Scenic Combining District, are not followed.

Objective 10.D: Maintain, protect and enhance the natural, historical and recreational attributes of the Mono Basin.

The DSEIR states in regard to Objective 10.D, “Onsite trails will be provided, and the applicant and county have indicated they will jointly seek grant funding for safe trail linkage from the project vicinity to the Lee Vining Community.”

While onsite trails might be specifically valuable to the Project, they are private land amenities that do not contribute to the overall recreational attributes of the Mono Basin, and currently, there are no trails indicated on the DSEIR site plans. The DSEIR does not guarantee any safe pedestrian or bicycle interconnectivity with Lee Vining, thus reducing the current recreational assets of the Mono Basin, and the current analysis indicates Mono County will be asked to accept an unmitigated Significant and Potentially Unavoidable Impact regarding this deficiency.

Policy 10.D.3, *Action 10.D.3.(a, b, c)*: Project is self-contained and has no convenient or accessible connection with the town of Lee Vining and its associated trails except by motor vehicle travel. While there could be the possibility of implementing new connectivity, there is no current coordination with any land management or transportation agencies to plan and execute mitigation for pedestrian and bike travel. Currently the project poses an increasing volume of use with existing barriers to connectivity with Lee Vining. As a result, the local recreational choices with the increased population will be up Lee Vining Canyon and along the Lee Vining Creek Trail. The Project does not analyze use at these specific sites relative to clearly articulated thresholds of significance for these locations.

Objective 10.E: Promote well-planned and functional community uses that retain small-town character and increase the quality of life.

The DSEIR discussion incorrectly implies the project is compatible with Community Plan Objective 10.E.

By proposing to add three more Lee Vinings to Lee Vining, the Project scale would decidedly *not* retain the small town character of Lee Vining. While the town would remain small relative to much larger towns, any project that suddenly triples a small community population is not retaining small-town character.

The DSEIR claims that “the project would increase the housing supply available to local workers, and occupancy would be linked to eligibility criteria.” MLC has heard this claim made in public meetings but the DSEIR document itself is quite clear that the project purpose is to provide housing to on-site employees at the Tioga Inn (3-5) and the DSEIR anticipates the housing to be full with Tioga Inn workers in the summer, the key time when community housing is needed in Lee Vining. The Project contains no binding restrictions that are enforceable regarding reservation of space or priority placement for workers in Lee Vining, thus this cannot be considered a benefit to Lee Vining.

The Community Plan specifically calls out requirements for workforce housing which include “establish tenant eligibility criteria, including a time requirement as a local resident and/or local employee, for workforce housing units, and identify the entity that applies, manages, and enforces the criteria.” The Community Plan also directs proponents to “promote workforce housing opportunities that connect the community with housing programs.” The Project does not satisfy these plan components.

The DSEIR states that “Trails would be provided onsite for walking and bicycles, and efforts will be made to obtain grant funds for development of a walking/biking trail that would safely link the project site to the Lee Vining community.” This statement is not concrete and does not prioritize pedestrian safety and travel to and from activity centers, including connectivity of project area to the town of Lee Vining. The Project does not offer substantive antidotes to conflicts with the Mono Basin Community Plan, specifically “providing safe and convenient pedestrian and biking facilities, working with Caltrans when applicable, to reduce vehicular traffic, increase local livability, and encourage visitors to explore town.” The Project falls short in this regard as proposed mitigations are linked to the *possibility* only of a future grant with the onus on Mono County and not the project proponent.

The DSEIR discussion concludes with an entirely incorrect claim that “The 1993 project design was developed to optimize public access to the scenic resources and views around the US 395/SR 120 junction, and the newly proposed uses will be largely screened from offsite views.” As discussed throughout this letter, the newly proposed uses actually create tremendous visual impacts, a point the DSEIR supports in numerous places in direct contradiction to the DSEIR discussion here.

In fact, the visually intrusive design of the Project is directly at odds with the Community Plan which, when considering a different project, clearly states as Policy 3 “recognize the junction of

Highways 395 and 120 as an important viewshed for the community and its visitors, and therefore, a project should avoid potential impacts to that viewshed.”

Objective 10.F: Provide appropriate public infrastructure and service capability expansion to support development, public safety, and quality of life.

The DSEIR discussion states that “the project incorporates partnership opportunities including increased airport utilization (through rental car availability),” which apparently is a reference to hotel expansion amendment concepts proposed during scoping and dropped from the current proposed project. This suggests other elements of the discussion of Community Plan compatibility, for example visual impacts which we note here, may also be outdated and incorrect due to being developed too early in the document process prior to full project analysis.

The DSEIR discussion further claims that “the site serves as a staging area during emergencies, and provides space adequate for helicopter landings.” MLC could not locate any DSEIR discussion of the site serving as a formal staging area during an emergency, and with the Lee Vining Airport just across the highway it seems of limited use as a helicopter landing site. While the discussion may be referring to the ability of the private development to handle its own private on-site emergencies, the Community Plan is focused on providing public infrastructure to meet shared needs of the public community.

The Community Plan Policy 1 directs that “future development should coincide with infrastructure and service capability expansion.” The Project as proposed stands to quadruple the population of Lee Vining, yet there is no discussion or plan on how local community services such as volunteer fire departments, post office capacity, or public parking will be able to accommodate the sudden surge in community population.

Compatibility with Community Plan Goal 11: Grow a sustainable local economy with diverse job opportunities that offers year-round employment and wages that reflect the cost of living in the area.

Objective 11.A: Plan for a diversified, sustainable economy.

The DSEIR discussion claims “the proposed workforce housing will support continued development of a diversified, sustainable economy in the Mono Basin” but provides no support for this single sentence of analysis. As explained throughout this letter, the visual and aesthetic impacts of this project will be far reaching and will undermine the sustainable economy of the Mono Basin which is based on natural area tourism and driven by the exceptional scenic assets that the Project will impair.

Objective 11.B: Enhance and support the existing tourism-related economy.

The DSEIR discussion states “The applicant has communicated with USFS regarding the potential availability of housing for Yosemite employees, and has communicated with Mono County regarding the possibility of providing rental cars to airport customers.”

Again, this discussion appears to be an attempt to imply Community Plan compatibility using incomplete and dated information. MLC’s understanding is that the Tuolumne River Plan

approved in 2014 addressed the bulk of Yosemite National Park's housing need through a reconfiguration of their existing facilities in Tuolumne Meadows, thus removing significant need for seasonal Park housing in Lee Vining. Communicating with the US Forest Service about this, as stated in the discussion, may be the problem since the National Park Service is a different agency in a different department of government. The discussion again references "providing rental cars to airport customers," raising the concern that multiple project activities and objectives are planned that are not included or analyzed in the DSEIR.

Objective 11.C: Diversify the existing economic base & employment opportunities to achieve a more sustainable economy.

The DSEIR discussion glosses over the finer points of this objective. The Project proposes redundant businesses and services and does not contribute to a mix of uses and services, nor are there additional employment opportunities beyond the range of those that already exist. This conflicts with Policy 11.C.2. The Project does not contribute to Policies 11.C.3 and 11.C.5, which seek development within the existing town area and Main street revitalization.

Compatibility with Community Plan Goal 12: build a safe, friendly community where people feel connected, work together to resolve community issues and are involved in community activities & events.

Objective 12.A: Build healthy social connections & interactions that contribute to a sense of community.

Policy 12.A.1 of the Community Plan is to "Improve interactions and support between community and the schools." The Project would impose major school impacts and the DSEIR discussion is misleading, claiming "Eastern Sierra Unified School District notes that the project would enrich the school community and that developer fees would cover the cost of new facilities for children in the workforce housing area." Additional analysis should be done as here the DSEIR misrepresents the small amount of information requested of the school district and reported elsewhere in the DSEIR, notably the ESUSD opinion that "the District anticipates that the additional student population would result in a shortage of classroom space at Lee Vining Elementary" (5.8-8) and the ESUSD calculation that developer fees would only cover "part of the cost of a new portable classroom" (5.8-9), rather than fully mitigate impacts at the two school sites.

The DSEIR does not discuss the fact that ESUSD is a Basic Aid district and thus would receive no additional per-student funding to support the large new student population resulting from the project. Because the Project would increase the student population by 30% at the elementary level and 50% at the high school level there are many impacts that should be disclosed and analyzed. The conclusion that the Project's impacts on schools would be less than significant (5.8-9) is incorrect. Significant consultation should be conducted with the school district, school principal, and any school community members they recommend to understand and evaluate these impacts and identify necessary mitigations.

Objective 12.C: Encourage people to volunteer in the community and participate in events.

The DSEIR discussion is again disappointing in attempting to show Community Plan compliance, offering only that the project's 300 new residents will have "A community poster board ... provided outside of the convenience store." From the fire department to the schools, historical society, churches, and many more, the Lee Vining community thrives due to dedicated community members who volunteer their time and energy. Community functionality is hinged on volunteer participation. The project intends to house 75% of the population of Lee Vining and must meet a high standard of community responsibility, including volunteerism and community participation.

II. Mitigations and Alternatives

The DSEIR does not offer alternatives or mitigation to avoid significant and unavoidable adverse impacts to the visual character or dark sky resource of the Mono Basin. While Mono County's dark-sky ordinance, downward pointing lights, and landscape design could shield a portion of the visual disturbance, no alternatives or mitigations are fully analyzed nor advanced in the DSEIR that could potentially hide the development from the most visually impactful perspectives. This is an area where the Project, curiously, fails to recognize and consider its location adjacent to the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, the Highway 395 Scenic Byway, the nationally significant eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park, or that Mono County is a valuable scenic resource for millions of visitors. The Project, as designed, instead, appears to monopolize these assets from its location, for the exclusive economic benefit of the Project and the maximum expense to visual character. The current siting location is placed on top of a bluff, 30 feet above the existing Mobil development. The cascading placement from this position opens the entire village development to view from Highway 395 and out across the Mono Basin.

A. Principles for solving visual and scenic impacts

The comment period on the DSEIR does not allow time for the public to develop detailed project alternatives and mitigations. MLC expects Mono County will want to explore a variety of useful alternatives and mitigations (including our suggestions below) to include in a revised DSEIR.

To be helpful in this process, MLC offers the following simple principles for evaluating the effectiveness of any new alternatives and mitigations in resolving the visual and aesthetic concerns that we and many others have raised.

1. The proposed housing and other Specific Plan amendments *should not be visible* from South Tufa, Navy Beach, Panum Crater, and the surface waters of Mono Lake in this vicinity. This means all elements of the physical structures, up to the roof peaks, and associated development infrastructure should be entirely hidden from view of a careful observer looking for the Project from these locations.
2. The proposed housing and other Specific Plan amendments *should not be visible* from Highway 395 or Highway 120 anywhere that the existing Mobil station is not visible. On Highway 395 this is generally the stretch south of the Highway 120 junction. On

Highway 120 this is generally the stretch west of the existing development. This means all elements of the physical structures, up to the roof peaks, and associated development infrastructure should be entirely hidden from view of a careful observer looking for the Project from these locations.

3. The proposed housing and other Specific Plan amendments *should have extremely low visibility* from the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Visitor Center and Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve boardwalk below County Park. Although the Project site is unavoidably visible from these locations, all visual impacts must be mitigated significantly.
4. The proposed housing and other Specific Plan amendments *should not increase* night sky light pollution in excess of the amount already approved in the existing Specific Plan.

B. Solving the Project placement problem

The placement of the Project on a high-profile, highly-visible bluff and ridgeline is the main cause of its Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to visual, aesthetic, and wildlife resources. The DSEIR describes the placement as follows:

As now proposed, the housing layout includes 16 separate 1-story and 2-story structures each housing a mix of studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units. The units are distributed over an area of approximately 8 acres that is directly southeast of and visible from the promontory restaurant site, but separated from the remaining public areas (gas pumps, store, and hotel) by an intervening ridge. The units are in distributed in a loosely clustered design that features two rows of units on a higher tier (elevation around 6,950') and two rows along a lower tier (at an elevation of approximately 6,915').

The decision to separate the housing from the rest of the Project (deli, hotel, etc.) results in a sprawling design that is the substantial source of detrimental unmitigated visual impacts. It appears that consideration was given to shielding the view of the housing from hotel guests and deli customers rather than the hundreds of thousands of Mono Lake visitors and highway travelers.

The DSEIR does not consider, or dismisses out of hand, multiple alternatives and mitigations that could screen all of the Project from Highway 395 and the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, South Tufa, Panum Crater, and Navy Beach. Creative solutions that involve additional grading, contouring, and underground parking could offer sensible siting solutions that would reduce significant adverse impacts. Workforce housing does not have to be two-story and maintain a 30' height in all cases. A design approach suitable for achieving LEED certification would provide helpful detailed guidance suitable for mitigating many impacts.

C. Alternatives

New Project alternatives should be developed that address the issues described here by MLC and in response to public comments. MLC suggests several concepts here for alternatives. Due to time constraints these are brief overviews focused on resolving the visual and aesthetic impacts

of the Project. Each of these can easily be expanded to include elements, such as phasing, that are responsive to comments from others the community and general public.

All new alternatives that are developed should be presented in greater depth than those contained in the DSEIR. To be viable for the public and decision makers alternatives must have enough detail to determine if they truly resolve public concerns. Each alternative should have a site map equivalent to Exhibit 3-3 and a grading plan. Photo simulations of each alternative should also be included.

1. Alternative: Modified design that lowers the Project below the ridgeline

This alternative would reduce visual impacts significantly by redesigning the Project so that housing units are not perched on the ridgeline and east slope of the bluff. Instead of the proposed two-tiered grading that maximizes visibility from the east, this alternative would develop a grading plan to place units with an orientation toward the interior of the project site (nearer the deli and hotel) with the specific goal of fully shielding them from view from the highway and Mono Lake locations noted above.

This alternative would use a combination of the mitigations described below to lower and adjust the Project such that the peak of the highest roof is not visible from the Mono Lake and highway evaluation points to the east. Grading to lower the ground elevation at the units, berming at the east of the units to shield the project from Mono Lake and highway views, structure height control, and structure siting can be combined in various ways to achieve the goal of this alternative.

Lowering the Project to a consistent ground elevation could provide additional benefits. Clustering of units in the proposal is impaired by the 30-foot differential in ground level between the west and east units. A level ground elevation would allow units to be more easily clustered.

2. Alternative: Locate Project elsewhere on site

This alternative would significantly reduce visual impacts by leaving the bluff undisturbed as planned and approved in 1993. The housing units would be placed in other locations on the Tioga Inn site, primarily within the area already approved for development in the existing Specific Plan. This alternative would also avoid creating new impacts on migratory deer, likely reducing the need for new wildlife mitigations. This alternative could make resolving fire safety concerns easier since housing would not be at the far end of a single access road.

A combination of the mitigations below would be needed to accomplish this. Providing underground parking for the hotel and housing, for example, would free up two acres of land to work with and reduce the footprint needed for the housing. Separation of the housing units into non-adjacent clusters would allow for placement of units at several locations on the site. Reduction of the total number of units could make siting easier. Thoughtful design of the units themselves and use of grading and berming would ensure integration with the character of the existing buildings and future hotel.

3. Alternative: Replace the hotel with the proposed housing

After 26 years the approved hotel has never been built. This alternative would adjust the Specific Plan to recognize that local housing is more useful to the community and more economically viable than the hotel. The hotel element of the specific plan would be abandoned and the hotel site and its extensive parking would be repurposed for workforce housing. The bluff would be left undisturbed as planned and approved in 1993, substantially eliminating new visual, aesthetic, and wildlife impacts.

While on-site worker housing needs (the purpose of this Project) would be significantly lower without the hotel, this alternative could include provision of more certain year-round housing for off-site workers in Lee Vining and surrounding communities, subject to clear and enforceable guarantees of community benefit.

While this alternative represents a significant change to the site concept, it also solves a common community concern that the proposed bluff housing might be built without the hotel ever coming into existence. Creating permanent impacts by siting housing on the bluff while leaving empty the hotel area already approved for impacts would be a failure in planning.

MLC is well aware that, as is often pointed out in the DSEIR, the hotel was approved in 1993. However, nothing about that approval is an obstacle to this alternative. The developer is free to voluntarily include changes to the hotel and hotel site in the current proposed amendment, and indeed was initially planning to do so (in other ways) during the scoping phase of this amendment.

D. Mitigations

1. Mitigation: Grading

The DSEIR mentions up to 8 feet for grading at the housing site to reduce the ground level elevation. This amount of grading appears to have been selected solely based on the need to provide fill for the hotel site (5.12-10).

Instead, site grading could be designed to mitigate the scenic impacts of the housing by lowering the ground level to the point that the peak of the housing roof could not be seen from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Highway 120 junction. Fill material could be used for the hotel as planned, berms as discussed below, or elsewhere on site.

This alternative would expand on the planned 8 feet of site grading. The DSEIR notes that the Clustered Alternative was not selected “because it would require significantly more grading (and jeopardize the goal to balance cut and fill onsite), without significantly reducing visual effects or resident benefits.” In contrast, this grading mitigation would be focused precisely on reducing visual impacts. Additionally, project goals and objectives do not mention balancing cut and fill on-site and, at any rate, grading is certainly a feasible option for mitigation that must be considered.

2. Mitigation: Earthen berms

Earthen berms are discussed under Table 5.12-4 in the context of Compliance with Scenic Combining District Regulations. However, there is no substantive description of these berms, nor is there any clue to their existence in the site plan or grading plan. The best that can be deduced is that these are small landscaped berms for planting trees and shrubs. The sole exception to this is the one “landscaped berm” identified on the grading plan which appears to be designed to shield restaurant patrons in the parking area from views of the Project.

Earthen berms could be constructed and contoured up to 30 feet in height to largely obscure the entire housing development from the east using grading fill from the Project site. While the approved hotel has yet to be built after 26 years, and there is reasonable uncertainty over where it will sit, the additional grading fill proposed for the hotel site might be better used to sculpt earthen berms. Revegetation with native species and additional grading, contouring, and stabilization strategies would be necessary. This simple mitigation measure is neither considered nor evaluated in the DSEIR; however, when combined with other mitigations, it could significantly help mitigate the visual impacts of the Project.

3. Mitigation: Setbacks and one-story housing

As a stand-alone mitigation, or in combination with others, the Project’s adverse visual impacts might be mitigated with a greater setback from the east edge of the sloping moraine. The current proposal sites two-story buildings along the promontory ridge contour of the planned restaurant and extends them down and to the east onto a natural basin in the moraine where proposed units display conspicuously over Highway 395 and out across the Mono Basin to the east. This siting is in conflict with Mono County Ridgeline Design Guidelines, which “call for views to be preserved to the extent possible, structures to be situated away from visually prominent areas.” The Project is sited in such a way that it gives the impression of favoring the views for future occupants at the greatest impacts to visual character and dark sky resources.

If the Project considered a one-story height and modified building arrangement, as well as some reasonable setback, additional grading, and contouring, it might be possible to more completely or perhaps fully screen the Project.

4. Mitigation: Reduced number of units

The Specific Plan amendment being proposed would leap from the ten approved residential housing units to 100 units and 150 bedrooms. This is an increase from scoping when 80 units were contemplated. Adjusting the number of units was considered in the DSEIR, but not in combination with other mitigations. As new alternatives and mitigations are considered it will be useful to consider adjusting the number of housing units to support feasible development of these new options.

5. Mitigation: Underground parking

The Project dedicates approximately two acres of land to providing surface parking for the housing village. Underground parking would reduce the project footprint, create space for setbacks, and possibly lower the cost of other mitigations.

The hotel site dedicates over two acres of land to surface parking. Here, too, underground parking would free up land and allow for significant siting adjustments to the housing. For example, the housing could be relocated to the vicinity of the hotel, which is 40 feet lower than the bluff, fully screening it from Mono Lake and the key evaluation points identified above.

6. Mitigation: Separation of housing units

The proposed housing is designed as an isolated module set away from the deli, hotel, and rest of the site. Separating the housing into different, smaller clusters would allow for placement at multiple locations across the overall site. For example, the small parking area just east of the gas pump island could be used for one of the proposed housing units.

7. Mitigation: LEED certification

In six different scoping comments from 2016, LEED certification was suggested as an approach that would help mitigate a variety of environmental impacts. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the most widely used green building rating system in the world, according to the program website, and “provides a framework that project teams can apply to create healthy, highly efficient, and cost-saving green buildings. LEED certification is a globally recognized symbol of sustainability achievement.”

The DSEIR acknowledged and dismissed LEED in one sentence, stating, “The project is not expected to meet formal LEED standards because stringent adherence would reduce overall affordability of the workforce units.” There is no analysis of LEED compatibility, nor is there any consideration of the various levels of LEED certification or design. Regardless, a design process that would produce a project able to gain LEED certification is certain to resolve, mitigate, or avoid many of the visual and environmental impacts that the current proposed project proposal creates.

LEED certification is an increasingly common way for gateway community developments adjacent to world-renowned natural areas like Yosemite and Mono Lake to show a commitment to environmental sustainability and to protecting the very resources that draw in business to the site. The following section of our comment provides reference projects, including from the western gateway to Yosemite, where LEED certification is part of a responsible development project.

8. Mitigation: Community connectivity

Constructing a foot and bike path to the existing town of Lee Vining is a mitigation that the Project developer could do more to explore. While it is true that sidewalks adjacent to the highway in the Caltrans right of way require agency actions independent of the Project, it is also

true that better, more pedestrian friendly options exist that the Project developer can substantially advance. A feasible mitigation is for the developer to acquire an easement from Southern California Edison for such a pathway to cross SCE's land located north of the Project. A developer-funded pathway extending from approximately opposite the Mobil entrance across SCE land to the end of the existing sidewalk at the south end of Lee Vining, including a pedestrian and bike bridge crossing Lee Vining Creek, would provide most of the connectivity necessary. Only the Highway 120 crossing from the site to the path would need to be worked out with Caltrans. The pathway easement and construction would be funded by the developer and the pathway would be public and administered by Mono County similar to sidewalks in Lee Vining.

9. Mitigation: Mitigation funds

The DSEIR identifies Deer Passage (BIO 5.3(d-5)) and Pedestrian Safety (SVCS 5.8(a-1)) mitigations that are contingent on Mono County securing public funding for their implementation. In both cases the Project is the cause of the significant impacts that trigger the need for mitigation. Further analysis in a revised DSEIR will likely identify additional situations where mitigation funding is required. While the DSEIR is correct that the developer cannot construct off-site mitigations independently, the DSEIR overlooks the common practice of establishing mitigation funding mechanisms. These allow the developer to pay their fair share toward mitigation projects that will necessarily be implemented by agencies or other entities. Mono County should establish such mechanisms to allow the Project to mitigate its significant impacts.

III. Reference Projects

Lee Vining is the gateway to Mono Lake, Yosemite, and Mono County. These are popular, well-known, well-publicized, major visitor destinations. Throughout this letter we have emphasized that as a result the Project should do more than the average development to explore alternatives and implement mitigations to achieve thoughtful compatibility with the special protections and high visibility of the area.

This challenge is not unique to Lee Vining and Mono County. Across the West communities that are closely tied to high-profile, protected areas are demonstrating that, with thoughtful planning and environmental commitment, projects are being carefully developed from the ground up to avoid significant damage to the natural values that make their locations special destinations.

Mono County should be among these leaders, as the Tioga Inn project will determine if Mono County qualifies for decades to come.

As County staff lead a DSEIR revision and recirculation process it will be helpful to learn from other successful projects and MLC suggests some to investigate here. Many begin their design process with commitment to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) process. This certification program is one way to ensure landscape, environment, and community compatibility specifically for projects with similar scope, goals, proximity to highly valued natural landscapes, and rural community needs.

A regional example of a comparable project with LEED Silver certification is the Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite in Fish Camp on Highway 41 at the western gateway to Yosemite. Tenaya Lodge achieved LEED scorecard points by reducing lighting in its exterior environment, water efficiency, minimizing onsite parking, providing alternative transportation access and parking, and taking extra effort to achieve development density and community connectivity.

The LEED website has a comprehensive list of project examples from other renowned destinations. Multiple LEED-certified employee housing developments at Yellowstone National Park, including the Old Faithful Employee Housing and Teal Dorm at Yellowstone, show that rising to meet LEED standards can be done for workforce housing.

Another regional example of a comparable project is Rush Creek Lodge and the associated Evergreen Lodge on Highway 120 west of Yosemite. Both lodges are reasonably similar in size and scope and to the Tioga Inn. Employee housing is included in their environment and community responsibility goals. Rush Creek Lodge has 143 rooms for guests and 168 workforce housing slots (which includes other programs, not just hotel staff). Both lodges advertise their environmental and community responsibility to the area and the communities in which they exist as part of the appeal of what they offer to visitors.

These facilities guarantee their commitment to these principles by operating as part of a certified B-Corporation. Certified B Corporations are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on their workers, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment. As the Rush Creek Lodge website says, their B Corp ownership structure is “designed for long term sustainability, putting the health of our communities, environment and staff on the same level as the health of the bottom line.”

IV. Conclusion

Mono County has important work to do on this Project. Many points of concern have been raised here, in our accompanying legal letter, by the community, and by the public at large. Better alternatives and mitigations need to be created to resolve these concerns. A comprehensive EIR, new alternatives and mitigations based on comments and community engagement, and recirculation of the document are the path forward.

As Mono County works through this process MLC offers a reminder that the County Vision, prominently displayed on the Community Development website, is an excellent guide to crafting a beneficial project that is respectful of the exceptional environmental resources of the Mono Basin and the unique community of Lee Vining:

“The environmental and economic integrity of Mono County shall be maintained and enhanced through orderly growth, minimizing land use conflicts, supporting local tourist and agricultural based economies, and protecting the scenic, recreational, cultural and natural resources of the area. The small-town atmosphere, rural residential character and associated quality of life will be sustained consistent with community plans.”

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for the responsiveness of Community Development Department staff, who have answered our questions with great knowledge and professionalism. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have about our

comments, and we would also be pleased to share our organizational knowledge of Mono Lake and the Mono Basin in any way helpful to your process moving forward.

Sincerely,



Bartshé Miller
Eastern Sierra Policy Director



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August 21, 2019

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Re: Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan
Amendment for the Tioga Inn Project

Dear Mr. Draper:

On behalf of the Mono Lake Committee (“MLC”), we have reviewed the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (“SEIR”) prepared in connection with the proposed Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment Number Three (“Project”). We submit this letter to express our legal opinion that the SEIR for the proposed Project, as currently drafted, fails to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code § 21000 *et seq.* (“CEQA”), and the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, title 14, § 15000 *et seq.* (“Guidelines”). In addition, the Project conflicts with the Mono County General Plan and Mono Basin Community Plan in violation of state Planning and Zoning Law, Gov. Code § 65000 *et seq.*

In light of the County’s decision to decline MLC’s request for a 30-day extension of the comment period, these comments are necessarily constrained. MLC reserves the right to submit more detailed comments prior to the County’s consideration of and final decision on the Project and SEIR.

The County cannot approve the Project in its current form because the SEIR is fatally flawed in a variety of ways. First, the County has violated CEQA in electing to proceed via an SEIR for a *portion* of the Project rather than starting again with a new EIR for the *whole* Project. The County must proceed via a new EIR because

conditions—both as to the Project itself and as to the surrounding community—have changed so significantly since 1993 that the 1993 FEIR is no longer relevant.

Second, the SEIR itself is seriously flawed. For example, the SEIR's project description contains various inconsistencies and gaps related to the particulars of the workforce housing village. The description's failure to clearly convey who the housing will serve and how the Project will impose eligibility and affordability criteria make it impossible to adequately assess the Project's environmental effects.

Further, the SEIR's analysis of and mitigation for environmental impacts is inadequate. Specifically, the SEIR fails to adequately analyze and mitigate: (1) adverse impacts to visual resources; (2) the Project's impacts related to wildfire evacuations and fire protection services; (3) adverse impacts related to biological resources; (4) adverse impacts related to vehicle miles traveled; (5) cumulative impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions; (6) population and housing impacts; and (7) adverse land use impacts related to conflicts with local land use plans, in violation of both CEQA and the State Planning and Zoning Law. Finally, the SEIR does not include an adequate analysis of alternatives to the Project.

Given these flaws, there can be no meaningful public review of the Project. The County must begin again with a new EIR for the whole Project. The new EIR (or a revised SEIR, if the County persists in following that unlawful course) must contain an adequate and legally compliant analysis in order to provide an adequate understanding of the environmental issues at stake.

I. CEQA requires that the County prepare a new EIR for the whole Project rather than an SEIR for the workforce housing village.

CEQA requires agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of Projects as a whole. It is a violation of CEQA to divide a Project into several smaller pieces and analyze their environmental impacts separately. *Arviv Enterprises, Inc. v. South Valley Area Planning Com.* (2002) 101 Cal.App.4th 1333, 1346 (“[E]nvironmental considerations do not become submerged by chopping a large project into many little ones—each with a minimal potential impact on the environment—which cumulatively may have disastrous consequences.”).

Moreover, although Public Resources Code section 21166 requires an agency to proceed via a subsequent EIR when there are substantial changes in a project that will require major revisions to an EIR, that section does not apply when the Project and surrounding circumstances have changed so drastically that the prior environmental

document is no longer relevant to the decision-making process. *Friends of College of San Mateo Gardens v. San Mateo Community College Dist.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 937, 951. Under such circumstances, “it is only logical that the agency start from the beginning.” *Id.*

The proposed Project and surrounding conditions have changed so dramatically since the 1993 FEIR was approved well over 20 years ago that that document is no longer relevant to the decision-making process. The County must therefore start again with a new EIR for the whole Project, including the workforce housing village, new gas island, hotel, and restaurant.

The changes to the Project itself since 1993 are so vast that they are a change in kind rather than a change in scale. In particular, the ten incidental residential housing units proposed in 1993 have transformed into a 150-bedroom workforce housing village that would dwarf the existing population of neighboring Lee Vining, tripling or quadrupling the size of that community in one stroke.

Conditions in the surrounding community have also changed so significantly that the 1993 analysis is no longer relevant. To name a few examples:

- The onsite deli now attracts up to 3,000 people per day to the Project site during peak periods. SEIR 4-11. These visitors were not envisioned in the 1993 FEIR, which did not contemplate a popular deli as part of the convenience store.
- In 1993, Mono Lake had not yet been protected from its then-threatened status due to excessive water diversions. In a 1994 decision, the State Water Resources Control Board protected the Lake from ecological collapse, leading to an increase in lake levels of 9 feet over the next 25 years and allowing the Lake to become a major tourist destination. Thus, the 1993 FEIR considered the visual and aesthetic impacts of the hotel and restaurant in an entirely different context from the one that exists at present. Today, visual impacts must be considered in the context of Mono Lake as a major, pristine scenic resource and attraction.
- The Mono Basin has experienced a large number of significant wildfires since 1993. Before that time, large wildfires were less common, as was the case in much of California. The State as a whole has experienced some of the most devastating wildfires in its

history in the last several years. As a result, the context for the wildfire risk analysis has completely changed.

- Finally, in 1993, there was no Mono Basin Community Plan (“Community Plan”). That document, developed in 2012 and incorporated into the Mono County General Plan, describes the needs and aspirations of the Mono Basin community to better guide decision-makers in evaluating future land use decisions. Community Plan 1. The 1993 FEIR does not account for this significant statement of the community’s own goals and values.

Completing a new EIR for the Project as a whole would allow the County to understand the full range of the Project’s environmental impacts and thus enable it to consider a more complete range of alternatives. For example, one alternative to be considered is siting all of the contemplated uses within the original development footprint approved in 1993. This feat could be accomplished without compromising Project objectives by relocating hotel parking underground to make room for additional housing in its place. In addition to achieving Project objectives, this alternative would reduce environmental impacts—e.g., by relocating workforce housing off of the bluff, thereby lessening visual impacts. This alternative, and others, are discussed in greater detail in Section II.C of this letter, below.

In sum, because the 1993 FEIR is no longer relevant, the County must start again and proceed with a new EIR that addresses the environmental impacts of the Project as a whole—including the restaurant, hotel, workforce housing village, and additional gas island. Without a new EIR considering all of these elements at once, the County would be improperly segmenting the Project and failing to evaluate all of its potentially significant environmental impacts, as well as feasible mitigation measures and alternatives to lessen or avoid such impacts.

II. The SEIR’s analysis of and mitigation for the impacts of the proposed Project are inadequate.

Although the County should have proceeded with a new EIR for the entire project, even if the County could proceed with an SEIR for the workforce housing alone, the document still does not comply with CEQA for the reasons described below. Subsequent EIRs are governed by CEQA’s standards for initial environmental impact reports. *Friends of College of San Mateo Gardens*, 1 Cal.5th at 952, fn.3.

The environmental impact report is “the heart of CEQA.” *Laurel Heights Improvement Assn. v. Regents of Univ. of Cal.* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 392 (citations omitted) (*Laurel Heights*). It “is an environmental ‘alarm bell’ whose purpose it is to alert the public and its responsible officials to environmental changes before they have reached ecological points of no return. The EIR is also intended ‘to demonstrate to an apprehensive citizenry that the agency has, in fact, analyzed and considered the ecological implications of its action.’ Because the EIR must be certified or rejected by public officials, it is a document of accountability.” *Id.* (citations omitted). Where, as here, an EIR fails to fully and accurately inform decision makers, and the public, of the environmental consequences of proposed actions, it does not satisfy the basic goals of the statute. *See* Pub. Res. Code § 21061 (“The purpose of an environmental impact report is to provide public agencies and the public in general with detailed information about the effect that a proposed project is likely to have on the environment; to list ways in which the significant effects of such a project might be minimized; and to indicate alternatives to such a project.”). Here, the SEIR places Mono County decision-makers in the untenable position of rendering judgment on the Project without the information they need to truly understand its environmental impacts. CEQA does not permit this outcome.

A. The SEIR’s incomplete and inconsistent project description undermines the analysis of the Project’s environmental effects.

An “accurate, stable and finite project description is the *sine qua non* of an informative and legally sufficient EIR.” *San Joaquin Raptor/Wildlife Rescue Center v. County of Stanislaus* (1994) 27 Cal.App.4th 713, 730, quoting *County of Inyo v. City of L.A.* (1977) 71 Cal.App.3d 185, 193. Such a description is “necessary for an intelligent evaluation of the potential environmental effects of a proposed activity.” *Id.*, quoting *McQueen v. Board of Directors* (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 1136, 1143. An inaccurate or incomplete project description may infect every subsequent section of the EIR and render the analysis of significant environmental impacts inherently unreliable.

Project descriptions that are internally inconsistent or incomplete are inadequate as a matter of law. *Communities for a Better Environment v. City of Richmond* (2010) 184 Cal.App.4th 70, 83, 89 (holding that an EIR was inadequate because its project description was “inconsistent and obscure” as to the extent of project activities). An inconsistent description sends “conflicting signals” that may mislead the public and decisionmakers about the project’s scope, preventing informed decision-making about the project’s environmental consequences. *Id.* at 82-84, quoting *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center v. County of Merced* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 645, 655-56.

The SEIR's description of the workforce housing and who it will serve is internally inconsistent. For example, the objective of the workforce housing project is to "provide sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses." SEIR 3-5. Thus, the Specific Plan Amendment and SEIR, in many places, express a commitment to housing on-site employees. SEIR 4-1 (stating that the Project "has a primary goal of facilitating the construction of up to 100 workforce housing units . . . to accommodate employees of the previously approved hotel and full-service restaurant"); SEIR 4-11 ("These units will . . . provide affordable housing for onsite employees."). Indeed, the provision of onsite employee housing is described as a Project feature in various sections of the impact analysis. The SEIR suggests that onsite housing supports compliance with the County's General Plan, SEIR 5.5-15 ("Provision for onsite employee housing will increase the likelihood that employees will have access to affordable housing near their place of work"), and could reduce fuel consumption and traffic associated with commuting, SEIR 5.8-11 (describing "[p]rovision of onsite workforce housing" as a feature that would "reduce the fuel costs associated with commuting").

In other places, however, the SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment indicate that housing will be made available to people who are employed elsewhere. SEIR 4-9 (stating that the Project's objective is to provide housing for employees of onsite uses "as well as [employees of] offsite land uses in the larger community"); SEIR 5.5-16 ("The workforce housing would, if approved and if units are available, be offered to Lee Vining residents."). During many months of the year, for example, the housing would be "made available to offsite workers, such as ski industry employees." SEIR 5.6-13. In addition to suggesting that the workforce housing will serve off-site employees, the SEIR indicates that the "onsite" employees may not necessarily be employed by any of the uses proposed in the Project: "Home businesses . . . shall be permitted." SEIR 4-20.¹

In addition to its inconsistent description of *whom* the workforce housing will serve, the SEIR's description of *when* the workforce housing will be constructed relative to the other project elements is internally inconsistent. For example, the original 1993 Specific Plan established a sequence of construction in which the workforce housing would follow the hotel. 1993 Specific Plan and FEIR 12-13. In some places, the SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment adhere to this sequence. Exhibit 3-3 states that the

¹ The notion that the workforce housing will serve off-site workers has also been publicly promoted as a benefit of the Project. See Rea, *Tioga Inn In The Works*, The Sheet (Nov. 5, 2016), attached hereto as Exhibit 1 (quoting Project applicant Dennis Domaille as saying: "I hesitate to call it employee housing. . . . It's just rental housing.").

workforce housing “will not be constructed until need is demonstrated or when [the] hotel is built.” SEIR 3-4.

But the Specific Plan Amendment also contains contradictory statements about the timing of workforce housing construction. For example, the Specific Plan Amendment’s discussion of phasing rejects the sequence described above, stating that “[S]ome or all of the proposed workforce housing area may be developed in advance of the hotel and the full-service restaurant.” SEIR 3-9; *see also* SEIR 4-13 to -14. Similarly, the aesthetic impacts section of the SEIR assumes that the workforce housing will be constructed either before or concurrently with the hotel. SEIR 5.12-10 (stating that grading will shift material from the housing pad to the hotel site).

These inconsistencies raise the question of whether the workforce housing will actually meet the project objectives. The Project’s workforce housing objective is to “provide sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses.” SEIR 3-5. But if the workforce housing is built before the hotel and restaurant are constructed, and if it is made available to off-site employees, it will not serve employees of the hotel, restaurant, and other land uses. Instead, it would be just another housing development, with no discernible relationship to the other elements of the Project or the Project’s objectives.

The Specific Plan Amendment and SEIR compound this problem by failing to provide sufficient detail regarding eligibility criteria for the workforce housing. For example, while the SEIR states that occupancy of workforce housing “would be linked to eligibility criteria,” SEIR 5.5-20, its references to such criteria are vague and insufficiently complete. As an initial matter, the reference to eligibility criteria cited in the previous sentence is entirely conclusory and contains no additional explanation. To find additional detail, members of the public must go hunting through the lengthy SEIR document to different sections. In those sections, the SEIR states only that the workforce housing would be available to “employees (whether on the Tioga site or other locations),” SEIR 5.6-7; *see also* SEIR 4-20, and that some form of preference would be given to “employees of the project site.” SEIR 5.6-7. The SEIR does not provide any detail about how these preferences or criteria will operate. For example, if the housing is built before the hotel, will offsite employees be evicted if an onsite employee requests housing once the hotel is built? After the hotel and restaurant are constructed, will hotel or restaurant employees be evicted if they are laid off after the peak summer months, when on-site employment would drop from 187 to as few as 20? *See* SEIR 5.6-13. The document does not answer these questions, nor does it describe how any eligibility criteria would be administered or enforced.

Related to eligibility criteria, the SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment fail to provide a consistent and complete description of whether the workforce housing will be affordable. Although the SEIR frequently references affordability and assumes that the workforce housing will be affordable, *see, e.g.*, SEIR 1-4 (noting that the Project would satisfy the County's goal to provide affordable housing for employees); SEIR 4.11 (stating that workforce housing units will "provide affordable housing for employees"), it does not provide any guarantees as to affordability. Although the SEIR states vaguely that rents are "anticipated to be at or below 30% of household income," it does not *require* affordability or any particular rent. Further, it is not clear whether there will be any income restrictions. Without rent restrictions or income restrictions, there is nothing in place to ensure that the workforce housing is (a) actually affordable for onsite employees, and (b) not a gift to wealthier residents.

In addition to raising questions about whether the workforce housing will meet the Project objectives, these vague and inconsistent descriptions make it impossible for members of the public to analyze the Project's effects on the environment. For example, the Project's traffic and greenhouse gas impacts will depend entirely on whether employees are working on-site or commuting to and from remote locations. *See, e.g.*, SEIR 4-14 ("The provision of onsite workforce housing will minimize home-to-work traffic and fuel consumption."). The Project's compliance with County land use policies regarding affordability will depend on the income and rental restrictions described above. Further, population and housing impacts as well as growth-inducing impacts will depend on whether onsite employees will be adequately served by the workforce housing. If offsite employees have occupied the Project housing, forcing onsite employees to find housing elsewhere, the population of Lee Vining could increase beyond the SEIR's estimates, and the Project could either put a strain on area housing and/or induce new housing and infrastructure to be built. Additionally, demands on public services would be different if the workforce housing were to reach capacity without meeting the needs of onsite employees.

To correct these problems, the SEIR must provide an accurate, consistent, and complete project description. Such a description must include clear eligibility criteria describing in greater detail how the system of preferences and eligibility would operate to ensure that the workforce housing serves onsite employees. Further, the description must guarantee that workforce housing construction will be tied to construction of the hotel and/or restaurant. If the workforce housing is built first, with no guarantee that hotel and restaurant construction will follow—and the last 26 years without construction of these uses suggests that such an outcome is not only possible, but perhaps even likely—the Project will entirely fail to meet its objectives. It will be revealed as simply a façade for a

new housing development that would dwarf the existing community and would have nothing to do with providing local businesses with workforce housing.

B. The SEIR fails to analyze and mitigate the Project's significant environmental impacts.

CEQA requires that an EIR be detailed, complete, and reflect a good faith effort at full disclosure. Guidelines § 15151. The document should provide a sufficient degree of analysis to inform the public about the proposed project's adverse environmental impacts and to allow decision-makers to make intelligent judgments. *Id.*; *Environmental Planning & Information Council v. County of El Dorado* (1982) 131 Cal.App.3d 355, 358 (finding an EIR for a general plan amendment inadequate where the document did not make clear the effect on the physical environment).

Meaningful analysis of impacts effectuates one of CEQA's fundamental purposes: to "inform the public and responsible officials of the environmental consequences of their decisions before they are made." *Laurel Heights*, 47 Cal.3d at 392. To accomplish this purpose, an EIR "must contain facts and analysis, not just an agency's bare conclusions." *Concerned Citizens of Costa Mesa, Inc. v. 32nd Dist. Agric. Assn.* (1986) 42 Cal.3d 929, 935. Nor may an agency defer its assessment of important environmental impacts until after the project is approved. *Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino* (1988) 202 Cal.App.3d 296, 306-07. An EIR's conclusions must be supported by substantial evidence. *Laurel Heights*, 47 Cal.3d at 392-93.

As documented below, the SEIR fails to identify, analyze, or support with substantial evidence its conclusions regarding the Project's significant environmental impacts, and also fails to consider feasible mitigation for the Project's significant impacts. These deficiencies render the SEIR inadequate under CEQA.

The SEIR suffers from several major problems and is insufficient to support a decision on the Project. In some cases, the SEIR fails altogether to provide the necessary analysis. In other cases, the SEIR provides insufficient mitigation measures, or ignores feasible mitigation measures that could lessen some of the project's substantial impacts. The document also substantially understates the severity and extent of a range of environmental impacts, including but not limited to significant impacts related to visual resources, wildfire evacuations and fire protection services, biological resources, vehicle miles traveled, cumulative greenhouse gas emissions, population and housing, and conflicts with local land use plans. This failure defeats CEQA's purpose of creating a process by which the public and decision-makers can fully appreciate the consequences of Project approval. See CEQA Guidelines, § 15002(a)(1) (listing as one of the "basic

purposes” of CEQA to “[i]nform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities”).

To ensure that the public and the County’s decision-makers have adequate information to consider the effects of the proposed Project—as well as to comply with the law—the County must prepare and recirculate a revised SEIR that properly describes the Project, analyzes its impacts, and considers meaningful alternatives and mitigation measures that would help ameliorate those impacts.

1. The SEIR must revise its analysis of visual and aesthetic impacts and consider additional feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant adverse impacts to visual resources.

Under CEQA, it is the state’s policy to “[t]ake all action necessary to provide the people of this state with . . . enjoyment of *aesthetic*, natural, scenic, and historic environmental qualities.” Pub. Res. Code § 21001(b) (emphasis added). “A substantial negative effect of a project on view and other features of beauty could constitute a significant environmental impact under CEQA.” *Ocean View Estates Homeowners Assn., Inc. v. Montecito Water District* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th 396, 401. No special expertise is required to demonstrate that the Project will result in significant aesthetic impacts. *Id.* at 402 (“Opinions that the [project] will not be aesthetically pleasing is not the special purview of experts.”); *Pocket Protectors v. City of Sacramento* (2004) 124 Cal.App.4th 903, 937 (“[N]o special expertise is required on this topic.”).

The SEIR recognizes the impressive and important visual resources at stake: “In combination with the dramatic Sierra escarpment leading into Yosemite National Park, the otherworldly beauty of Mono Lake is among the outstanding scenic vistas of the world.” SEIR 5.12-4. Further, the SEIR correctly recognizes that the Project’s irreversible changes to scenic and visual resources constitute a significant impact. SEIR 5.12-22.

The Project’s visual impacts are a great source of concern to the Mono Lake Committee and its members. As the SEIR acknowledges, the Project’s impacts are likely to be significant and unavoidable. Given the importance of the Mono Basin’s visual characteristics—as a point of community identity and pride, as a central element of the area’s tourist economy, and as a unique and inherently valuable resource in itself—it is of paramount importance that the County fully and correctly analyze the Project’s impacts to visual resources and consider *all* feasible mitigation measures to lessen those impacts.

The SEIR's analysis, however, falls short in several significant respects. In addition to the numerous deficiencies detailed in the contemporaneously-filed letter from the Mono Lake Committee, the SEIR contains a contradictory and inadequate analysis of impacts from light and glare.

The SEIR's conclusion that light and glare impacts would be significant and unavoidable is not supported by facts or analysis in the SEIR, as required by CEQA. The SEIR first implies that the Project would have a "less than significant impact" related to light and glare. SEIR 5.12-26. The SEIR gestures toward this conclusion based on the Project's compliance with local dark sky and scenic by-way regulations. For example, the SEIR states: "[t]he [Project's] potentially significant light and glare impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels through mandatory compliance with the [dark sky regulations]". *Id.* But after this "analysis," and without any explanation, the SEIR nevertheless concludes that the Project's lighting and glare impacts will be "significant and unavoidable." 5.12-27. This conclusion does not follow logically from the SEIR's purported analysis. As a result, the SEIR is inadequate as a matter of law. *Sierra Club v. County of Fresno* (2018) 6 Cal.5th 502, 514 ("[T]he adequacy of an EIR's discussion of environmental impacts is an issue distinct from the extent to which the agency is correct in its determination whether the impacts are significant. 'An EIR's designation of a particular adverse environmental effect as 'significant' does not excuse the EIR's failure to reasonably describe the nature and magnitude of the adverse effect.'") (citation omitted). Even though the SEIR correctly concludes that light and glare impacts would be significant, the County must correct its analysis to explain to the public *why* and *how* the Project would affect visual resources. A correct analysis would lead to a more informed discussion of the Project and potential mitigation measures to reduce its impacts.

Furthermore, the SEIR may not correct the analytical error above simply by concluding, based on the same analysis, that the Project's light and glare impacts would be less than significant. As stated above, the SEIR gestures toward that conclusion because of its assertion that light and glare impacts would be "reduced to less than significant levels" based on compliance with local regulations. SEIR 5.12-26. But compliance with local regulations alone is not enough to support a determination that an impact would be less than significant. Instead, the EIR must independently analyze the Project's impacts. *E. Sacramento Partnerships for a Livable City v. City of Sacramento* (2016) 5 Cal.App.5th 281, 302-03 (agency improperly used city's general plan standard as sole threshold to avoid finding significant traffic impacts); *Californians for Alternatives to Toxics v. Dept. of Food & Agriculture* (2005) 136 Cal.App.4th 1, 15-20 (reliance on safety regulations "is inadequate to address environmental concerns under CEQA"). For example, the SEIR must analyze whether compliance with dark sky

regulations will be effective given the placement of the Project on an elevated bluff, where even downward-facing lights will be highly visible from the surrounding area.

When an EIR identifies a Project's impact as severe, the agency must consider all potentially feasible mitigation to lessen the Project's effects on the environment. Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(1) ("An EIR *shall* describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts[.]") (emphasis added); § 15126.4(a)(1)(B) ("Where several measures are available to mitigate an impact, each should be discussed and the basis for selecting a particular measure should be identified."). Here, the agency must consider the following feasible mitigation measures to reduce the Project's significant adverse impacts to visual resources:

- Design site grading to mitigate the scenic impacts of the workforce housing village by lowering the ground level until the roofs of the housing structures are not visible from the South Tufa site, near the shores of Mono Lake, or from Highway 395 south of the junction with SR 120.
 - Use fill from the Project site to construct larger earthen berms to obscure the workforce housing village or other Project elements from scenic vantage points.
 - Require greater setbacks from the eastern edge of the sloping moraine on the Project site.
 - Limit building heights. In combination with the other mitigation measures listed here, height limits could effectively reduce the visibility of the workforce housing from the surrounding areas.
 - Require underground parking to reduce the footprint of the site and create additional options for siting structures that may have less significant aesthetic impacts.
 - Separate the housing structures into smaller units. Separating the housing into smaller structures, rather than consolidating the units into a handful of large buildings, could allow for different siting options that could reduce the Project's visual effects.
2. **The SEIR fails to adequately analyze the Project's impacts related to wildfire evacuations and fire protection services.**

As proposed, the Project would site 100 residential units and a previously-approved 120-unit hotel and promontory restaurant on rugged hillside terrain near a windy canyon surrounded by open, wild sagebrush scrub and forested lands. *See generally* SEIR. In so doing, the Project would both create and be located in a wildland urban interface in what the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection has identified as a moderate fire hazard severity zone. SEIR 5.7-5. Indeed, the history of the area reveals a close call with a wildfire in the recent past. As the SEIR discusses, a wildfire swept down Lee Vining Canyon in 2000, leaving scars on the Project site and coming close to the convenience store. *See* SEIR 5.3-2, 5.3-5. The 2000 wildfire also jumped Highway 395 and resulted in the temporary closure of both roads serving the Project site, Highway 395 and SR 120. *See* Mono Lake Newsletter, *The Lee Vining Canyon Fire* (Summer 2000), attached as Exhibit 2.

Yet despite these hazardous conditions, the SEIR does not identify wildfire-related risk as a significant impact and its analysis is flawed. As an initial matter, the SEIR fails to include any standards or thresholds for assessing the significance of impacts relating to wildfire evacuation. A threshold is a numeric or qualitative level at or below which impacts are normally less than significant. CEQA Guidelines §15064.7(a); *see also Protect the Historic Amador Waterways v. Amador Water Agency* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th 1099, 1107. This flaw leads to a cascade of other failures: without a threshold, the EIR cannot do its job. Thus, for example, while the SEIR asserts that the Project would not interfere with an adopted emergency evacuation plan, it provides no standard by which to evaluate this impact's significance. SEIR 5.7-21.

In place of a well-reasoned analysis, the SEIR simply concludes that the Project would not impair implementation of an emergency response or evacuation plan because the site has access to SR 120. SEIR 5.7-21. But the site's access to evacuation routes alone does not mean that these routes or the roadways provided for people on the Project site to access those routes can safely handle an evacuation of the site during a natural disaster. And although the SEIR includes a mitigation measure—the development of an evacuation plan—it does not contain any explanation or analysis of whether or how such an evacuation plan would be effective.

Alarming, the SEIR contains no analysis of whether US 395, SR 120, or the access road on the Project site have the capacity to handle emergency evacuations in light of the greatly increased population of the workforce housing village and the population of tourists and out-of-town visitors attracted by the hotel and restaurant. Common sense dictates that an EIR should *at least* consider (1) the number of cars attempting to evacuate the project area, along with the significant impacts incident to such an evacuation; (2) the amount of time it would take for all residents and visitors to

clear the site; and (3) the significant impacts to emergency personnel attempting to respond while an evacuation is underway; not to mention (4) whether the County Community Center in Lee Vining that is currently used as an emergency evacuation center could handle the potential increase in evacuees. *See Save the Plastic Bag Coalition v. City of Manhattan Beach* (2011) 52 Cal.4th 155, 175 (“Common sense . . . is an important consideration at all levels of CEQA review.”) Especially in light of the single paved entrance to the site and the placement of the housing at the far end of the single access road, the SEIR’s conclusions that the Project would not impair an evacuation plan is not supported by substantial evidence. As such, the County cannot approve the Project unless it recirculates a revised SEIR that adequately analyzes the aforementioned wildfire evacuation impacts. Once an adequate analysis is provided, the SEIR must evaluate feasible mitigation to lessen any significant impacts. The development of such mitigation may not be deferred until a later date as the SEIR currently attempts.

Related to fire impacts, the SEIR fails to adequately analyze and mitigate the Project’s public-services-related impacts to the Lee Vining Fire Protection District. Neither the public services section nor the wildfire risk section discusses the Project’s impacts on the services available from the Lee Vining Fire Protection District (“LVFPD”). But the Project could have significant adverse impacts related to the LVFPD. The Project, by potentially tripling or quadrupling the population of the Lee Vining area, could significantly increase the demand for the fire protection and emergency medical services that the LVFPD provides. This increased demand could create a need for an expansion of LVFPD facilities or equipment in order to maintain acceptable service ratios and/or response times. The SEIR, however, does not contain any analysis of the Project’s impacts related to fire protection services. While the wildfire-risk section of the SEIR discusses the construction of fire hydrants on-site, SEIR 5.7-23, the number of hydrants onsite has nothing to do with demand for the LVFPD’s services or the Project’s potential to generate a need for additional or modified LVFPD facilities.

These impacts could be especially severe given the volunteer status of the LVFPD. Additional calls related to new development, including both fire-related and emergency-medical-related calls, could stretch volunteers thin and reduce levels of safety in the community. And maintaining existing levels of service despite new demand could cause fundamental changes to LVFPD operations. As a volunteer department, LVFPD cannot simply “scale up” and hire additional firefighters due to new development. Instead, the LVFPD would have to significantly change its mode of operation to hire even a single paid firefighter as an employee. The County should consider, as a mitigation measure, creating a new paramedic unit based in Lee Vining and requiring the Project to pay fees for its fair share of the costs of providing the needed service.

We understand that the LVFPD is preparing a comment letter responding to the SEIR. The County must recirculate a revised SEIR that adequately analyzes the Project's impacts related to fire protection services, including a clear analysis of the points raised above, as well as those submitted by the LVFPD. The recirculated SEIR should also contain feasible mitigation for any impacts identified. For example, the SEIR should impose mitigation fees that require the Project proponents to pay for their fair share of the increased service costs caused by the Project.

3. The SEIR fails to adequately analyze and mitigate significant adverse impacts related to biological resources.

The SEIR correctly concludes that the Project will have a significant and unavoidable impact related to the migratory patterns of wildlife, including mule deer. SEIR 5.3-21. Nevertheless, the SEIR must still adequately and accurately describe the nature of the Project's impacts on the mule deer, *Cleveland National Forest Foundation v. San Diego Assn. of Governments* (2017) 3 Cal.5th 497, 514 (“An EIR’s designation of a particular adverse environmental effect as ‘significant’ does not excuse the EIR’s failure to reasonably describe the nature and magnitude of the adverse effect.”), and it may not rely on ineffective and unenforceable mitigation measures. The SEIR falls short on both accounts, as explained in letter submitted contemporaneously by the Mono Lake Committee. That letter’s comments regarding impacts to mule deer, the inadequacy of the SEIR’s proposed mitigation measures, and proposals for additional feasible mitigation measures are incorporated by reference herein.

4. The SEIR fails to adequately analyze and mitigate significant adverse impacts related to vehicle miles traveled.

CEQA is an information-forcing statute, and its purpose is to inform the public about a Project’s potential environmental impacts. Pub. Res. Code § 21061 (“The purpose of an environmental impact report is to provide public agencies and the public in general with detailed information about the effect that a proposed project is likely to have on the environment . . .”). An EIR’s discussion of impacts is legally acceptable “if it provides sufficient information and analysis to allow the public to discern the basis for the agency’s impact findings.” *Californians for Alternatives to Toxics v. Dept. of Food & Agriculture* (2005) 136 Cal.App.4th 1, 13.

The SEIR’s uniquely uninformative discussion of vehicle miles traveled (“VMT”) falls far short of this standard. The SEIR simply states that Mono County has not yet adopted a threshold of significance for VMT. 5.9-10. It then indicates that the annual VMT for the Project is estimated to be 872.133 miles, and that the cumulative

VMT for the Project with the already-approved elements is estimated to be 3,277.43 miles. *Id.*

The SEIR provides no analysis of these figures. There is no baseline presented regarding VMTs absent the Project. *See* CEQA Guidelines § 15125 (“An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions” to constitute “the baseline . . . by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant.”). There is no discussion of the relationship between any particular amount of VMTs and the corresponding effect on the environment. Nor is there any explanation of what the VMT figures actually represent or the assumptions that went into their calculation, which makes it impossible to assess their accuracy. For example, did the VMTs include the addition of 60-mile round-trip commutes from the workforce housing to Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, given the acknowledged availability of workforce housing to ski area employees? The SEIR does not say. Such a bare presentation of uncontextualized figures, untethered to any information that might help the public reach a conclusion about the Project’s environmental effects, is inadequate.

Further, the SEIR’s conclusion that the Project would have a less than significant impact related to VMTs is inadequate because the SEIR’s qualitative analysis is flawed. The SEIR assumes that VMTs will be insignificant because the Project is adjacent to a public transit stop and because the applicant “intends” to provide space for an Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (“ESTA”) bus stop onsite if the project is approved. SEIR 5.9-10. The SEIR, however, does not provide any evidence or analysis to support its assumption that workforce housing residents will take public transportation. And the SEIR cannot rely on an applicant’s mere “intent” without more. For the SEIR to rely on the presence of an ESTA bus stop onsite in reaching its conclusion that the Project would have a less than significant effect on VMTs, the SEIR must *require* that the Project include such a feature.

Nor may the SEIR “presume” that the Project would cause a less than significant transportation impact pursuant to Guidelines section 15064.3, which the SEIR adopts as a threshold for significance. SEIR 5.9-8. Section 15064.3(b)(1) states that such a presumption may apply to a project within one-half mile of an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high quality transit corridor. But the SEIR does not identify whether either of these factors is present. *See* Pub. Res. Code § 21064.3 (defining “Major transit stop” as “the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less” during peak commute times); Pub. Res. Code § 21155(b) (defining a “high-quality transit corridor” as a corridor with bus service with service intervals no longer than 15 minutes during peak commute times). ESTA in particular, while it does provide a valuable service, does not support the site’s

meeting the criteria for a major transit stop or a high quality transit corridor. *See* Exhibit 3, ESTA Transit Schedule, Lone Pine to Reno Route.

Finally, it is not clear from the analysis of VMT whether the SEIR has taken into account the fact that the workforce housing units may be inhabited by offsite employees, some with significant commutes to Mammoth Lakes, ski areas, Yosemite National Park, or more remote locations. *See* SEIR 5.6-13. Thus, considering all of the above, the SEIR's conclusion related to VMTs is not supported by substantial evidence.

5. The SEIR fails to analyze cumulative impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions.

CEQA requires the lead agency to analyze and mitigate a Project's potentially significant cumulative impacts. CEQA defines cumulative impacts as "two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Guidelines § 15355. An effect is "cumulatively considerable" when the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects." Guidelines § 15065(a)(3). A proper cumulative impact analysis is "absolutely critical," *Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control v. City of Bakersfield* (2004) 124 Cal.App.4th 1184, 1217, as it is a mechanism for controlling "the piecemeal approval of several projects that, taken together, could overwhelm the natural environment," *Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc. v. County of L.A.* (1986) 177 Cal.App.3d 300, 306. GHG emissions in particular are inherently cumulative. In evaluating GHG emissions, the County must focus on the Project's "incremental contribution" to climate change, which may be "cumulatively considerable even if it appears relatively small compared to statewide, national or global emissions." Guidelines § 15064.4(b).

The SEIR fails to analyze the GHG impacts of the Project in combination with the GHG impacts from the previously approved elements (i.e., the hotel and restaurant), either as part of the stand-alone GHG section or in the cumulative impact analysis section. This flaw is particularly problematic in light of the fact that the 1993 FEIR did not include any analysis of climate change.² Because of these omissions, there is *no analysis* of the GHG emissions resulting from the hotel and restaurant available to the public.

² Nor is there any evidence that the GHG emissions from the already approved but not constructed elements of the Specific Plan are included in the SEIR's GHG baseline.

The unstudied GHG impacts could be independently as well as cumulatively considerable. The hotel and restaurant alone are anticipated to draw robust tourist traffic, often from distant locations, resulting in potentially significant transportation-related emissions. Indeed, as the SEIR's VMT analysis indicates, the Project's cumulative VMTs are almost four times more considerable than the VMTs generated by the workforce housing alone. SEIR 5.9-10. Because this analysis is absent, however, and cumulative GHG emissions from already-approved elements are not included in the County's GHG calculations, the County's conclusion that the Project will not meet the 3,000 MT CO₂e threshold of significance is not supported by substantial evidence. The County must re-do these calculations taking into account all of the Project's elements.

The SEIR's silence as to the cumulative GHG emissions impacts of the previously approved and newly proposed Project elements is not permissible. CEQA Guidelines § 15130(a) (setting forth the requirement that an EIR shall discuss cumulatively considerable effects and "briefly describe its basis for concluding that [an] incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable."). The SEIR must be revised to calculate the Project's cumulative increase in GHG emissions and assess its significance.

6. The SEIR's analysis of population and housing impacts is inadequate.

Under CEQA, a project has significant impacts if it would "induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly . . . or indirectly[.]" Guidelines, Appendix G, section XIV.a. This Project will cause a significant impact in Lee Vining by effectively tripling or quadrupling the population of the area. As the SEIR states, Lee Vining proper has a current population of about 90, SEIR 5.6-4, and the workforce housing village—not including the transient residents of the hotel—will increase the population of Lee Vining by 194 to 293 people, SEIR 5.6-10, an increase of more than 300%, SEIR 5.6-14.

The SEIR's analysis of population and housing impacts has several significant flaws that render it legally deficient. First, the SEIR incorrectly analyzes the Project's population and housing impacts in relation to projected theoretical growth in the Mono Basin area. *See* 5.6-11 to -12. But because the population impacts will directly impact Lee Vining, the town of Lee Vining, and not the Mono Basin area, is the correct framework for this analysis.

Second, the SEIR erroneously compares the Project's population and housing impacts against a future baseline, rather than a baseline of current conditions,

without justifying its choice. Conditions existing “at the time the notice of preparation is published . . . will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant.” CEQA Guidelines section 15125. An agency *may* select a baseline of projected future conditions if such a decision “is justified by unusual aspects of the project or the surrounding conditions.” *Neighbors for Smart Rail v. Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority* (2013) 57 Cal.4th 439, 508-09. The SEIR does not identify any such unusual circumstances or conditions here, nor does it otherwise justify the selection of projected future growth as a baseline. In fact, the only unusual circumstances present—a Project that would quadruple the population of a town in one stroke—suggest that a baseline of current conditions is more appropriate.

Additionally, the selection of the “practical build-out” scenario described in the General Plan as a baseline or a threshold of significance for population growth is grossly inappropriate, *see* SEIR 5.6-11, given the General Plan EIR’s description of what that scenario describes. The “practical build-out” scenario is based on the theoretical maximum build-out of all parcels in the County—i.e., a scenario that assumes that “build-out will include 100% of the total dwelling units that could potentially be built.” Mono County General Plan EIR 4.12-6. The practical build-out scenario takes into account known constraints related to hazards, infrastructure limitations, and agricultural preservation. But “even the ‘practical’ [scenario] overstates development.” *Id.* Notably, the General Plan EIR states that one of the reasons the practical scenario overstates development is because it fails to account for “environmental concerns” that would effectively limit development. *Id.*, 4.12-6 to -7.

The SEIR cannot legitimately determine that a current Project will have no significant adverse environmental effects related to population growth because it compares favorably to a hypothetical future scenario that overstates development and *fails to account for environmental concerns*. Such a hypothetical future scenario cannot be said to represent “planned” growth, making the SEIR’s use of that scenario in evaluating whether a project would “induce substantial unplanned population growth” arbitrary and capricious. *See* SEIR 5.6-7. Further, in relying on the practical build-out scenario, the SEIR fails to analyze the Project’s actual population impacts: to name one example, there is no discussion of how Lee Vining will absorb quadrupled parking demand when parking is already a scarce resource, and the greater demand for parking could result in greater traffic and related emissions from visitors circling for parking or the environmentally-damaging construction of new parking infrastructure (especially given the acknowledged uncertainty as to whether pedestrian and bicycle improvements would be implemented, *see* SEIR 5.9-9).

The SEIR must re-do its analysis of population and housing impacts using an appropriate baseline and incorporating an appropriate and well-supported analysis of *actual* impacts related to population growth.

7. The SEIR fails to identify the Project’s significant adverse land use impacts related to conflicts with local land use plans in violation of both CEQA and the State Planning and Zoning Law.

CEQA requires that environmental impact reports analyze the consistency of a project with applicable local plans. *See Napa Citizens for Honest Government v. Napa County Bd. of Supervisors* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 342, 356; Guidelines § 15125(d). Inconsistencies with a general plan or other local plan goals and policies that were enacted in order to protect the environment are significant impacts in and of themselves and can also be evidence of other significant impacts.

Furthermore, the State Planning and Zoning Law (Gov. Code § 65000 et seq.) requires that development decisions—including specific plans and amendments of specific plans—be consistent with the jurisdiction’s general plan. Gov. Code §§ 65359, 65454. “Under state law, the propriety of virtually any local decision affecting land use and development depends upon consistency with the applicable general plan and its elements.” *Resource Defense Fund v. County of Santa Cruz* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 800, 806. The requirement of consistency with the general plan includes consistency with provisions of local land use plans incorporated into the general plan. *See Orange Citizens for Parks & Recreation v. Superior Court* (2016) 2 Cal.5th 141, 153. Accordingly, “[t]he consistency doctrine is the linchpin of California’s land use and development laws; it is the principle which infuses the concept of planned growth with the force of law.” *Families Unafraid to Uphold Rural El Dorado County v. Board of Supervisors* (1998) 62 Cal.App.4th 1332, 1336.

It is an abuse of discretion to approve a project that “frustrate[s] the General Plan’s goals and policies.” *Napa Citizens*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 379. The project need not present an “outright conflict” with a general plan provision to be considered inconsistent; the determining question is instead whether the project “is compatible with and will not frustrate the General Plan’s goals and policies.” *Id.* at 379. As discussed in more detail below, the Project is directly inconsistent with numerous provisions in the General Plan and documents incorporated into the General Plan.

Because the SEIR fails to identify various conflicts and inconsistencies with local land use plans as a significant adverse impact, the SEIR is legally deficient.

The Project conflicts with local land use plan goals related to preserving aesthetic and scenic values. The Mono Basin Community Plan (“Community Plan”) contains a goal stating that the County should “[m]aintain the spectacular natural values of the Mono Basin and rural, small-town character of communities by managing growth[and] ensuring high-quality aesthetics” Community Plan at 17. To implement this goal, the Community Plan sets forth a policy to “support design practices that protect scenic vistas,” which may be implemented by “[e]ncourag[ing] the siting and design of buildings to preserve scenic vistas.” Community Plan at 18. The values reflected in these goals and actions are at the heart of the Community Plan, and they appear throughout the document. *See* Community Plan at 13 (emphasizing “small, compact communities” and “low-density limited development patterns lead[ing] to a small-town rural character,” as well as “a healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies, pristine wilderness and open space. We protect and cherish the natural character of the land by minimizing the intrusiveness of structures, protecting our natural assets, and being environmentally responsible.”). The Project conflicts with these goals and policies. As the SEIR acknowledges, and as discussed at greater length in Section II.B.1 of this letter, the Project will have a significant adverse impact on scenic vistas. SEIR 5.12-22.

In light of this conflict, the SEIR incorrectly concludes that the Project will have a less than significant impact related to conflicts with local land use plans. *See* SEIR 5.5-24. This conclusion is not supported by substantial evidence, as the SEIR itself acknowledges that aesthetic impacts will be significant. SEIR 5.12-22. Further, the SEIR’s attempt to explain away this conflict is inadequate. *See* SEIR 5.5-16. The SEIR states that the newly proposed project uses will not conflict with maintaining scenic values because they will not “substantively change the rural character and scenic values of the site *relative to existing approvals*.” SEIR 5.5-16 (emphasis added). The SEIR further responds to Community Plan policies to preserve scenic vistas by stating that the Project’s design elements will be in harmony with existing development onsite, and siting of new uses “incorporate[] . . . visual perspectives gained from the schematic renderings.” SEIR 5.5-18. But the SEIR later concludes that the newly proposed workforce housing itself would be visible from the southern and eastern portions of Mono Lake, disturbing scenic vistas independent of any disturbances from approved uses. SEIR 5.12-13.³

³ The Project’s placement and visibility from scenic viewpoints and from Highway 395 also conflict with the County’s Ridgeline Development Design Guidelines (“Structures should not be located on or near visually prominent areas . . . or ridgelines”), *see also*

For similar reasons, the SEIR is legally deficient because it fails to recognize conflicts with traffic/circulation and public safety policies as significant adverse land use impacts. For example, the Community Plan includes a policy related to providing “safe and convenient pedestrian and biking facilities.” Community Plan 23. But, despite the fact that the Project will have significant adverse pedestrian safety impacts, and there is no guaranteed mitigation to address those impacts, SEIR 5.8-9, the SEIR fails to identify a conflict with the Community Plan’s policy.

The SEIR also fails to recognize inconsistencies between the Project and local land use plan policies related to workforce housing and affordable housing. The Community Plan sets forth a goal to increase workforce housing, and notes that the County should “[e]stablish tenant eligibility criteria, *including a time requirement as a local resident and/or local employee*, for workforce housing units.” Community Plan at 21. Yet despite the SEIR’s assurances that the Project would increase workforce housing and contain eligibility criteria, *see* SEIR 5.5-20, the SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment contain insufficient eligibility criteria, *see* Section II.A, *supra*. Further, the document’s vague references to tenant eligibility do not include any time requirements. In fact, the SEIR’s statements that workforce housing could serve off-site ski industry employees suggests that the housing may not serve “local employee[s]” at all.

In terms of affordable housing policies, the General Plan’s housing element requires development projects to comply with County Code requirements for affordable housing. Housing Element 73 (“Program 2.9: Development projects shall comply with the Mono County Housing Requirements (Mono County Code 15.40), which requires development projects to include affordable housing.”).⁴ But the SEIR does not contain any description of guaranteed income or rent restrictions and thus does not ensure either that all of the housing will be affordable or that the Project will be in compliance with the County Code’s requirements for affordable housing.

These inconsistencies and inadequacies may lead to the Project’s workforce housing serving off-site employees working dozens of miles away, with no guarantee that the housing will be affordable. Such an outcome would frustrate the goals and policies of

SEIR 5.12-10, and Mono County Scenic Combining District regulations, *see* SEIR 5.12-20 (“New structures shall be situated where, to the extent feasible, they will be least visible from the state scenic highway.”).

⁴ Although it appears as though the County’s inclusionary housing ordinance is temporarily suspended, SEIR 5.6-7, the SEIR should still analyze these policies because they are in the General Plan, and the ordinances may be re-instated.

the General Plan and Community Plan to provide affordable workforce housing, and approval of the SEIR would thus violate the Planning and Zoning Law.

C. The SEIR Fails to Adequately Analyze Alternatives to the Project.

The SEIR does not comply with the requirements of CEQA because it fails to undertake a legally sufficient study of alternatives to the Project. CEQA provides that “public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives . . . which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects.” Pub. Res. Code § 21002. As such, a “major function of an EIR is ‘to ensure that all reasonable alternatives to proposed projects are thoroughly assessed by the responsible official.’” *County of Inyo v. City of L.A.* (1977) 71 Cal.App.3d 185, 203 (citation omitted). To fulfill this function, an EIR must consider a “reasonable range” of alternatives “that will foster informed decision making and public participation.” Guidelines § 15126.6(a). “An EIR which does not produce adequate information regarding alternatives cannot achieve the dual purpose served by the EIR” *Kings County Farm Bur. v. City of Hanford* (1990) 221 Cal.App.3d 692, 733.

Here, the SEIR’s analysis of alternatives is legally deficient in several ways. First, the analysis of the Optional Siting Alternative is arbitrarily constrained. Although the SEIR’s discussion of the Optional Siting Alternative from the 1993 Specific Plan acknowledges that “it is still potentially feasible to consider alternative siting layouts” because the hotel and restaurant have not yet been developed, the SEIR duplicates errors in the 1993 FEIR’s alternatives analysis and arbitrarily rejects alternative sites. For example, the SEIR rejects alternative sites for the hotel and restaurant that would mitigate visual and aesthetic impacts because alternative sites “would [not] meet the project objective to deliver outstanding views.” SEIR 7-5. But “delivering outstanding views” has never been a Project objective. The Project’s objectives are, rather, to “draw upon” tourist traffic through Mono County and “provide a complete range of services” to visitors. SEIR 3-3. There are no objectives related to providing visitors with views. Rather, the visual objective of the Project is “to blend into the natural setting through careful structure siting.” SEIR 3-3. Thus, the SEIR’s conclusion that the Optional Siting Alternative fails to meet Project objectives is arbitrary.

Second, the analysis of the Reduced Development Alternative is arbitrary, and the SEIR’s analysis is flawed and incomplete. As an initial matter, although the SEIR identifies the Reduced Development Alternative as environmentally superior, SEIR 7-7, the SEIR fails to explain its seemingly nonsensical conclusion that “this alternative would reduce the acreage designated for Open Space-Preserve compared to the project as

proposed.” SEIR 7-5. It violates common sense that a less intensive development would decrease the amount of open space available on the Project site, and the SEIR does not provide any evidence or analysis to support its conclusion.

Similarly, the SEIR does not provide any explanation for its conclusions that the Reduced Development Alternative would be less effective in meeting Project objectives. For example, the SEIR does not explain how reducing the amount of workforce housing available onsite would reduce the Project’s ability to “provide [a] full range of tourist/traveler/resident services,” to “optimize customer views” (though note, as argued above, that this is not properly a Project objective), to “strengthen [the] area economy,” or to “[u]pgrade infrastructure sizing to meet needs.” SEIR 7-7 to -8. Because there is no apparent reason why reducing the size of the workforce housing village would impair these objectives, and the SEIR does not provide any explanation, the SEIR has arbitrarily rejected the environmentally superior alternative.

Finally, the SEIR should consider additional feasible alternatives that would meet the Project objectives and be more effective in reducing environmental impacts. A discussion of several such alternatives is included in the contemporaneously-submitted letter by the Mono Lake Committee. The discussion of alternatives in the Mono Lake Committee’s letter is adopted and incorporated by reference herein.

III. Conclusion

For all of the foregoing reasons, we respectfully submit that the County cannot lawfully approve the SEIR and Project in their current form. The County must start environmental review again and prepare a new EIR for the whole Project, rather than an SEIR for a portion of the Project. But even if the County (unlawfully) elects to proceed via an SEIR, the proposed SEIR is deeply flawed and fails to inform the public of the full impacts of the Project. Before considering this Project further, the County should fully analyze the Project’s numerous significant impacts, develop adequate mitigation measures, and properly analyze a reasonable range of alternatives that would avoid or substantially lessen impacts.

Michael Draper
August 21, 2019
Page 25

Very truly yours,

SHUTE, MIHALY & WEINBERGER LLP



Amy J. Bricker



Aaron M. Stanton

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EXHIBIT 1

the sheet

News, Views & Culture of the Eastern Sierra

Saturday, November 5, 2016

FREE

Vol. 14, No. Pedro



Lucy (left) and Molly Jacoby chow down at Dave Easterby's State Farm office on Friday, October 28. For more photos, see p. 12.

BISHOP GETS EXTRA!

Expanded grocery store is all the rage

By James

Shoppers in Bishop are flocking to the newly renovated and greatly expanded Smart & Final Store in Bishop. All around town people are enthusiastically asking friends if they "have been to the new Smart & Final," and going on about how great it is.

Local competitors are waiting to see what impact the bigger store will have on business, says Manor Market owner Kyle Oney.

The Bishop store, now dubbed a "Smart & Final Extra!" has more options than ever. There is a large dairy and fresh meat section, a greatly expanded liquor section, and most striking is the large produce section and an extensive bulk foods department in which nuts and other dry goods are sold from self-service bins.

The new store's manager said that it will employ approximately 40 employees and are still accepting job applications.

Smart & Final's appeal has always been its low prices on selected items—it has long been the store of choice for operators of small restaurants, catering companies, businesses, clubs and civic organizations looking to buy food products in bulk. It also offers low prices on household goods such as cleaning products. Smart & Final are seen as the preferred location for stocking kitchens and preparing for holidays, parties and events.

The limited selection available at the small store in Bishop also limited the number of shoppers. Local shoppers often prefer neighboring Vons out of convenience for its much larger selection of brand-name foods, even if prices were higher.

Parking at Vons is also much more convenient.

Smart & Final's main competitor in Bishop is Vons, which also made some

see SMART, page 10



PHOTO: JAMES

Sierra Wave's Bill LeFever is about to break character and go nuts at the expanded Smart & Final in Bishop.

BAD BEARS, WHAT YA GONNA DO?



"Steve Searles" (Hannah DeGoey) arrests a problem bear (Krystle Stewart) on Halloween. Remember, bears are still active at this time of year and are looking to bulk up for winter. Lock up your dumpsters and keep any leftover Halloween candy out of their paws. See more Halloween photos, p. 13.

NEW POLICIES, OLD SUSPICIONS

LADWP lease changes create anxiety

By Bodine

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) Board of Commissioners finalized new ranch leases for Inyo County at its October 27 meeting. The leases contain brand new language and policies, including leases being made transferable between family members. However, a lease, typically a five-year agreement, can only be sold to a third party, once.

Once. A rancher could sell his or her lease to another party, but when the new lease is up, it will go out to bid. This leaves little incentive for the lessees to invest in their busi-

ness if they know they won't be able to recoup their capital investments.

The one-time transfer devalues the lease and nullifies investments and improvements (like structures) lessees have put into the property or business.

"If they're not sure they can make their money back on capital improvements there's not much incentive to grow and invest," said Nathan Reade, Inyo-Mono County Agricultural Commissioner.

The one-time transfer appears to be in direct violation of the Charles Brown Act, California Senate Bill 883, that grants existing lessees

right of first refusal before the lease goes out to bid but applies only if an entity owns more than 50 percent of private land in another county.

James Yannotta, Manager of the Aqueduct for LADWP, told The Sheet in an email that LADWP sells and leases City of Los Angeles property located in Inyo County in accordance with the Charles Brown Act, Los Angeles City Charter, and LADWP policies and procedures.

The City of Los Angeles owns about 251,958 acres in Inyo County, or about 89 percent of the private land, and 62,501 acres, or just under

see LEASES, page 8

The sound of music

/p. 11/

Dirt lots

/p. 10/

Some game!

/p. 19/

High on life

/p. 7/

Can't stop progress

/p. 6/

TIOGA INN IN THE WORKS

After sitting on the shelf for twenty years, plans develop for a hotel at the site of the Tioga Gas Mart

By Rea

When Dennis Domaille bought the property overlooking Mono Lake that eventually became the Tioga Gas Mart, he had plans to build a hotel there, he told The Sheet in July as the Gas Mart (also known as simply "The Mobil") neared its 20th anniversary.

"To make a long story short," he said at the time, "the gas station got built and has turned out to be incredibly successful—to the point that I didn't need to really do any more...development. I had my hands full..."

It seems the time for that development is here after all. Dennis and Jane Domaille submitted a Notice of Preparation to the Mono County Community Development Department on October 21 for the proposed "Tioga Inn," a 120-room hotel with a 200-seat restaurant that will be built adjacent to the current Tioga Gas Mart.

Their application to build the hotel and restaurant was approved in 1993, but they have reworked the design and added a few features in the 20 years since they opened the Tioga Gas Mart.

The proposed acreage of the entire compound is reduced from 73.7 acres (in 1993) to 67.83 acres, but the hotel is now a proposed three stories, as opposed to two stories in 1993.

"My motivation for that is twofold," Dennis Domaille told The Sheet on Wednesday, November 2. "One, a three

story building is more energy efficient. And the other thing is that by making the footprint of the hotel smaller, we maintain views from the gas station... the gas station is probably much more important to the people of the Eastern Sierra than the hotel is," he said with a laugh, referencing the Tioga Gas Mart's iconic views and role as a summer watering hole and music venue for both east and west siders alike.

The Domailles also want to boost the restaurant's capacity from 100 to 200 seats and build up to 80 workforce housing units onsite.

"I hesitate to call it employee housing," Domaille said. "It's just rental housing. But my goal is to make it affordable. Which for single people are small, compact, energy-efficient units so it doesn't cost them a fortune to live there. It seems that's what the kids and the millennials kind of want. They don't want to tie up all their income in rent."

Domaille said that the Tioga Gas Mart currently employs 38 people in the height of summer, and that the hotel is projected to need about 50 employees. He hopes that the Tioga Inn will bring more life to the small, seasonally-booming town of Lee Vining and fill its school with more children whose parents have year-round employment.

A scoping meeting at the Lee Vining

Community Center on October 27 brought about 50 community members out to hear Domaille's proposal, said Janet Carle, co-founder of 350 Mono, a climate change activism group.

"There is a certain amount of concern about whether or not the infrastructure of Lee Vining can handle the impact of the increased visitation," said Ellen King, Membership Coordinator for the Mono Lake Committee. "[There could be] a big jump in the use of water, fire [protection services], and possibly schools and things like that," she told The Sheet on Wednesday. However, she said, "Dennis was very upfront, he was there and spoke at length at the meeting" about the future of the project.

Domaille told The Sheet he's not particularly interested in acting as a hotel operator, and most likely would go through the process of getting the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) approved and then sell the project to the right developer.

Carle told The Sheet that "the community needs to be a watchdog... and say, 'this is what we want,'" regarding the project, especially if it is not being developed by the Domailles themselves.

"Let's make this a project we can all be proud of, that the community can be proud of, that will be a signature project for the eastern Sierra...it's a big deal for the [Mono] Basin especially."

Both Carle and King mentioned the desire to have sustainable components integrated into the facility, such as solar panels and greywater systems. Carle wrote a letter to Gerry LeFrancois, Land Use and Transportation Planner for Mono County, urging that the project be energy efficient and that the proposed workforce housing

be built apartment-style, rather than cabin-style as the current employee dwellings at the Tioga Gas Mart are designed. "The current proposal is for 80 small cabins," Carle wrote. "This is inefficient in a mountain climate with major energy demands for heating in the winter. Two or three apartment-style buildings could be more energy efficient."

She also said that water conservation is of utmost importance. This project should be a showcase for using water wisely," she wrote. "Native, drought-tolerant landscaping throughout this new project is desirable. This is the future."

Domaille told The Sheet that the state of California has come a long way in allowing things like grey water systems (where water draining from sinks and showers can be recycled for underground use in landscaping, for instance) to be used in new projects. Other than in Mammoth, Domaille said, "this is probably the first hotel that will be built in the eastern Sierra in 60 years." California also now has "solar-ready" building requirements for any new nonresidential structures in the state, which require "solar zones" calculated based on the size of buildings. "We would like to see enough solar installation and energy saving design elements to [make the Tioga Inn] a net zero energy user," Carle wrote in her letter.

Domaille told The Sheet that he is currently installing solar panels on the Tioga Gas Mart, and was expecting the panels to be installed before the weekend. He expects that the panels will provide 75-80 percent of the current building's energy needs. "It just makes sense," he said. "Solar technology has just come so far in the last decade."

The comment period for the SEIR for the Tioga Inn runs through November 21. However, LaFrancois told The Sheet that the public will have three more opportunities for public comment.

Public comment can be directed to Mono County c/o Gerry LeFrancois. P.O. Box 347 Mammoth Lakes, CA. 93546. Email: glefrancois@mono.ca.gov.

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EXHIBIT 2

The Lee Vining Canyon fire

In the morning on May 29, 2000, a wildfire broke out in Lee Vining Canyon, near route 120 to Yosemite. The cause is unknown and under investigation but suspected to be human-caused, possibly a campfire. The fire was not the result of any prescribed burn activity.

No structures were burned, or people injured, but the fire came quite close to the Forest Service Ranger Station and the Tioga Gas Mart and temporarily closed both Highways 120 and 395. Generally, it burned the south moraine slopes in Lee Vining Canyon, going up and over the top to Horse Meadow. It also burned eastward from the moraine crest, and jumped Highway 395, burning a small area east of the highway.

Six hand crews, twelve fire engines, five water tenders, and two helicopters worked to control the fire. Many local

fire agencies were involved in the effort.

Happily, the winds did not push the fire north into Lee Vining, but the fire was only a mile away! Avid Mono Lake WebCam watchers noticed the smoke in Sunday's WebCam images.

The following images were taken the day of the fire. 



Photos by Arya Degenhardt



Photo by Geoffrey McQuilkin

A long-planned expansion project is currently in progress on Highway 395 just south of Lee Vining turning the two-lane section into a four-lane split highway. Although highway expansions have many associated issues, Caltrans' four-lane project will be better than the existing highway for Rush, Walker, Parker, and Lee Vining creeks. The new bridge on Rush Creek (construction shown above) and the culverts on the other streams are designed to improve fish passage and handle higher flows. The Committee is keeping an eye on construction disturbance along the stream banks during the peak flow period this summer. Flows should be relatively low in this just-under-normal year.

Correction

In the Spring 2000 *Newsletter*, we reported that the Mono Lake Committee had been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) to integrate migratory bird studies with restoration activities in the Mono Basin. In fact, the Committee was awarded \$19,500 from the North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC).

The CEC created NAFEC in 1995 as a means to fund community-based projects in Canada, Mexico and the United States that promote conservation, protection, and enhancement of the North American environment.

Funding from NAFEC and Mono Lake Committee Members' made it possible for the Committee to launch the initial version of the Mono Basin Clearinghouse Website www.monobasinresearch.org. The Clearinghouse is growing into a comprehensive source of scientific and historical information on the Mono Basin.

We thank NAFEC for supporting the Committee's work.

EXHIBIT 3



No Service on Weekends

Home / Routes & Schedule / 395 Routes / Lone Pine to Reno

Lone Pine to Reno Route

Schedule: Lone Pine to Reno (northbound route)

Stop	Monday – Friday	Address/Location
Lone Pine	6:15 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:10 am	McDonald's (601 S. Main Street)
Independence	6:30 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:27 am	In front of Courthouse (168 Edwards Street)
Aberdeen	6:45 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:35 am	Aberdeen Store <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Big Pine	7:00 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:53 am	Bartel & Newman
Big Pine	7:02 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:53 am	Main Street bus shelter
Big Pine	7:05 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:53 am	Reynolds Road
Bishop	7:30 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 7:25 am	Vons/Kmart; 1200 N. Main Street
Tom's Place	7:55 am	Bus shelter just west of store/café; 8180 Crowley Lake Pl. <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Crowley Lake	8:05 am	Bus shelter at Community Center; 529 S. Landing Rd.
Mammoth Lakes	8:20 am	Stop 25 just west of Vons (481 Old Mammoth Rd.)
June Lake Junction	8:40 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 8:50 am	Hwy 395 at CA Hwy 158 <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Lee Vining	8:50 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 9:00 am	In front of Caltrans yard, across from Chevron
Bridgeport	9:20 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 9:36 am	121 Emigrant St, (by the park)
Walker	10:00 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 10:12 am	Walker Country Store, 107700 US 395
Coleville	10:05 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 10:15 am	U.S. Post Office <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Gardnerville	10:45 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 10:50 am	Smiths; 1341 US Hwy 395N <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Carson City	11:10 am Beginning 9/16/2019: 11:17 am	Hot Springs & Retail/Walmart (JAC Stop): Just west of Walmart (3200 Market Street) <i>As of 2/1/2018</i>
Reno-Tahoe International Airport	12:00 pm	Ground Transportation Area outside Door "D"
Reno/Sparks Greyhound (Centennial Plaza Transit Center)	12:15 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 12:10 pm	Northwest corner of Victorian Ave. and Victorian Plaza Cir. (1408 Victorian Ave., Sparks, NV) <i>*ESTA bus does NOT stop inside of Centennial Plaza Transit Center. It stops on the North side</i>

Stops marked with a telephone icon require 24-hour advance notice. Please [call \(760\) 872-1901](tel:7608721901) to request this stop.

[REQUEST A RESERVATION](#)

[HOLIDAY SCHEDULE](#)

Schedule: Reno to Lone Pine (southbound route)

Translate »

Stop	Monday – Friday	Address/Location
Reno/Sparks Greyhound (Centennial Plaza Transit Center)	1:10 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 1:30 pm	Northwest corner of Victorian Ave. and Victorian Plaza Cir. (1408 Victorian Ave., Sparks, NV 89 *ESTA bus does NOT stop inside of Centennial Plaza Transit Center. It stops on the North side
Reno-Tahoe International Airport	1:30 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 1:40 pm	Ground Transportation Area outside Door "D"
Carson City	2:05 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 2:15 pm	Hot Springs & Retail/Walmart (JAC Stop): Just west of Walmart (3200 Market Street) <i>As of 2/1/2018</i>
☎ Gardnerville	2:30 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 2:45 pm	AM/PM mini-market; 1338 Hwy 395 <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
☎ Coleville	3:05 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 3:25 pm	U.S. Post Office <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Walker	3:10 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 3:30 pm	Walker Country Store, 107700 US 395
Bridgeport	3:55 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 4:05 pm	121 Emigrant St. (by the park)
Lee Vining	4:25 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 4:41 pm	In front of Chevron
☎ June Lake Junction	4:35 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 4:51 pm	Hwy 395 at CA Hwy 158 <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Mammoth Lakes	5:15 pm	Stop 25 just west of Vons (481 Old Mammoth Rd.)
Crowley Lake	5:30 pm	Bus shelter at Community Center; 529 S. Landing Rd.
☎ Tom's Place	5:35 pm	Bus shelter just west of store/café; 8180 Crowley Lake Pl. <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Bishop	6:30 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:15 pm	Vons/Kmart; 1200 N. Main Street
Big Pine	6:50 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:30 pm	Main Street bus shelter
☎ Aberdeen	7:10 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:40 pm	Aberdeen Store <i>Stop requires 24 hour advance notice. Call (760) 872-1901</i>
Independence	7:25 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 6:55 pm	In front of Post Office (101 S. Edwards St.)
Lone Pine	7:40 pm Beginning 9/16/2019: 7:15 pm	McDonalds (601 S. Main Street)

☎ Stops marked with a telephone icon require 24-hour advance notice. Please [call \(760\) 872-1901](tel:7608721901) to request this stop.

REQUEST A RESERVATION

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

BUS FARES

CONTACT ESTA

P.O. Box 1357 Bishop, CA 93515
Toll Free: 1-800-922-1930
Phone: 760-872-1901
Fax: 760-784-9566

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[ADA Notice Under the Americans with Disabilities Act \(PDF\)](#)

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Translate »

Michael Draper

From: Lucas J. Mudskipper <lucasmudskipper@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 6:18 AM
To: Michael Draper; arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn, etc

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper and the Community Development Department,

Seriously, enough is enough. Every time I turn around in California some developers are doing everything they can to spoil our un-spoiled places.

Why do we have to keep fighting these people off at every turn?

When will Mono County and the rest of California start standing up to these folks?

When will these developers and land owners finally say, OK, enough is enough. We have done enough damage to the environment.

I guess at the end of the day it all comes down to greed.

Listen up and PLEASE be realistic. Lee Vining and the Eastern Sierra Nevada cannot absorb a 150 bedroom Workforce Housing Village. This is the height of ridiculousness and greed.

Yes, the West is growing and people want to experience the great outdoors, but at the foot of Tioga Pass is no place to house, or encourage the masses to come too.

Lee Vining, Mono Lake and the Eastern Sierra is not for developers.

If you allow this project to go through it's just one step closer to approving a housing development on the shores of Mono Lake. Don't kid yourselves!

If you approve this project, it's just a matter of time before another land owner in Mono County is going to sell to a developer who will then come after you to approve their plan for multi-unit housing, ie: tract homes, ie: suburbs. Yes, the good ol' suburbs of Los Angeles will finally reach the shores of our precious natural resources of Mono County, and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power will finally show the good folks of Mono County what the Power in their name really means.

Developers in Reno are suing the city over flooding. It was the developers who probably sued to the city to build there. Developers in San Francisco

are suing the city because buildings are tilting and sinking, the same developers who sued the city to build.

Listen, Mono County is up against the litigious and very deep pockets of developers and if you don't turn them away now, and FIGHT LIKE HELL to turn them away in the future, they will keep coming at you like rabid dogs.

There is enough bad news in the world today and it seems nobody is willing to stand up against this madness.

The people Mono County can survive without the trappings of money money money. The tourists who visit the Eastern slope of the Sierras can survive without the comfort of being waited on hand and foot by a team of 150 strong workforce.

Please don't approve this nonsense. If you do, I promise you you will be fighting off developers for the decades to come.

Lucas Mudskipper
125 Mason Street Apt 204
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-430-5500

Michael Draper

From: Leah Nansel <leahnansel@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 11:59 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Mono Lake

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Michael Draper

I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,

Leah Nansel

Sent from my iPhone

RECEIVED
AUG 16 2019

August 9, 2019

Mono County CDD

Dear Mr. Draper,

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan undermines the foundation of the Mono Basin Community Plan, a collective community document created in 2012. The Mono Basin Vision states, "The residents of Lee Vining and the Mono Basin desire to build a community that preserves our quality of life, provides for diverse economic activity, and protects the spectacular natural beauty and ecosystems of the area" (p.13, Mono Basin Community Plan). The addition of 100 units of workforce housing to the Tioga Inn Plan threatens several aspects of this collective vision.

Lee Vining's charm and close-knit community lies in its size. The Mono Basin Vision states, "We strive to preserve our small-town character" (p.13). As of 2010, the Lee Vining census recorded 222 residents, meaning that the addition of the Tioga Inn housing units would double the population of Lee Vining, ruining the "small-town character" that is one of the pillars of the Mono Basin community vision. In the Values section of the Community Plan, "Small, compact community" (p.13) is the very first value. The location of the proposed housing units at the Mobil Gas Mart is outside of town and threatens to fracture the Lee Vining Community. If half of Lee Vining lives outside of the center of town, the "compactness" and "smallness" is threatened. The charm of Lee Vining community is that I know my neighbors, and that I work near them.

Lack of housing for employees is a real concern in Lee Vining, but the magnitude of the Tioga Inn proposal is far larger than what would be suitable for Lee Vining. One of the concerns in the Community Plan is that there is inadequate employee housing. It states, "Workforce housing opportunities, both to rent and buy, are needed to sustain the existing community and enable people to live where they work" (p.15). I agree that people that work in Lee Vining should be able to live in Lee Vining. The proposal to add 150 bedrooms to the existing workforce housing at the Tioga Inn is far too many to house only the Lee Vining workforce. Mammoth Mountain has already started looking at housing its workforce at the Tioga Inn. The additional housing would create a culture of people living in Lee Vining and commuting elsewhere for work. This goes against the core values of the Community Plan. The Community Plan is very clear that the existing community is the one that needs affordable housing. It states, "Housing is affordable so community members and their families can continue to live here" (p.15). The Lee Vining community wishes to remain the same size.

Staying a small community does not prohibit growth. The Community Plan states, "Growth does not necessarily mean becoming bigger; it could also mean improving what already exists within the current development footprint" (p.15). The Tioga Inn does not need to expand housing units to grow economically.

Finally, the proposed project would impede scenic values as well as un-mitigatable light pollution that would ruin the dark night skies in the Mono Basin. The Community Plan focuses specifically on night skies, stating that the Mono Basin should be "a healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies" (p.13). As a National Scenic Area, anything seen from Mono Lake is subject to scrutiny. The Mono Basin is beautiful because the lack of development—that is what brings tourists here and supports our economy. That is why I love to live in Lee Vining. The 150 bedroom housing development would threaten these scenic values.

As a Lee Vining resident, I would be incredibly sad to see this community change from small and tight-knit to sprawling and broken. I hope that the Mono Basin Community Plan will be considered as the Tioga Inn Specific Plan is evaluated. If it is followed, it is clear that the 150-bedroom housing unit goes against almost every tenet of the community vision of residents of the Mono Basin. The Mono County housing crisis should not be solved with one large development in Lee Vining. I fully oppose the Tioga Inn Specific Plan.

Thank you for your time,

Ellie Neifeld



General Delivery

Lee Vining, CA

93541

From: Gary J. Nelson
Date : August 17, 2019
To: mdraper@mono.ca.gov
Subject: Comment on Tioga Inn Specific Plan and SEIR
Reply to : admiralnelson52@gmail.com

Mr. Draper,
Please accept these comments on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan and SEIR.

Dear Mono County Development Department,

As a 32 year Mono Basin resident I can't help but feel a sense of deja vu when I look at the Tioga Inn proposal. Decades ago, in spite of vociferous objections by local residents, Mono County approved a large resort development at Conway Ranch, promising trophy trout streams winding their way through luxury homes, with magnificent views of Mono Lake and the Sierra. In spite of being fully approved, this project ran into an obstacle which could not be overcome: Mono Basin Financial Reality.

I believe that Mono Basin Financial Reality accounts for the fact that the Tioga Inn has not been built already, in spite of being approved for decades. I once asked Bill Banta, then-owner of the Lakeview Lodge in Lee Vining how much business he did during the winter. He replied that he lost money during the winter, because he kept his staff employed year round in spite of little to no winter business.

Most Lee Vining businesses close for the year soon after the closure of Tioga Pass, including the Tioga Gas Mart and Whoa Nellie Deli on the site of the proposed Tioga Inn. It should be noted that two of Lee Vining's year round businesses, the Mono Market, and Nicely's Restaurant, are currently for sale. There is a very real possibility that the new owners of these businesses will close them during the winter. During the 32 years I have lived in the Mono Basin it has consistently suffered through winter economic doldrums lasting around half the year. I do not foresee this changing any time soon.

Project proponent Dennis Domaille has stated that he does not intend to build the Tioga Inn, but rather to sell the land and approved plans. Potential buyers would have to be wary of investing considerable sums into a local economy that is moribund for half the year.

I feel that approving plans whose stated purpose of providing *“sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full service restaurant, and other onsite land uses.”* is rashly premature considering the unavoidable negative impacts this project will have such as deer migration, traffic, visual impact, and safety, and given that the motel may never even be built.

Mono County does not have a Housing Mitigation Ordinance. Therefore, whoever develops the Tioga Inn/Restaurant would not be required to provide workforce housing for their employees. Developers in Mammoth Lakes have routinely avoided low income housing requirements by paying mitigation fees, leading to the current workforce housing crisis in that community.

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan provides housing numbers well in excess of local requirements and will be available to persons falling under the broad category of “Mono County Workers”. It is not unreasonable to assume that future tenants of this project would include many Mammoth Lakes employees. Such a population would work, shop, and largely recreate in Mammoth. They would contribute little to the Lee Vining economy while placing unprecedented winter stresses on the local infrastructure.

My final recommendation is that the project as proposed in the SEIR be rejected (i.e. “not recommended or selected”) along with the Clustered and Apartment Design Alternatives, because as the SEIR clearly states, these three alternatives include significant negative impacts that cannot be fully

mitigated:

Significant Visual Impacts - any approved project should reduce aesthetic and visual impacts to an insignificant level. Visual impacts should also be considered along with the impacts of the approved hotel and gas station, and not piecemeal (the visual impact will not be piecemeal.)

Significant, cumulative impacts on deer migration. Any mitigation for this would be contingent on outside agencies and not the developers; as such, the mitigation is unenforceable and not guaranteed, which is unacceptable.

Impacts on public safety and traffic. Mitigation of these factors likewise depends on uncertain funding and approval from outside agencies, and is likewise unenforceable and not guaranteed

Local volunteer fire departments have not been properly consulted, nor provisions made, to ensure safe egress for fire response, or to obtain equipment necessary to deal with structure fires potentially involving several hundred occupants of the motel and employee housing.

In summary I recommend that the current project proposal, the Clustered Development Alternative, and the Apartment Development alternatives be rejected (ie “do not recommend or select”) because they have too many negative impacts that cannot be mitigated.

Please modify the stated project goals to strike reference to “sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel...” Re-word the project goal to be to provide a reasonable amount of general rental housing as needed for the Mono Basin/Lee Vining community.

Consider a Phased Development Alternative in which 15 units are allowed to be built immediately, but the remainder of housing development is contingent on actual workforce need at the site.

Thank You, Gary J. Nelson Mono City

August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA
93546

Dear Michael Draper,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Tioga Inn project in the community of Lee Vining. I am a relatively new resident of the town of Lee Vining, but I came here with community in mind. Within months of moving here I have been working in our humble Lee Vining Community garden, helping to fix up bicycles around town and have been doing outreach at the public schools. These exercises in community contribution has expedited my connection to the people of this town and the land surrounding it. There is something so inherently fulfilling to living in Lee Vining and I believe the addition of the workforce housing village proposed in the Draft SEIR would negatively affect our community in many ways. I am also concerned with all of the potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts the project would induce. I do recognize the need for housing in Lee Vining and Mono County at large, though I do not see the addition of a work force housing village at Tioga Inn as the solution. In the following letter I will state my concerns and make some recommendations to be included in the Final SIER.

One of my biggest concerns is the impact this work force housing village development would have on the scenic resources and visual character of the Mono Basin. I am lucky enough to lead interpretive tours around the Mono Basin for people from all walks of life. I take out college students, underserved youth, tourists, special environmental groups, local Lee Vining Students, and more. Since May 1, 2019 I have taken over 400 people around Mono Lake to share the unique and beautiful qualities of the area. Not only do we marvel at the ecosystems that have faced challenges in the past and present, but also take in the 360° views. I always make a point that the unimpaired view of the Mono Basin is quite rare in the world today and it was achieved by the diligence of many who are passionate and have sought to protect this land. Visitors marvel at this achievement and understand the Mono Basin is a beacon of hope and change. I believe the intrusive view of the work force housing village would not only take away from the stunning views, but also inflict a sense of defeat to those who admire the resilience of the Mono Basin. Those who now leave Mono Lake and bring home optimism, courage, and sense of purpose may instead return home feeling discouraged and helpless.

My next concern somewhat dovetails with my previous concern which is the creation of new sources of light and glare. I spent the summer of 2017 working with underserved and at risk youth from Los Angeles in the Mono Basin. The main point of the program is to get kids out to the source of their water in recognition of their role as the future decision makers of Los Angeles and also to empower their actions as they come from underserved communities. While we talk

about water issues and solutions between the Mono Basin and Los Angeles, we also conduct a lot of evening programs. Many of the people who visit from Los Angeles have never slept outside or seen stars before. Their trip to the Mono Basin lends itself to opening up a whole new world to these folks that they may not be able to experience otherwise. The importance of these students seeing the night sky, asking questions on a larger scale and recognizing the vastness of the universe can impact how they perceive things at home and prioritize daily frustrations that occur when you are a minority living in the city of Los Angeles. The addition of new light sources and glare would take away from their life changing experiences in the Mono Basin.

Another potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impact to this proposal is its interference with wildlife movement or migration. This especially relates to the Mule Deer who are an important part of the food chain and ecosystem of the Mono Basin. Not only do these animals control the natural processes of vegetation in the area, but are also a vital food source for the mountain lions. It is hard to say what would happen to other natural processes surrounding these important mega fauna of the Mono Basin, but creating an imbalance will have influences to the natural ecosystems.

I am concerned that there is an alarming lack of clarity in the document relating to who the workforce housing village would serve. There are contradictory statements in the SEIR on the timing of the workforce construction, whether or not the housing will meet project objectives, the eligibility criteria of tenants, and the affordability. I feel like without any kind of assurance or deed restrictions to the proposed units, this workforce housing village would be a commuter town for Mammoth and June Lake. The cost of rent could be market rate and therefore leave a lot of local Lee Vining people who do need housing out of the housing option. Note that owner is legally allowed to discriminate based on income for the housing and that income is not one of the 7 protected classes. If the people who can afford the housing live in Mammoth and June Lake, there would be more pollution created by excess commuting, increase the risk and use of resources while commuting in the winter, and weaken the sense of community that is so strong in Lee Vining. This concern resounds in other potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts to schools, fire, police and other services.

As of August 17, 2019 there were 5 unfilled teaching positions in Lee Vining. The addition of more students from the development would not necessarily be good or 'validate' our schools unless the workforce housing village also is able to accommodate at least 5 to 10 more teachers to the Lee Vining Schools. Though our class sizes are small, are schools are strong. Many of the classes are 'AP' and the amount of first generations college students coming from Lee Vining is high. Size does not mean strength.

There is also a large concern on how at least doubling the size of Lee Vining with the workforce housing village would impact the Volunteer Fire Department and address their concerns to safety of the development. The workforce housing village would have to supply the community of Lee Vining with enough volunteers to bolster our Volunteer Fire Department in an effective way. I would also strongly recommend that the grading and road plan for the development be revised to include adequate escape routes in case of fire or emergency.

The traffic in Lee Vining would also be negatively impacted by the excess housing. There is already a shortage of parking spaces in Lee Vining, occurrences of vehicle hit and runs (which I personally experienced in July of 2019) and a potential of increased pollution in the area. This is another potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impact of the development. Kids walking or biking from the workforce housing village would encounter safety obstacles unless a walk/bike path was included or major change to the intersections. I am concerned that the responsibility to make these changes would fall on the public funds and taxes of the residents of Mono County.

I would also like to make sure the people living here as long as anyone can remember, the Kutzadika Paiute, are listened to. I have been working with the local tribe on educational outreach projects and supporting their efforts to be a voice in the community. I believe that they have been consulted and may be submitting comments on this proposal. I urge that all of their comments and concerns be heard and respected in the highest degree. They are working hard towards Federal Recognition and therefore their voice can be lost in these conversations. After getting to know the Chairperson and other members of the counsel, I have only respect for them. Their connection to the Mono Basin is deeper than anything I will ever experience. Their knowledge and traditions needs to be preserved and observed.

I have experienced difficulties with housing in Lee Vining, but I do not believe this is the answer to the problem without serious consideration and amendments to the SEIR.

The following are my recommendations concerning the final SEIR:

- First, I would strongly recommend to restart with a new EIR for the whole project, including the workforce housing village, new gas island, hotel, and restaurant.
 - o Twenty six years have passed since the FEIR was completed and a lot has changed since.
 - o The current deli attracts more visitors than envisioned in the 1993 FEIR.
 - o Mono Lake had not yet been protected by the 1994 decision by the State Water Resources Control Board to protect the lake and increase the lake level by 9 vertical feet. Thus, the 1993 FEIR visual impacts are different than what exists today.
 - o Wildfire risk in California and Mono Basin has increased in the past 26 years and the analysis of this risk needs to be updated.
 - o In 1993, there was no Mono Basin Community Plan which was written in 2012 and incorporated in the Mono County General Plan. The Community Plan covers goals and values that are not accounted for in the 1993 FEIR.

- My second recommendation is that the project as proposed in the SIER be rejected. The SIER project documentation lists potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts.

- My next recommendation would be to produce a complete and consistent project description of the workforce housing and who it will serve. This description should include and enforce stipulations to be followed.
 - o Housing should be prioritized for residents of Lee Vining.
 - o Housing should be affordable for the ‘workforce’ in the area and can be managed on a minim wage income. Or at least offer 20 affordable units.
 - o Housing should be mixed with options to buy.
 - o Ensure no Airbnb, nightly rentals, or leases under 30 days.
 - o MMSA and or other large companies of Mono County cannot rent large blocks of the housing.
 - o All buildings should be built with the highest level of sustainability as possible. Use passive and active solar, install greywater systems, have a recycling system, include a walk/bike path to get to Lee Vining proper, source locally, and add an environmental education aspect on these practices.
 - o Housing will be built before any construction is started on the hotel and restaurant.
 - o Set back the housing so it isn’t impacting the visual character and scenic resources.

- I would then recommend a Reduced Development Alternative with the above project descriptions included. Balance the number of units available with the actual needs of the project.

Thank you for your time and considerations with my concerns and recommendations in relation to the Tioga Inn Development Draft SEIR. I believe a balance can be found with this project and highly encourage the land owner to reach out to the town residents and discuss alternatives. I would also request that Mono County is open to housing alternative in the future that are more in line with the Community Plan and opinions of the residents of Lee Vining. It would be such a shame to see the community of Lee Vining altered so drastically for a short sighted and singular monetarily benefited project.

Thank you,

Rose Nelson

274 Mono Inn Road

Lee Vining, CA

93541

(530) 864-8100 --- rosiepose1234@gmail.com

August 16, 2019
Michael Draper
Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Mr. Draper,

I am writing to object to the Tioga Inn Plan Amendment (Plan) and the Subsequent Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). Whenever I travel to the eastern Sierra's, I always visit the Whoa Nellie Deli. The Whoa Nellie Deli has become very popular and I understand the desire to expand and update the facility. However, the current plans will have significant negative impacts on the surrounding area. Mono Lake is a very special Nature Reserve and the area surrounding it deserves special protections. Below are my objections to the Plan and the SEIS:

- The project as currently proposed will have significant visual impacts on the surrounding area. The Plan does not include mitigation that will sufficiently screen the visual impact.
- The Final SEIS does not include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.
- I recognize that Tioga Inn is an important employer for the area. However, Mono County should balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place. The current draft project does not include alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts.
- There are cumulative adverse impacts to migrating deer with this project, and there is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife.

If the current Plan is approved and built, then I will probably no longer stop at the Whoa Nellie Deli as I travel to the eastern Sierra's. Carrying my own peanut butter and jelly sandwiches will have to suffice.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my objections to this Plan and the SEIS.

Sincerely,
Mark Nelson

RECEIVED
AUG 16 2019

August 9, 2019

Mono County CDD

Dear Mr. Draper,

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan undermines the foundation of the Mono Basin Community Plan, a collective community document created in 2012. The Mono Basin Vision states, "The residents of Lee Vining and the Mono Basin desire to build a community that preserves our quality of life, provides for diverse economic activity, and protects the spectacular natural beauty and ecosystems of the area" (p.13, Mono Basin Community Plan). The addition of 100 units of workforce housing to the Tioga Inn Plan threatens several aspects of this collective vision.

Lee Vining's charm and close-knit community lies in its size. The Mono Basin Vision states, "We strive to preserve our small-town character" (p.13). As of 2010, the Lee Vining census recorded 222 residents, meaning that the addition of the Tioga Inn housing units would double the population of Lee Vining, ruining the "small-town character" that is one of the pillars of the Mono Basin community vision. In the Values section of the Community Plan, "Small, compact community" (p.13) is the very first value. The location of the proposed housing units at the Mobil Gas Mart is outside of town and threatens to fracture the Lee Vining Community. If half of Lee Vining lives outside of the center of town, the "compactness" and "smallness" is threatened. The charm of Lee Vining community is that I know my neighbors, and that I work near them.

Lack of housing for employees is a real concern in Lee Vining, but the magnitude of the Tioga Inn proposal is far larger than what would be suitable for Lee Vining. One of the concerns in the Community Plan is that there is inadequate employee housing. It states, "Workforce housing opportunities, both to rent and buy, are needed to sustain the existing community and enable people to live where they work" (p.15). I agree that people that work in Lee Vining should be able to live in Lee Vining. The proposal to add 150 bedrooms to the existing workforce housing at the Tioga Inn is far too many to house only the Lee Vining workforce. Mammoth Mountain has already started looking at housing its workforce at the Tioga Inn. The additional housing would create a culture of people living in Lee Vining and commuting elsewhere for work. This goes against the core values of the Community Plan. The Community Plan is very clear that the existing community is the one that needs affordable housing. It states, "Housing is affordable so community members and their families can continue to live here" (p.15). The Lee Vining community wishes to remain the same size.

Staying a small community does not prohibit growth. The Community Plan states, "Growth does not necessarily mean becoming bigger; it could also mean improving what already exists within the current development footprint" (p.15). The Tioga Inn does not need to expand housing units to grow economically.

Finally, the proposed project would impede scenic values as well as un-mitigatable light pollution that would ruin the dark night skies in the Mono Basin. The Community Plan focuses specifically on night skies, stating that the Mono Basin should be "a healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies" (p.13). As a National Scenic Area, anything seen from Mono Lake is subject to scrutiny. The Mono Basin is beautiful because the lack of development—that is what brings tourists here and supports our economy. That is why I love to live in Lee Vining. The 150 bedroom housing development would threaten these scenic values.

As a Lee Vining resident, I would be incredibly sad to see this community change from small and tight-knit to sprawling and broken. I hope that the Mono Basin Community Plan will be considered as the Tioga Inn Specific Plan is evaluated. If it is followed, it is clear that the 150-bedroom housing unit goes against almost every tenet of the community vision of residents of the Mono Basin. The Mono County housing crisis should not be solved with one large development in Lee Vining. I fully oppose the Tioga Inn Specific Plan.

Thank you for your time,

Ellie Neifeld



General Delivery

Lee Vining, CA

93541

Michael Draper

From: Karyn Kestrel O'Hearn <karyncoh@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 11:59 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: The Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn, Threat to scenic Mono Basin comments

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Michael Draper
Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

Since Spring 1995, when I was first introduced to the Mono Basin during a University of California course, I have been returning yearly to this culturally, naturally, and historically significant place. Examples of what brings me back to the Mono Basin: to see the stars in the dark night sky, hiking, scenic vistas, photography, observing wildlife, guiding visitors, camping on rustic, remote federal lands, and the pursuit of a deeper understanding and experience of this scenic basin's natural wonders.

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

The Mono Basin, a visitor's first experience entering Yosemite, and the small-town experience of Lee Vining will be marred by this project. The sudden, dramatic, scenic appearance of the Tioga Crest, welcoming travelers traveling north on Hwy 395 as they enter Lee Vining will be spoiled by multiple, two-story buildings breaking the skyline and interfering with this scenic, gateway view of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

The project's visual impacts are significant. The iconic Mono Lake image of Mono Lake, tufa towers, and the Sierra Nevada, untrammled by human activity, will have over a dozen two-story buildings built into the hillside, peppered with reflective windows and surfaces. The many distracting artificial reflections, and much-increased source of flood lights intruding the night sky will create a glow visible for miles and forever detract from this world-class dark sky experience.

There are cumulative adverse impacts to migrating deer with this project, and there is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife. There are cumulative adverse impacts to migrating birds with this project, and there is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce migration impacts from light pollution and death from window collision. Let alone impact from habitat created by human infrastructure for non-native or native species that will impact the native desert species.

The previously-approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the proponent seeks to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will affect highway travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day. The draft document can still be substantially improved to provide county leaders and decision makers with thoughtful, realistic alternatives to choose from.

All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, at once—not in pieces.

The proponent has not considered sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village.

The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.

This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.

I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place.

I implore you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

Mono Lake, the gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed.

Sincerely,
Karyn O'Hearn

--

Karyn "Kestrel" O'Hearn
Yosemite National Park Interpretive Ranger Naturalist
Yosemite Conservancy Instructor
California Naturalist Instructor
Avian Sciences Graduate Group, UCD

"In order to see birds it is necessary to become part of the silence." Robert Lynd

Michael Draper

From: gerryjim <gerryjim@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, July 28, 2019 10:04 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Fw: Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment and Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR)

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This development will have a negative impact on wildlife and police and fire operations as well as other services. It will change the visual and scenic character of the area. I visit Mono Lake often and find this development to be inappropriate at this location.

Gerald Orcholski
Pasadena California

Michael Draper

From: sb9794 <sb9794@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:42 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: action@monolake.org
Subject: Proposed Tioga Inn Expansion Project

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Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

We are writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three. Overall, the project documents don't provide adequate alternatives and mitigation for the permanent impact the project would create.

My husband, Nicholas Parish, and I have spent more than twelve seasons in Lee Vining and the Mono Lake area as we have used that location as the base camp for countless hikes and backpacking trips in Yosemite National Park. We consider the Mono Basin and this entrance into Yosemite to be one of the gems of national beauty in our country. Over many years, we have recommended to others this unique area to fellow Americans and to people we have met from all over the world, to put this location as a "must see" of what we think is one of the most beautiful areas in the United States.

I understand that Mono County previously approved a hotel and restaurant that creates permanent adverse visual impacts. This current proposal seeks to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will totally destroy the uniqueness of the natural beauty of this area. This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Hwy 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.

Not only will this construction site leave a visual scar on this land, without serious oversight and changes, the night sky will be destroyed. This will be a tragedy. My husband and I have a place in Sun Valley, Idaho, that has put in place a night sky ordinance. That area has expanded the night sky both north and south, creating a corridor where night sky has been protected. This has turned into an area where tourists go to experience the wonderful joys of being in a night sky. While it is my understanding Mono County currently has a night sky ordinance requiring downward pointing lights, because this construction would be on a bluff, the glow from these lights will be seen for miles and forever detract from this world-class night sky experience. Especially for those who enjoy photography, this will mar their experience and perhaps impact their interest in spending time in Mono County.

The thought of the negative visual impacts of construction as proposed on the South Tufa area of Mono Lake is unsettling. These views are inspirational for many who live in your area or pass through as they travel. To not protect them for all of human kind is short-sighted. People spend time in Lee Vining area to be inspired and not depressed by the negative impacts of humanity on this glorious and unique environment.

The cumulative impacts of the SEIR's previously approved hotel and restaurant at this site need to be addressed as well as the negative impacts of the proposed additional construction for the multi-unit, two-story construction of this 100-unit/150 bedroom Workforce Housing Village. I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this one of a kind spectacular environment.

Mono Lake, the Gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed. All visual impacts need to be evaluated, and mitigated, at once in order to be certain they are executed properly and in a timely fashion.

Thank you for considering our concerns of this expansion of the Tioga Inn Project. Please protect this unique and special location in your own backyard. You have the power to make a positive difference for Mono County. You also have the power to protect this environment for those who have come to believe it is a national treasure. My husband and I are two of these believers that you just might figure out a way to protect this special place we have come to love.

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Bowman and Nicholas D. Parish

3617 Oas Dr W

University Place, WA 98466

Sb9794@aol.com

Michael Draper

From: Nancy Parsons <nancyparsons29@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 3:08 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

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Dear Mr. Draper,

The proposed project is just too big for such a special. fragile area. A "village" will completely destroy the quiet, dark and wild feeling of the area. Added light, two story buildings and traffic will mar the night sky and beautiful vistas. Certainly the project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395. Any kind of visibility from Panum Crater should be protected at all cost.

Please stick to the original approved plan of a hotel and restaurant. Don't ruin this special place which my family has been visiting for 40 years. I am so looking forward to showing my grandson the beauty of Mono Basin AS IT IS NOW!

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Draper

From: Erika Perloff <erikaperloff@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 9:28 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn

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Dear Mono County Development Commission, I am writing to comment on the planned Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR. As a long time visitor to the Mono Basin and as a former resident of Yosemite National Park I am very familiar with the property, the town of Lee Vining and the surrounding natural areas. I urge you to greatly scale back this development or reject it entirely. The housing called for in this development is for a hotel workforce for a hotel that does not exist, but was conceived of decades ago. The proposed number of units would double the size of Lee Vining, change the character of the town and be a significant visual and environmental impact on the area. Developers have stated that the units would help alleviate housing shortages in Mammoth Lakes for Mammoth Ski Area workers. Considering the notoriously dangerous nature of Highway 395, especially in the winter, this seems like an ill conceived plan. The additional number of people and cars would also add traffic and safety impact on the town of Lee Vining as well as on emergency personnel. The units would adversely affect wildlife, especially migrating deer. The visual impact of this development would forever change the feel of Lee Vining and would be an eyesore for residents and visitors alike. Please say no to this massive development.

Erika Perloff

Michael Draper

From: Julie <forjuliepoole@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 5:47 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga inn

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No!!!! Yosemite can't handle the amount of tourism it currently draws. If you build it more will come. Damage is already sadly apparent. The money gained by the government cannot possibly be worth the destruction of the rare beauty we live here for. Not to mention the trashing of the mono basin and any canyon people can get up. The canyons are already suffering from the trash and destruction left in the wake of our new kind of visitors.

Julie



Range of Light Group
Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club
Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
P.O. Box 1973, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546



August 21, 2019

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
Mono County
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
mdraper@mono.ca.gov

RE: Comments on the SEIR for the Tioga Inn Project

On behalf of the Sierra Club's Range of Light Group Executive Committee, I'd like to express our thoughts on the Tioga Inn Project and the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report. The Range of Light Group is part of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club and consists of over 400 Sierra Club members in Inyo and Mono Counties. Our members as well as visitors from around the world visit the Mono Basin and Yosemite National Park. We have a vested interest in protecting the scenic qualities and natural resources of the Mono Basin.

The Sierra Club is also involved in many projects to help reduce our dependence upon fossil fuels. We appreciate that the plan has some features to offset the impact of added GHGs during construction. The main GHG offset is having people live where they work—at the hotel. If the hotel were not built, then many workers would have to commute, possibly to June Mountain, Mammoth Lakes, or Mammoth Mountain. That would negate the GHG offsets and this project would just add to the global warming problem.

The likelihood of the hotel being built is low because a seasonal hotel is not financially viable in a remote area like this. Tourism in Lee Vining is dependent upon the opening of Tioga Pass, not on the activities and resources in Mammoth Lakes or June Lake. Until Tioga Pass is open year-round, a hotel will not be profitable. The 1992 Final Economic Impact and Fiscal Analysis for the Tioga Inn Specific Plan and EIR (economic report) assumed a 50% occupancy rate during winter through June Mountain and Mammoth Mountain market capture. Since 1993, June Mountain visitation has declined significantly, which makes that projection questionable. Guests who want to ski Mammoth Mountain may not risk the drive as predicted when weather closes the road or chains are required. Without the Tioga Inn hotel, the workforce housing is overkill for the Mono Basin and an unnecessary disturbance to the natural beauty of the Mono Basin. Ten-twenty bedrooms would more than meet the needs of Lee Vining.

If this project is to solve regional housing shortages from Bridgeport to Mammoth Lakes, then the SEIR should include housing assessments and alternatives at the regional level. The main housing need is in Mammoth Lakes for Mammoth Mountain employees. Workforce housing should be there. One hundred fifty workforce-housing units in Lee Vining for Mammoth employees might



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Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club
Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
P.O. Box 1973, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546



not be popular or affordable and many units might remain vacant. The requirement of Mono County employment would need to be dropped in order to rent all of the units. Since there isn't public transportation between Lee Vining and Mammoth Lakes, this project would create that new demand and generate GHGs. The impacts of that should be included in the SEIR. However, this project is not the only possible location for workforce housing in Mono County. It is not the only possible location for workforce housing even in Lee Vining. Nicely's is for sale and would be a much more suitable location for a two-story joint commercial business/housing project. Since 1993 Mammoth Mountain has come into its own land through the Base Land Exchange and could build housing for its employees on it. The TOML has also purchased the Shady Rest parcel and plans to build affordable housing on it. The rationale for this project intermingles arguments for this project being workforce housing for the Tioga Inn hotel and for the county such as how the GHGs would be reduced in the one case when they would be increased in the other.

If the hotel is built after the workforce housing project is built, then it is possible the workforce housing will be rented out and not immediately available to the hotel employees when the time comes. The employees, although they have first "dibs", will have to wait until rental units become available. Also, there is no guarantee the hotel employees will be able to afford the rent. Mono County developed a housing mitigation ordinance, but it has been suspended since 2011. The Mono County Board of Supervisors recently approved an extension of the suspension of a housing mitigation ordinance until December 31, 2019. If it is suspended at the time the hotel is developed, then there will be no requirement for the hotel to provide housing for its employees. The 1992 economic report states that 80 employees would be needed for the hotel and 22 for the restaurant for a total of only 102 employees. Some of these employees would share a unit so less than 100 bedrooms are needed for this project, not 150. Unless 100 bedrooms are set aside and left vacant until the hotel is built, this project is basically unrelated to the hotel. It should be judged as an independent rental housing project.

If this project is truly connected to the original 1993 project, then the SEIR should have been expanded to cover the environmental impacts of both: approved and un-built parts of the original project and the workforce housing amendment. There have been significant changes to the environment since the 1993 EIR for the original project that would need to be taken into account: increased visitation to Yosemite National Park, more land burned in wildfires in the Mono Basin, more cheatgrass replacing natural habitats, warmer temperatures, more prevalent catastrophic wildfires, smaller glaciers feeding the streams in the basin, and even a new presence of red fox in the area.

The Range of Light Group believes this SEIR is deficient because it states it is a separate project yet doesn't include an alternative where the project is scaled to the small housing needs of Lee Vining. Nor does it justify or explain how this project will be the best way to solve the housing needs of the County. To avoid repeating the situation as we have today where decisions were made 26 years ago based on conditions that no longer apply, the approval for workforce housing for the hotel and restaurant should be deferred until they are actually developed. That might be a few



Range of Light Group
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decades from now. More importantly, this project exceeds the footprint and impact envelope of the 1993 Tioga Inn Specific Plan and has visual impacts on the Mono Basin, the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve, and the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area that were unforeseen in 1993, i.e. the number, size, and the height of the buildings. The Range of Light Group believes that the SEIR must present alternatives to the location of the project that reduce its visual intrusions on the environment, as it will adversely affect views from many parts/areas in the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. See *infra* (discussion of viewshed).

Fossil Fuel Concerns

1. An additional gas pump island is being proposed. To reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, more and more people are converting to electric vehicles. Gas stations too need to convert to electric vehicle charging stations. A DC quick charging station would be much more appropriate to add to the facilities than an outdated gas pumping station. The Tioga Gas Mart is at the crossroad of State Route 120 (Tioga Pass) and Highway 395. It would be an ideal location for one. In anticipation that the YARTS buses and tourist buses will be electric buses one day, the charging station access should also accommodate buses.
2. It should be noted that the CalGreen 2016 requires wiring for electric vehicle charging stations and parking spaces for electric vehicles when EV chargers are installed. However, it does not require that chargers be installed. We recommend one or more dual port, level 2, universal EV charger be installed in the workforce housing area and equivalent parking spaces be designated as EV only or EV preferred.
3. The workforce housing should be all-electric to reduce dependence upon fossil fuels. If they were all-electric units, a 30,000-gallon propane tank would not be necessary. Because we live in snow country, there should be a backup system in case the electricity is down.
4. The workforce-housing units should have the highest rating of insulation to lower the energy usage in the cold winters and hot summers. The buildinggreen.com website recommends a 5-10-20-40-60 rule for zone 6 that includes Mono County. These numbers refer to the R-value recommendations for windows, foundation slabs, foundation walls, above-ground walls, and attics (or roofs), respectively. This is higher than the California building code, but worth not skimping on.
5. The Tioga Inn Plan says it will not meet LEED construction requirements, but will conform to 2016 CalGreen building code and some voluntary measures. How many CalGreen points are anticipated with this project?
6. CalGreen requires a common recycling area for residents. Where will this be?
7. The SEIR states there will be solar panels installed to offset the increase in greenhouse gases that come with this project. Is that a requirement of the project or merely a possibility? We certainly encourage solar panels on the workforce housing. However, the glare or visibility of them on rooftops should be included in the photo-simulations and the evaluation of visual impacts.
8. If some of the workforce-housing units are not south facing, solar panels could be placed on the ground in the area.



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Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
P.O. Box 1973, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546



9. Consider adding more solar panels to offset the additional electricity needed for increased groundwater pumping.
10. The SEIR should require that the cost of including solar panels be included in the penciling out of the cost of the project up front, not as a separate project that comes later.

Groundwater Pumping Concerns

The Range of Light Group is seriously concerned about groundwater sustainability in the Mono Basin. The SEIR did not provide enough information to allay our concerns. The workforce housing almost doubles the water use of the original 1993 plan. The additional usage would be on going; forever.

The projected water usage is another important factor. The SEIR says the Tioga Inn Project will pump groundwater at the 100 gpm 24 hours/day and that the maximum usage at full build out (hotel, restaurant and workforce housing) will be 34,835 gpd in winter and 64,600 gpd in summer. That cranks out to 58.74 af/yr (34,835 x 151 days + 64,600 x 214 days / 324,900 gal/af). (It would have been nice if the document had calculated that.) The projected usage for the fully built, 1993 project is based on the 1992 SEIR before anything was built. This estimate should have been revised to reflect what is known about current usage, projecting the additional usage of the hotel and restaurant. While 59 af/yr isn't a lot of water, it isn't insignificant either. It will probably have an impact in drought years and when the Gibbs, Dana, and Conness glaciers disappear due to climate change. The SEIR should acknowledge that.

It is possible that the current water usage for what has been built under the 1993 project plan may have negatively impacted the neighboring well of the Andrew family located about a half mile to the south. Increased pumping at the new, 2017 well, which is located even closer, may negatively impact their well even more. The two Tioga Inn project wells go down at least 300 feet but start at a much lower elevation than the Andrew's well that sits on the moraine. There should be a developer bond set aside to deepen neighboring wells should they go dry.

The Mono Basin is a low priority groundwater basin and will not have oversight through the Groundwater Sustainability Act for years to come. In 1993 when the original plan was approved for a hotel climate change was not taken into account, but we have since learned a lot more. The groundwater usage must be sustainable now and in the future. The groundwater pump tests done in May 2017 were done after a record winter season for snowfall. The test showed that pumping 100 gps for a day takes 25 hours to recharge and lowered the water table 0.2'. The tests done in June 1992 were done at the end of a six-year drought. The recharge rate was faster, but lowered the water table 0.3'. That test was done before the current complex was built or any water was withdrawn, which might be why the recharge was faster. A 0.2' or a 0.3' drop in groundwater day after day, could have significant, cumulative impacts to the water table level over the next 50 years. The water table must be monitored and thresholds set for controlled water use until a GSA is formed for the Mono Basin. The SEIR should include how that will be monitored and controlled



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Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
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in the interim. The days of unlimited withdrawals are over in California. By California law, groundwater basins must be sustainable.

The SEIR and the RCI review note that impacts to Lee Vining Creek were not determined, yet is it most likely that there will be impacts with how close the creek is to the wells. The impacts should be determined as part of this project as it is a critical natural resource in the Mono Basin and to Mono Lake. Groundwater pumping with this project could change the temperature of the water going into the lake or change how much of the water in the stream channel goes into ground before it reaches the lake. The impacts to local springs should also be determined as they are also critical to wildlife in the Mono Basin. We request that further tests be done. The SEIR assumes the flow in Lee Vining Creek is a constant 25 cfs when, in reality, it drops as low as 10 cfs in drought years and in winter. The impact then, is not < 1% It could be as much as 2.3% at 10 cfs. Groundwater pumping should be at lower rates when flows are low and specific thresholds should be set, including a no pumping allowed threshold.

This project is not going for LEED certification, but could use less water than is in the plan.

Wildlife Concerns

Deer migrate through the project area on their way up or down Lee Vining Canyon to the Sierra meadows. In the fall, they pass through the property munching on the shrubs under the windows of the residences as they go. In theory, deer could go around the project, but they may not. They don't change their path. So the more open space and less human impact on the south and west side of the property, the better it would be for them. The Project Site Plan preserves a significant amount of open space, which is good. However, is it where it will benefit wildlife or is it where it isn't feasible or visually acceptable to build? There is a swath of open space at the eastern edge of the property along Highway 395 that will endanger wildlife. This swath provides a more natural setting close to the road. However, it puts wildlife, e.g. deer and coyotes, and vehicles on a collision course. This is not a safe location for deer to forage and find cover.

A fund should be set aside with developer fees to help fund an under/over pass for wildlife to cross State Route 120 or Highway 395 to get to Lee Vining Creek

We would like to point out that with workforce housing, come dogs. If there are 300 more people living in the workforce housing units, there could be an additional 50-100 dogs. People will be walking their dogs on the surrounding USFS public lands a few times per week here, there, and everywhere. This will have a cumulative and negative effect on wildlife. A smaller scale project would lower the number of people and dogs.

Bears live up or near Lee Vining canyon. They are seen every year in the willowed areas and have on a few rare occasions, wandered through the project property. The SEIR didn't indicate if there would be more dumpsters added near the existing dumpsters or how trash would be handled for



Range of Light Group
Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club
Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
P.O. Box 1973, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546



the workforce housing units. Bear-proof dumpsters will be needed to avoid attracting bears to the workforce housing area.

Visual Concerns

The Mono Basin is a National Scenic Area that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world during the summer. The scenic and visual night setting of the basin is extremely important to maintain. We do not want it nicknamed “the Mono Basin non-scenic area” or for visitors to tell people it’s not worth the trip because of this project. Whatever is built here on the Tioga Inn Project site will be a permanent visual disturbance forever. The buildings should be hidden as much as possible. The lights or lighting glow should be as low as possible. Visual impacts should be the highest concern of this project.

The SEIR lacks projected visuals from various key points around the Mono Basin to show how much of the project would be visible i.e. from the USFS Visitor Center, the end of the Boardwalk, the edge of the Mono Lake at South Tufa, and from the trails on Panum Crater. Also the quality of the photo-simulations in the SEIR from the parking lot at South Tufa, the Epic Café, and Highway 395 are of poor quality. It is hard to tell if one or two-storied buildings were projected onto the photo and they do not convey the true impact of the project. It is hard to believe that a two-storied apartment building will be hidden by the ridgeline as stated in the photo from the Epic Café vantage point when it is built starting at the ridgeline elevation. The SEIR should include before and after photos. They should be of iconic views of what the visitors see when they come here. There should be a South Tufa photo taken from the lake with the tufa towers in the foreground and the mountains in the background looking at the project site because that is what the visitors will see. That is the million-dollar viewshed Mono County will be permanently sacrificing for this project. The viewshed in Mono County is one of its most important assets. Today, a visitor can stand anywhere in the Mono Basin and see few human disturbances for as far as the eye can see--an incredible experience. There will be scarring from the construction of the wastewater treatment and leach fields that will be visible for up to a decade, but that is to be replanted. Although there are still cheatgrass patches and lines from the original construction of 20 years ago that are visible, the buildings will be visible forever.

There are two buildings that will stand out the most: the restaurant on the promontory and the set of buildings on southern-most side of the workforce housing. Two sets of buildings are shown on the Project Site Plan map for workforce housing and both are planned to be two-storied. The southern-most set will be visible from the highway with only landscaping planned to screen it. However, if the number of workforce housing bedrooms planned were scaled back, then this southern-most set could be single-storied and much less visible from the highway. If the hotel were not built, all the other new buildings could go where the hotel is and be much less visible.

The daycare center proposed is in a central location, which would be convenient for the residents, but is a waste of “hideable” space. It should be located closer to the south side of the property, where low buildings are less visible from the highway. Other alternative designs should be



Range of Light Group
Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club
Counties of Inyo and Mono, California
P.O. Box 1973, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 93546



considered that pack in more of the buildings on the north (town) facing side on the greenbelt space between the residential area and the workforce housing area in order to reduce the visibility of the complex and from fewer points around the Mono Basin.

Visitors enjoy and photograph the night sky in the Mono Basin. The lighting from this project will create a glow that will be seen from around the basin. Think of all the lights inside each hotel room, each bedroom, living room, and kitchen turned on at night. The outside lights will be facing downward or low, but the inside lights will impact the Mono County dark sky ordinance. That glow will be seen from around the Mono Basin, i.e. from South Tufa, Mono County Park, east side of the lake. The only way to reduce this is to scale down the project and limit the number of lights i.e. along outdoor pathways, outdoor patio lights, parking lot lights, etc. Adding another gas pump also adds more lighting that is high intensity lighting—very visible from a distance.

Other Concerns

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment states there would be up to 100 units or 150 bedrooms. The Project Site Plan map shows 92 units and 142 bedrooms plus a manager's unit with an unspecified number of bedrooms. Where would the other 7 units/7 bedrooms be, if the project were built out to the maximum?

It is a high priority to us to have a walking/biking trail connecting the town and the Tioga complex for tourists, locals, employees, and children walking to/from town to preserve the sense of community of Lee Vining. The Tioga complex will be a self-contained resort for visitors and a company town. We recommend a fund be set-aside with the developer fees for a trail that connects the project to the town. Yes, there is a problem now, but the problem would be greatly exacerbated with a doubling of the town's population due to workforce housing. A walkway connecting Utility Road to the Mobil Gas Mart with a bridge over Lee Vining Creek would be an asset to the whole community.

This project stands at the gateway to Yosemite National Park and overlooks the Mono Basin Scenic Area. It should be a showcase project of green technology and aesthetics. It should be designed to have the least visual impact.

Sincerely,

Malcolm Clark, Vice Chair and Conservation Chair
Range of Light Group
Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club

August 16, 2019

Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR

Dear Mr. Draper:

I first saw Mono Lake forty years ago when my mom and I drove from Los Angeles to Lee Vining. We were on our way to Yosemite, but were so enthralled with the stark, stunning, one-of-a-kind beauty of the Mono Basin that we decided to spend a few days in Lee Vining instead.

Towns like Lee Vining rely on tourism. And tourists, like my mom and me, value the wide unspoiled vistas, the chance to see stars in a dark sky, and the timeless quality of such an ancient place.

Everyone deserves a decent, affordable place to live, especially people who work hard in the service and tourist-related industries.

Unfortunately, this project does a disservice to this genuine need.

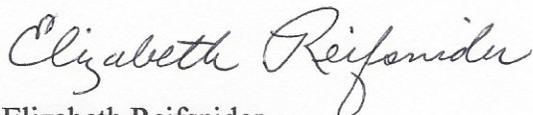
For instance:

- The Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report fails to include the already approved hotel and restaurant on this site. What are the cumulative impacts of this new, expanded proposal? We don't need a second Mammoth Lakes in Mono County.
- The visual impacts of this project are substantial. The proposed Workforce Housing Village, as currently envisioned, will destroy the unique character of Mono Basin. The project's visual and aesthetic impacts must be greatly reduced.
- How will this project mitigate the problems of increased vehicle traffic, the effects on deer and wildlife migrations, and the potential for more collisions with wildlife?
- Travel and Leisure Magazine listed Mono Lake as one of 14 destinations in its October 2017 article "Where to Find the Darkest Skies in the U.S. for Serious Stargazing." This project would end those opportunities.

I am confident Mono County can find alternatives to address these concerns and will find solutions to eliminate the project's unavoidable impacts. However, if this project goes forward as currently envisioned, I fear the Mono Basin National Scenic Area will no longer be scenic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Reifsnider
1344 Vallejo Way
Sacramento, CA 95818

Detailed comments on the Tioga Inn SEIR
8/21/2019

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three. I lived in Lee Vining 1995-2011, owned a home, was on the volunteer fire department, and participated in the RPAC. Now I visit at least once a year. But this project would fundamentally change the character of Lee Vining, making the area less of a draw compared to closer destinations with better land use planning.

A large part of what makes Lee Vining special is its small size. Its compact footprint fits well within the grandeur of the undeveloped Mono Basin. Over the years since I moved there, incremental losses of natural parts of the Mono Basin have taken their toll, even though the overall human footprint is still dwarfed by the stunning landscape.

These individually painful losses of native habitat and the uncluttered feel of the Basin include the Mobil Station, the flashing red light on top of the cell phone tower above the Mobil Station, the raising of the airport runway (in the Scenic Area), the four-laning of Highway 395 south of town, the doubling in size of the Desert Aggregate gravel pit near Rush Creek, the new BLM fire station at the entrance to Lundy Canyon, the reflection of unpainted metal power poles above Tioga Lodge in the morning sun (in the Scenic Area), the reflection of solar panels on the northeast shore of Mono Lake (in the Scenic Area), the avalanche control devices on Warren Bench (in the Scenic Area), the road at the east end of Mono City (in the Scenic Area), the bright glaring lights of the schools and gas stations in town, and the one house at Sagehen Meadow that brings permanent habitation to an otherwise vast uninhabited area southeast of Mono Lake. All of these relatively recent projects have had ongoing impacts that are likely permanent, although in many cases their visual impacts could be mitigated better without much cost.

When I see each of these things, I feel the pang of loss--the loss of a once-grand, wilder, more beautiful Mono Basin. With the exception of the highway widening, the cumulative visual and habitat impacts of these smaller projects over the years pale in comparison with the approved and proposed elements of the Tioga Inn. This one approval would bring a much greater loss.

The list of avoided development projects that would have degraded the quality of the Mono Basin is also long: Cedar Hill, Conway Ranch, Cunningham, Rodeo Grounds, connected Mammoth-June ski areas, a straightened faster highway along Mono Lake, toxic gold mines in Bodie and Long Valley--and if you go back far enough, Silver Lake Reservoir, which would have drowned Silver Lake and Rush Creek with a dam built at the narrows above Grant Lake Reservoir. There are many more--environmental saves are temporary, and ideas for new developments are never-ending. I sincerely hope that the workforce housing portion of the Tioga Inn project is relegated to the list of avoided mistakes, and not added to the list of painful losses.

Detailed comments:

1. The project piecemeals moving the water tank and whatever is to replace the old water tank. The future use of that location must be disclosed now, prior to approval of the move. The way

this is proposed it appears that a future amendment could add additional housing in the area of the old water tank.

2. The workforce housing should be no larger than needed for serving the housing needs of on-site employees. The north end of Lee Vining has already been identified as a community expansion area and other housing needs should be clustered there. Housing and business growth must be synchronized so that a large commuter population isn't created.

3. Pedestrian trail and bike path connections to town must be built as part of this project in order to mitigate the sprawl.

4. The large propane tank should be denied--this is not an appropriate location for a new propane fuel distribution center, when there is already a large propane tank at the intersection of Hwy 120 and 395.

5. The analysis of Lee Vining Creek minimum flows is flawed. Lee Vining Creek flow can be as low as 15 cfs during the growing season and 10 cfs in winter. Additional studies should be conducted to determine the impacts of water use on Lee Vining Creek (1/2 mile away) and springs at Mono Lake (1 mile away). Until these studies are completed, well pumping should be limited when Lee Vining Creek flows are less than 30 cfs, the threshold below which no water diversions are allowed in summer in LADWP's proposed new water rights license. For example, 100 gpm could be the pumping limit when the creek is 20-30 cfs, 50 gpm could be allowed when the creek is 10-20 cfs, and no pumping could be allowed when the creek is less than 10 cfs. A monitoring program should be developed that triggers reductions in pumping when impacts begin to occur, both in the creek and in the downgradient springs at Mono Lake.

6. Cumulative visual impacts must be fully mitigated, even if it means mitigating visual impacts elsewhere in the area that have already occurred (see partial list at beginning of this letter). This approach should be used for all impact categories--if impacts can't be mitigated on site, then mitigation elsewhere (with a nexus to the project area) should be required. For example, increased water and energy use can be mitigated by investing in water and energy efficiencies elsewhere in Lee Vining.

7. Impacts to wildlife (and to humans from habituated animals) occur where visitors feed gulls and improperly stored trash attracts bears and other wildlife. Ongoing training of visitors, residents, and employees in not feeding wildlife is necessary to create a culture of responsibility. This can include signs and policies in rental agreements.

Sincerely,

Greg Reis
P.O. Box 161
San Geronimo, CA 94963
Gregr@gmx.com

Michael Draper

From: Brooke Roberts <robertsbandc@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 2:17 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: tioga workforce village

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eastern sierra is a premium spot on this earth which is open for many to visit. along with the visitors come needs fuel, hotels, restaurants which brings us to the main issue where do the people who operate these services live(winter and summer)??? i feel that tioga village will provide housing for all those folks. they will not be renting on million dollar row. the good provided will out weigh the precieved (negative issues). this world is expanding like it or not. lighting from housing, impact on services covered by property taxes etc are trumped up thoughts to curtail progress. tioga folks have always done tasteful development with the enviornment in their planning! mono county needs workforce housing!! respectfully submitted Brooke Roberts

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Draper

From: Mary Ann <marsmail21@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, July 27, 2019 8:15 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn expansion

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

As a frequent visitor to the Eastern slope and Lee Vining, I am writing to express my opposition to any expansion of the Tioga Inn plan, specifically, the additional hotel and housing units. Construction at the site will negatively impact wildlife and the botanical value of the area. The housing units will carve a huge scenic and environmental scar On the Eastern slope. Construction will also reduce the friendly and relatively quiet character of Lee Vining, making it so much more just another tourist trap.

Mary Ann Robinson
136 Hartnell Place
Sacramento CA 95825

Michael Draper

From: Tina Robinson <yotidog@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 5:36 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment and SEIR comment

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I do not think that this is an appropriate development for this area primarily due to its significant and unmitigated visual and scenic impacts. For an area that is tourism dependent like the Eastern Sierras, visual impacts are extremely important to the character of the area and attracting visitors. The few people that this project would support (in a short time frame window - about 5 months max) do not compare to the large numbers that would be repelled by the sight of it. All highway travelers on 395 and 120.

The visual character of the buildings do not fit either and they will stick out like a sore thumb. Future visitors will wonder how such an albatross was ever approved. Further, it requires a Specific Plan Amendment. If General Plans and Specific Plans are always amended, what is the point of developing them in the first place? Highway 395 is a designated Scenic Highway and maintaining such designation is dependent on maintaining its visual character. Please don't risk the Scenic Highway classification by approving a large, ugly development on this bluff. If a development is to be approved, it should be located within or immediately adjacent to the existing communities of June Lake or Lee Vining, not where there is little existing development. The buildings should be architecturally consistent in character with a mountain community. The schematics I saw looked like a bunch of shipping containers with a large modern central building. UGLY!!! If it is approved, I, for one, will send a photo of it to Caltrans and suggest that the Scenic Highway designation should be re-evaluated. Then you can just go ahead and make the entire area look bad to match.

I look at the care that was put in to make the Mono Lake Visitor Center (outside of Lee Vining to the north) compliment the terrain and fit, and then at this project - and it is sickening. Please reject this project unless you can hide it from all views, including from the highways and points of interest farther up the Sierra Crest.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chris Robinson
PO Box 7545
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Sent from my iPad

August 18, 2019

Dear Mono County Community Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

As a year-round resident of Lee Vining I am deeply concerned about the new amendment to the Tioga Inn project. I have major concerns over the addition of the 100 units of workforce housing that are being proposed, I fear that the scale of this housing project could erode the small-town character and strong sense of community present in Lee Vining. I have lived and worked in and around Yosemite National Park for years and know Lee Vining to be the only gateway community to the park that hasn't been over-developed and still retains rural characteristics.

As someone who has struggled to find housing in the Mono Basin, I can echo the need for workforce housing but I cannot support the housing plan laid out in the amendment. The effort to house 200 to 300 people would quadruple the current population of Lee Vining (the SEIR states that 89 people currently live in Lee Vining), without adequate resources to accommodate such an increase. Workforce housing of this size would not be "solving" the housing crisis in the Mono Basin, it would require Lee Vining to accommodate Mammoth and Junes tremendous affordable housing issues and in turn cause Lee Vining to absorb all of the impacts of a second town being built in Lee Vining and inevitably becoming a company and commuter town.

The lack of clarity and definition around "workforce" housing raises many red flags. It is unclear who this housing is intended for and who is given priority. Would the residents of Lee Vining be prioritized in these housing arrangements? Would the cost of living reflect wages in the area? Would MMSA buy blocks of the Tioga Inn housing to sublet to their employees? Is our town of Lee Vining responsible (or equipped) for solving the housing crises of the surrounding resort towns? Without specific definitions around "workforce" housing the whole palette of our community could be permanently changed.

The Reduced Development Alternative would be the ideal solution for providing rental housing to workers and residents of Lee Vining to accommodate around 30-60 people. Please consider a Phased Project Alternative, where a small amount of housing can be approved for current construction but the remainder of the "workforce" housing is contingent on there actually being an increased workforce when (and if) the hotel is built.

We need to create affordable housing so community members and their families can continue to live here, however, the size and location of the workforce housing proposed in the amendment would put forth intrusive structures and damage our natural assets which draw in millions of visitors.

I have many other concerns that aren't fully addressed in the SEIR, these include:

- This plan fails to protect the spectacular beauty and ecosystems of the area with the "unavoidable" adverse impacts of the project that interfere with visual character, cause new sources of light pollution, and obstruct wildlife movement and migration
- Increased traffic of cars and people in the area and lack of parking
- Lack of connectivity to LV from Tioga Inn; no safe passages to town by bike or foot

- Light pollution from extra traffic would pollute our dark night skies
- South Tufa view impacted
- LVFD ability to provide enough services for population growth
- Single entrance/exit – concern for evacuations in the case of a wildfire
- Yosemite is already experiencing over-visitation and cannot find solutions to this problem, major impacts on Tuolumne Meadows and entrance station

The Lee Vining community needs to be fully heard and addressed in this process since it is in Lee Vining and the town will be absorbing the impacts of such a large project. This plan, if approved, could sacrifice the rural characteristics and healthy natural environment valued by residents in the Mono Basin.

Sincerely,

Joslyn Rogers
P.O. Box 354, Lee Vining, CA 93541
858-229-3956
joslynrog@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: Michael <rokeach@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 10:38 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village

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Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing to express my concerns over the above referenced project that is currently being reviewed.

This project's visual impacts are significant without considering sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn. This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of Tioga.

I believe Mono County should make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this very special place. The current draft project doesn't include alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts.

The previously approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. This expanded project will create significant visual impacts that will affect highway travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day.

The final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.

Thank you for considering my opinion on this project.

Sincerely,

Michael Rokeach

Michael Draper

From: Ron Romanosky <rromanosky@ca.rr.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 25, 2019 6:45 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: the Lee Vining hotel project

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Michael,

Since I heard about this hotel and restaurant definitely going up a year or two ago I've dreaded what it will do to the character of Lee Vining and the surrounding area. To me, my brothers and our families keeping both currently as they are seems far more wise than the assured negative impacts ***(negative, that is, for all but those making money off it)***. You have to know this development will lead to more development until Lee Vining is filled with disgusting, littering and noisy tourists day and night 24/7/365, to say nothing about its effect on the open space around Lee Vining. Both are unacceptable.

What next, motels, McDonalds and a Del Taco at Bodie?

Ron Romanosky
351 Prospect Park
Tustin, CA 92780

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Michael Draper

From: JAMES ROSEN <james.rosen@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 6:45 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn proposal

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Michael Draper, Community Development Dept, Mammoth Lakes

From: James Rosen, Ph.D., Sonoma, California

Re: Tioga Inn proposal

Dear Mr. Draper,

I urge the Mono County Community Development Dept to minimize as much as possible the harmful impacts of the Tioga Inn expansion on the natural beauty and environment in the Mono Lake area.

As a native Californian and longtime outdoor enthusiast, I've been camping, exploring and photographing the Mono Lake basin for years. The 395 corridor is a treasure to Californians and people from around the world who come to escape "civilization" and enjoy the beauty and of power of the Sierra escarpment and geologic wonder of Mono Lake and volcanic land. So special is the lack of commercial development and residences. It would be a shame to lose some of the magic one feels when traveling toward Mono Lake and viewing the Sierra from the Lake or craters.

I hope the Development Department can request adjustments to the Tioga proposal that would reduce the impact on the viewpoints, photography, and wild feel of the Basin. Mono County should consider the affect of local decisions on the bigger picture of preserving nature for people outside the County in this special location. I have faith in the wisdom and expertise of the Mono Lake Committee and urge you to include their ideas as you consider the Tioga Inn proposal.

Sincerely,

James Rosen, Ph.D.

Michael Draper

From: will rowe <warowe1@msn.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 11:37 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project: Draft SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings Mr. Draper,

The following comments focus on the Draft SEIR (Proposal) as it pertains to construction of a two-story Worker Housing Village with upwards of 150 bedrooms.

I am a long-term (over 50 years) multi-season visitor to the Mono Basin and appreciate the current views and natural landscape of the Basin absent intrusive development. As a licensed Professional Geologist, I am concerned that the natural landscape (including geologic features) will be degraded by this proposed development. Specifically:

1) Cumulative Impacts: A previously approved hotel and restaurant at the site will cause intrusive adverse visual and other impacts. It is recognized that the Proposal will cause additional visual impacts seen from various locations in the Mono Basin. Although the Proposal addresses direct light, the sheer number of lights will cause a distinct glow over the area. Also, in addition to the ruination of dark skies to the southwest of the Basin, the natural vistas at the site will be intruded upon by these large structures. These structures will be visible in multiple areas around Mono Basin, thereby diminishing the quality of the Basin view-shed. These impacts are cumulative on top of the existing approved project.

2 Migratory water fowl and deer: with additional development, the Proposal will affect deer migration patterns and light-induced confusion for migratory water fowl. It is not apparent how these will be mitigated.

3) Proximity to Public Lands: The Proposal's proximity to Public Lands requires that visual and traffic impacts to those lands are completely mitigated.

4) Degradation of the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park: As a world-renowned attraction, the eastern entrance via the Tioga Road should not be degraded by the Proposal which reduces the quality of the Park experience. Such development must be done in substantially less intrusive manner.

Housing is a critical need in the Mono Basin. Housing can be built which does not degrade the visitor experience to the Basin. This Proposal simply must be re-designed to mitigate the impacts discussed above.

Also, please recognize that there is an economic correlation between dark skies, natural vistas and stunning beauty of the Basin. Hence, the Proposal will likely have economic impacts.

This project for badly needed housing can be done without sacrificing the very attraction to the Basin which on which the Proposal seeks to exploit.

Thank you for your consideration.

William A. Rowe
Chico, CA

Michael Draper

From: WILLIAM RUNYAN <kc6qcr@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 9:17 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Lee Vining development

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Any of the adverse effects listed for the proposed expansion project would by itself outweigh any possible benefit. Since there are five different adverse effects listed, the proposed development should be dismissed out of hand.
William L Runyan kc6qcr@aol.com

Michael Draper

From: ann sanders <ann@annsanders.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 8:30 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn expansion

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper and Mono County Community Development Department,

I am not a local, but my husband and I are avid supporters and lovers of the Eastern Sierra, and the Mono basin in particular. This is a plea to think twice before approving the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn project. I realize that there is undoubtedly a need for workforce lodging, but I hope that all efforts will be made to mitigate the impact of the proposed expansion. I beg you to ensure that all options have been explored to minimize the impact on dark sky and of visibility of the buildings. Once the project is built it will be there, if not forever, surely for a long time. The beautiful expanse of open space is something to be treasured, and not be given up lightly.

Thank you for what you do, and for your consideration of my comments.

Best regards,

Ann Sanders

6881 Del Playa Dr.
Goleta, CA 93117
(805) 448-8702

Michael Draper

From: Karen Schembs <kschembs6@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 11:16 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: New Development

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

I come to your beautiful Mono Lake community to see the stars. It is so amazing to be under the canopy of stars without the interference from local lights that destroy the vision of the night sky.

I do hope as you make plans for further development in your community you take into consideration this beautiful resource you have. There are few places with as pristine a view of the sky as the stars over Mono Lake. Please try to preserve this treasure.

Thank you so much for you attention, Karen Schembs

RECEIVED
AUG 16 2019

August 9, 2019

Mono County CDD

Dear Mr. Draper,

The Tioga Inn Specific Plan undermines the foundation of the Mono Basin Community Plan, a collective community document created in 2012. The Mono Basin Vision states, "The residents of Lee Vining and the Mono Basin desire to build a community that preserves our quality of life, provides for diverse economic activity, and protects the spectacular natural beauty and ecosystems of the area" (p.13, Mono Basin Community Plan). The addition of 100 units of workforce housing to the Tioga Inn Plan threatens several aspects of this collective vision.

Lee Vining's charm and close-knit community lies in its size. The Mono Basin Vision states, "We strive to preserve our small-town character" (p.13). As of 2010, the Lee Vining census recorded 222 residents, meaning that the addition of the Tioga Inn housing units would double the population of Lee Vining, ruining the "small-town character" that is one of the pillars of the Mono Basin community vision. In the Values section of the Community Plan, "Small, compact community" (p.13) is the very first value. The location of the proposed housing units at the Mobil Gas Mart is outside of town and threatens to fracture the Lee Vining Community. If half of Lee Vining lives outside of the center of town, the "compactness" and "smallness" is threatened. The charm of Lee Vining community is that I know my neighbors, and that I work near them.

Lack of housing for employees is a real concern in Lee Vining, but the magnitude of the Tioga Inn proposal is far larger than what would be suitable for Lee Vining. One of the concerns in the Community Plan is that there is inadequate employee housing. It states, "Workforce housing opportunities, both to rent and buy, are needed to sustain the existing community and enable people to live where they work" (p.15). I agree that people that work in Lee Vining should be able to live in Lee Vining. The proposal to add 150 bedrooms to the existing workforce housing at the Tioga Inn is far too many to house only the Lee Vining workforce. Mammoth Mountain has already started looking at housing its workforce at the Tioga Inn. The additional housing would create a culture of people living in Lee Vining and commuting elsewhere for work. This goes against the core values of the Community Plan. The Community Plan is very clear that the existing community is the one that needs affordable housing. It states, "Housing is affordable so community members and their families can continue to live here" (p.15). The Lee Vining community wishes to remain the same size.

Staying a small community does not prohibit growth. The Community Plan states, "Growth does not necessarily mean becoming bigger; it could also mean improving what already exists within the current development footprint" (p.15). The Tioga Inn does not need to expand housing units to grow economically.

Finally, the proposed project would impede scenic values as well as un-mitigatable light pollution that would ruin the dark night skies in the Mono Basin. The Community Plan focuses specifically on night skies, stating that the Mono Basin should be "a healthy natural environment with clean air and water, scenic grandeur, dark night skies" (p.13). As a National Scenic Area, anything seen from Mono Lake is subject to scrutiny. The Mono Basin is beautiful because the lack of development—that is what brings tourists here and supports our economy. That is why I love to live in Lee Vining. The 150 bedroom housing development would threaten these scenic values.

As a Lee Vining resident, I would be incredibly sad to see this community change from small and tight-knit to sprawling and broken. I hope that the Mono Basin Community Plan will be considered as the Tioga Inn Specific Plan is evaluated. If it is followed, it is clear that the 150-bedroom housing unit goes against almost every tenet of the community vision of residents of the Mono Basin. The Mono County housing crisis should not be solved with one large development in Lee Vining. I fully oppose the Tioga Inn Specific Plan.

Thank you for your time,

Ellie Neifeld



General Delivery

Lee Vining, CA

93541

Michael Draper

From: Jenell Schwab <jenellschwab@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 1:55 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: The Mobil

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August 21, 2019

Michael Draper

Community Development Department

PO Box 347

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper and the Mono County Community Development Department,

This letter is in regard to the proposed project at The Mobil in Lee Vining.

I lived in and around the Mono basin for several years before moving away in 2007. The community and landscape will always have a special place in my heart. Since leaving the Eastern Sierra, I've traveled extensively for work, and I can attest to the fact that it is uncommon to see a proper night sky. In the cities, a person can pick out a few planets and a couple of constellations, maybe Orion and Scorpio if he or she is lucky. In smaller towns and rural areas, a few more stars and night features are usually visible. However, the night sky as seen in the Mono basin is both rare and precious.

A dark night sky is a cultural experience equivalent to visiting the Notre Dame cathedral or the Pantheon, a comparison I make with confidence after seeing all three. Each sight encourages a person to contemplate his or her place in the scheme of the world and the universe. No matter a person's background, age, and political affiliation, he or she will see a reflection of themselves when they look up at the stars.

I encourage you to go above and beyond to preserve the dark night sky in the Mono basin. Currently, I base out of Tucson. The city here implements light restrictions to aid the nearby mountain top telescopes. There are many mitigation options available to you, and I encourage you to fully explore and implement any and all options you have.

Best,

Jenell Schwab

10488 East Port Townsend Street

Tucson, Arizona 85747

Jenellschwab@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: WENDY SCOTT <wscott1995@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 1:04 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn

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Michael Draper

Dear Mr. Draper,

As a longtime donor to the Mono Lake Committee and a visiter whenever we can get up there, one of the great things about visiting Mono Lake has been the natural environment where one can look out and see few examples of human activity, including at night. Apparently, this new project would certainly interfere with the vistas people get to see, which are so unusual in our society these days, and will be highly visible from many classic viewpoints including South Tufa, Panum Crater, and Highway 395 south of Lee Vining. Even its lighting at night would interfere with our ability to see the stars, a feature of Mono Lake that brings many of us into the area and supports the town of Lee Vining. I'm especially concerned about effects the buildings and traffic will have interfering with migrating deer and other wildlife. They have a hard enough time these days with our impacts on their environment.

I hope you will reconsider and come up with a better project design, one that blends in better with the natural environment, if that is at all possible.

Sincerely yours,

Wendy & Bob Scott
3008 Willetts Way
Ceres, CA 95307

Michael Draper

From: Jack Shipley <bodiejack2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:02 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project: Subsequent Environmental Impact Report; Specific Plan Amendment No. 3

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To: Mono County Community Development Dept.

This is a project that should never happen in its present guise. The biggest asset we have in the Mono Basin is our low level of industrial-scale development. Whether you are considering our economy, tourism, safety, beauty, or our own low-stress peace of mind, the present undisturbed quiet, viewshed, dark skies, low crime, and low pollution are all unmatched, but all would be marred by this huge project. It would be a profit for a developer, but an eyesore and annoyance for everyone else, forever. Please reject this plan. Thank you!

--- John Shipley, long-time Mono Basin resident, fire commissioner, retired park ranger

Michael Draper

From: Dwight Sims <dsims@sonic.net>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 10:08 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Workforce Housing Village

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Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P O Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Mr. Draper,

As a frequent visitor over the past 30+ years often staying for a month, I have come to love the Mono Lake Basin and its pristine natural beauty. The night sky with a full moon rising over Mono Lake from Picnic Grounds Road is one of my all time favorite experiences. Another is seeing coyotes romp through the snow near the closed Mobil Station in late November. Yet another, is a massive eagle taking care of the carion on the roadside (Highway 395). This massive development will impact all of this!

The sudden, dramatic, scenic appearance of the Tioga Crest, welcoming travelers traveling north on Highway 395 as they enter Lee Vining will be spoiled by these multiple, two-story buildings breaking the skyline and interfering with this scenic, gateway view of the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

And furthermore, one of the draws to come enjoy the Mono Basin is to see the stars (and full moon) in the dark night sky. In looking at the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project I see that impacts on light and glare are identified as some of the 6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts. I find it hard to believe that there are not more things that can be done in order to preserve this special resource. I urge you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

In addition, this project will have a cumulative adverse impact to migrating deer. There is no planned immediate, enforceable mitigation that will reduce additional vehicle impacts with deer and other wildlife in the Mono Basin who call this place "home."

The proposed multi-unit, two-story construction of a 100-unit/150-bedroom Workforce Housing Village will, if approved as is, fundamentally change the experience of the wild natural beauty of both Mono Lake and Mono Basin. Mono Lake, Mono County, and the scenic highway and gateway to Yosemite National Park deserve better. Please see that this happens.

A very concerned lover of the Mono Basin,

Dwight J. Sims

Michael Draper

From: Betty K. Smith <bettysmith@mindspring.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:14 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: action@monolake.org
Subject: Proposed housing development above Mono Lake

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To: Mono County Community Development Department
Re: Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn

As regular visitors to Mono Lake, Lee Vining, Lundy Canyon, and adjacent areas, we are concerned that the proposed Tioga Inn housing development is ill-planned and especially ill-sited.

My family and friends come to Mono County every summer because we love the lake, the vistas, the hikes in and around the area, canoe trips on the lake, and the beautiful gateway drive up to Yosemite. Huge efforts have been made for many years to protect this grand and unusual lake. It would be a shame now to mar its surroundings. The proposed development will be seen for miles—a surely unnecessary blemish on a gorgeous natural resource. Has there been no effort to integrate new housing with the existing residential areas? Immediate needs come and go. Please take a longer view and do not damage this beautiful setting.

Betty Smith

Michael Draper

From: Douglas Smith <douglasfredericsmith@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, August 16, 2019 6:55 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: comments re Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I would like to briefly voice my strong concerns regarding this Draft SEIR. There are insufficient project alternatives, and therefore the very negative visual impacts of the structures as designed are not mitigated in any way. While I support the addition of new worker housing and increased visitor lodging, I am deeply worried that a priceless and irreplaceable visual resource--the viewscapes which make the Mono Basin the unique and special place that it is--is about to be permanently squandered due to inadequate options being present during this planning process. This project should not be visible from destinations such as South Tufa or Panum Crater.

As you are well aware, the Mono Basin is the hub of one of California's most scenic and ecologically important regions. I work every summer with the Yosemite Conservancy, and speak daily with visitors from around the world who share their joy at being able to experience Mono County's scenic and recreational resources. It would be a tragedy if this were marred due to inadequate, hasty design. Please delay any decisions about moving forward with this process until additional, less impactful alternatives are developed.

Thank you very much for considering my concerns,

Douglas Smith
Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite Conservancy

Nancy E. Smith
884 Chestnut Street
San Francisco, CA 94133

August 17, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Dept.
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Tioga Inn DSEIR

Dear Mr. Draper:

I am writing to comment on the DSEIR prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and related amendment. I am a summer visitor to Lee Vining and the Mono Lake area, both to hike in the eastern Sierra and to enjoy Mono Lake for its subtle beauty, its bird life, and the exquisite dark night skies it offers. From my first view of the Lake while descending Tioga Road, to evenings watching the sky darken as the eastern escarpment of the Sierra is backed by the light of the setting sun, I find it a rare and exceedingly beautiful place.

The DSEIR identifies as significant impacts of the proposed project its impact on the visual character, that is, the natural scenic beauty of the area, and its creation of new sources of light and glare (Section 5.12). Those impacts should be reduced to insignificant, with sufficient, specific mitigation measures. The final SEIR must include alternatives to achieve that result.

I hope Mono County will make the effort to protect this unique area of California. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely, (signed) Nancy E. Smith

To the Mono County Development Department,

My name is Ava Stavros, a year-round Mono City resident. I am writing today to convey my numerous concerns about the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three, the “workforce housing village.” As an individual born and raised in the Eastern Sierra who cherishes the small towns it holds, I oppose both the hotel (which was approved *26 years ago*) and the workforce housing to accompany it. Below I’ve listed the reasons why this project should not be approved. The following items of concern listed have been brought up at community meetings and amongst many residents of Lee Vining, myself included. I am extremely concerned with the already immitigable impacts that the plan addresses, yet offers no solutions to. Namely:

- **Interference with wildlife movement and migration.**

The Eastern Sierra is home to thousands of animals, some year round, others that pass through on migration. One of the animals most at risk should this project proceed as planned is the mule deer. The highways in our area are already streaked with the blood of countless deer. Building the hotel and the housing village will draw more permanent residents and seasonal visitors and increase the likelihood of more deer fatalities with the potential to significantly decrease the population of these large and graceful ungulates. Also, in the interest of continuing to bring visitors to appreciate this area, many photographers would like the opportunity to admire living deer, rather than the sad remains strewn on the roadways.

Allowing more of these bloody streaks to stain the roadways signifies that the project developers do not appreciate or care to protect these animals.

- **Impacts that both the hotel and the workforce housing village could impose on the fire services, schools, and other infrastructure of Lee Vining.**

Lee Vining proper is a town of about 150 people. The remaining 250 or so live in small communities around the basin, like Mono City, and Lundy Canyon. The housing village alone has the potential to *double* the number of people living within the town limit—and that is if we only count the number of bedrooms to be built. If this housing is

expensive, it's likely that tenants will fit as many as possible per unit to lower costs of rent. This would have significant problems for our *volunteer* fire department, many of whom are friends of mine and frequently respond to medical emergencies in the area alone. These medical emergencies include car accidents, heart attacks, altitude sickness, and dehydration, among countless others.

If we include the number of potential guests at the hotel, we face the possibilities of being grossly unprepared to adequately handle medical emergencies with our limited number of personnel and limited resources. Plus, the hotel is to be two-stories high, which our volunteer fire department staff will have considerable trouble accessing. Additionally, the project includes a *single* entrance and exit to the development, the one that is currently in existence. In the event of a fire emergency, this single entry and exit point could be disastrous if residents and visitors needed to evacuate safely. There is no guarantee that safe entrances and exits will be constructed.

Also, the local schools are not staffed to successfully handle the number of new residents with K-12 students that might live in the workforce housing. Not only do our schools not have sufficient staffing for a sudden increase of student population, they are already short-staffed, with many positions currently vacant. One of the things that makes our school system successful and effective is the ratio of students to teachers. Each student is well known and valued, and has a personal rapport with the school staff. Seasonal students and an increased number of students from the workforce housing village will negatively affect this relationship here.

The majority of businesses in the town of Lee Vining operates on a *seasonal* tourist-based economy, in which they close during the winter when Tioga pass is completely inaccessible due to snow. In light of this, what will the supposed visitors of the hotel be doing here in the winter? Will visitors merely be commuting to Mammoth and June Mountain Ski Areas to recreate, further adding to drivers on the road who likely have little to no experience driving in the snow and risking their lives and the lives of others in doing so? Will there be enough staff present to operate a larger restaurant and large hotel, or will many of those housing units sit empty? And, rather than having those

units sit empty, will the workforce housing village be rented out and subsidized by Mammoth Mountain for their own seasonal employees? (Again, adding to inexperienced winter drivers on the highways). Since the housing is intended for staff of the Inn, but also allegedly be open to community members, will community residents be evicted come spring to make room for summer employees of the proposed Tioga Inn or Mammoth Mountain? Will the families living seasonally have their kids in our schools while they're around? Each of these questions has arisen at public meetings, and Sandra Bauer had few direct answers regarding them. Most of her responses simply stated that it was not clear what the outcome would be. This eventually came off as exposing the draft SEIR as extremely unprepared for the needs and concerns of the community.

Another big concern of mine is that the landowner claimed he was doing the town a favor by building housing. However, if given the choice, most residents will not want to live in employer-owned housing for the following reasons: the housing is often completely dependent on the employment of that specific owner, and if employment changes, the employee could find themselves facing eviction and having nowhere else to move. Also, as one of the community members pointed out at a meeting, just because staff housing is built does not mean that staff will move in. If these housing units are built and sit empty, there is no going back to the open vista that once graced the hilltop. In that case, why not consider building a few private homes well back from the crest of the hill and out of sight from the congressionally designated scenic area, where community members would gladly live and the views of the Mono Basin will not be irreversibly damaged? Why not designate an area for undeveloped camping, as countless people sleep in their cars at the flagpole every summer night already?

- **Traffic hazards will be created at an already busy intersection at the base of 120 West and Highway 395.**

The project sits at the base of highway 120 west, or Tioga Pass, which is the *only* road heading in and out of Yosemite National Park from the east. There is an enormous number of visitors heading up and down this stretch of two-lane road into an intersection already struggling slightly beyond its simple capacity of two lanes and a turning lane

each direction. Most of these visitors are driving cars; however, there is a significant amount of bicyclists who make use of this route as well. Putting a two-storey hotel and 150 housing units, each with the space for 2 vehicles out front, will create extremely dangerous conditions along the highway. As a previous bicycle commuter who religiously stays in the bike lanes and obeys traffic laws hoping for safety, who STILL got hit by a car while doing everything in my power to avoid it, I cannot emphasize enough the fear that distracted drivers will bring as they come into the basin. The location for the plan provides a sudden and breathtaking view from Highway 120 of Kuzaba (more widely known as Mono Lake) and the mountains beyond. Not to mention the fact that many drivers will have picked up speed while letting gravity assist them down the steep mountain highway. This, combined with the increase in pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists funneled into a single busy intersection is a recipe for disaster, with no guarantee that outside entities (such as Caltrans) will be able to amend.

Also, the *current* lack of safe passage for pedestrians and cyclists between the project location and the town of Lee Vining is already apparent. There are no sidewalks along the busiest section, there is no easily visible bike lane, which means there is little or no incentive to save gas and walk or bike this distance. (Speaking of saving gas—we are at a time of upheaval for natural resources. The plans to create an additional gas island will only prolong our reliance on limited fossil fuels when the project could instead be supporting efforts to make renewable power resources more widely available.) This will encourage visitors of the hotel and residents of the workforce housing village alike to hop in their cars to get to town, and increase the number of cars on an intersection with little safety features, into a town that is already overrun by distracted drivers who speed through and risk the pedestrians on crosswalks. More cars on the road further endangers the resident community and any visitors who will make use of this space on their travels or their vacations to spend time here. From personal experience, I can vouch that being hit by a car is an ordeal absolutely no one will look forward to on their vacation, or ever.

In respect to the housing proposal, there is much to be said for the questionable uses of the workforce housing village. By my understanding, there is no way to ensure

that these units will truly be accessible to the community, as the landowner claims. If the units are rented out and subsidized by a larger entity like Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, there will be an increase in the population, with no valuable return, no benefit to the community. On the other hand, seasonal staff in workforce housing tend to isolate themselves, and will not be in town long enough to truly contribute anything to the town in terms of volunteering for the fire department, or building lasting or meaningful connections to the people or the unique and beautiful location in which we live.

- **Unavoidable impacts that this project would have on sources of light and increased sound.**

One of the most spectacular features of visiting the Mono Basin comes from the incredible views of the night sky. This area is one of the darkest and brilliantly celestial places I have ever had the joy of inhabiting. Not only do visitors who come from all over the world find beauty in the stars, but residents as well. As a matter of fact, one of the main things that brought me back to the Eastern Sierra after spending 8 years in the fog of the Pacific Northwest was the ability to see the immense number of stars and planets at night, in addition to wanting to return to a *small community* where my family has been living for over 40 years. We are lucky to live in a town so small that even when all the houses have the lights on, we would still be able to see the Milky Way at night while standing in the street. This is especially true for visitors who come to the area specifically to photograph the night sky. If this project is approved and carried out, the many lights of the workforce housing village, the hotel, parking areas, and the new gas island will be clearly visible from most scenic vantage points in the Mono Basin, as from South Tufa State Natural Reserve, Conway Summit, where there is a stunning vista of the open desert, the lake, the islands, and the mountains. And of course, coming down the mountains from Highway 120, Tioga Pass.

- **Irremovable visual impacts on the scenic values of the area, as well as community.**

The proposed project sits less than one thousand feet away from the congressionally designated scenic area of the Mono Basin, which thousands of people both local and abroad fought for decades to protect. Building 150 housing units and a two

storey hotel at this distance does not render them invisible. Imagine visiting this area for the first time, having driven east on Highway 120 through the stunning granite domes of Yosemite National Park, or south on Highway 395 past the open meadowlands and the jagged skyline of the Sawtooth ridge outside of Bridgeport, or north on Highway 395 in view of the Minarets, and through one of the deepest most visually spectacular valleys of the continent under Winuba (Mt. Tom) and Tumanguya (Mt. Whitney, the tallest peak in the lower 48 states). All of these routes lead to Kuzaba, or Mono Lake. Along all of these routes we find places that inspire awe in the natural world that people have valued for thousands of years. Imagine now that this view of 3-million-year-old Mono Lake, surrounded by sage steppe, volcanoes, and glacially carved mountains is interrupted by a fresh scar on the land, filled with a hotel, swimming pools, parking lots, a new gas island, and 150 housing units that may or may not ever be inhabited. The proposed project makes it clear that this location, this incredibly unique and fragile place is not the focus to be valued and appreciated, rather just another attraction to draw people where they will spend their money. The project is clearly intended to cater to the desires of visitors, rather than meet the housing needs of the local community as my previous questions addressed.

As an individual who was born in Bishop and raised in Mammoth Lakes, this project feels uncomfortably close in relative scale of full time community to development, to the Village in Mammoth where people come to take selfies and leave their trash, a place that caters to the visitors by having some sort of party every weekend, a place that gives nothing back to the community. Having lived in Mammoth with parents in the service industry before that particularly congested and decidedly elitist part of town had been built, I have watched the character of my home change so drastically so that I now hardly want to visit my family on the weekends when town will be flooded with visitors (dangerous driving in the icy winter months). It is a place where the few businesses that can afford to pay the rent sell absurdly high-priced merchandise, something that the residents will not be able to afford.

I understand that there are currently no high-end retail shops in the works for this plan, but this particular kind of “progress,” these developments have the undeniable root

in getting profit from people passing through at the expense of the location and the living quality of the locals. This proposed development is huge for our area. In this case, the location is the Mono Basin, a place where people have united across *international borders*, in spite of differences, to make compromises with each other in the interest of preserving the land.

Many people have moved here, have been born and raised here, specifically for the character and the quality of the town. Parents are comforted knowing that their children are safe playing in the quiet streets, where the few cars that pass have familiar drivers who know to proceed slowly and cautiously. The schools and businesses are close-knit, and everyone knows everyone else. There is a connection that people have developed that is unique, lovely, and compassionate. Many of the residents do not lock their front doors (some don't actually have the keys to the locks) for the knowledge that nothing bad will happen here where neighbors are caring for one another, oftentimes in spite of politically different views that would create divisions elsewhere. There is a true sense of community, of unity here that I have not experienced in any other towns where I have lived. Building this hotel and the workforce housing village would completely change the character of our home. The sheer amount of people alone will place strain on the infrastructure as mentioned previously, and it will make this small, charming, unified community suddenly an overcrowded place where folks from all over are merely passing through and giving nothing back. This does not create a stable community in which people want to raise their kids and enjoy their neighborhoods, particularly given the seasonal nature of our community that slows down once Highway 120 West closes for the winter and the question of whether or not there would even be sufficient employment to offer to the workforce housing village residents.

While there is much concern over the lack of available housing in the Eastern Sierra, the needs of the town of Mammoth Lakes are often seen influencing the development of homes and projects in other towns of Mono County. Take Benton, for example. There are limits based on how new homes can be built based on snowfall. This is clearly a regulation that is intended for the town of Mammoth, where large snowfall is

a significant issue; however, Benton does not receive nearly a fraction of the snow. Yet, residents there feel the presence of such regulations because Mammoth's influence extends well into the rest of the county. Benton is not Mammoth Lakes. Lee Vining is not Mammoth Lakes. We do not want to become a satellite town, a suburban area for more new housing being built across the street from our year round homes for workers who will only ever commute from home to work, keeping themselves separate, or even to have new housing continually out of reach for Lee Vining residents who would actually be looking for a home. This proposed sudden development is enormous for our area, which has seen very little, if slow growth in decades.

- **Not addressed in the specific plan's immitigable impacts, but of great concern is the lack of local indiginous voices heard at the meetings.**

While again considering the constant efforts to protect and conserve the land, the character of our town, and natural resources, I am reminded of a looming absence in the conversations that were had in both of the meetings open to the public. This is of course the absence of the people who have inhabited and cared for the Mono Basin for *thousands of years*, the Kutzadika'a Paiute. During the first meeting, at the Mono Lake Indian and Lee Vining community center in town, there were only two members of the local First Nations folks present sitting in the front row. When presenting the draft SEIR, Sandra Bauer overlooked their raised hands on a few occasions. When asked about whether this project (though now on privately owned land) would impact historic and meaningful sites of the Kutzadika'a, she gave a very brief and undetailed response claiming that an archeologist had looked at the site and found nothing of significant value. Was that archeologist white? Did the archeologist account for the fact that white folks have been in this area since the 1800s and that many artefacts would likely have been seen and collected before there were laws to protect them? Can anyone with any sense of conviction say that this site is not meaningful, if what was originally there has been taken away?

In my previous list of concerns, I *intentionally* use the indiginous names for some of the most widely known places, places that since white colonization of the area have

been renamed by white folks. This is a constant practice of erasure that has been going on across the United States, since before this land was called the United States of America. The very idea of “wilderness” that comes to mind to most people is proof of this. Take a moment to consider what the implications of the word “wilderness” bring to mind for you. Do you envision open, undeveloped areas, with not a single person on them? If so, you are not alone in the way we have come as a culture to understand this word. This is a common idea, that wilderness has no people in it, that the people themselves, in particular the indigenous people, have been removed from the land both figuratively and historically (more often than not violently) to create this “wilderness.” As a country we have a terrible habit to speak of the First Nations people as if they are gone. We have a terrible habit of teaching through textbooks and use of words that the First Nations peacefully stood aside, and use the past tense to refer to them as if they were not sitting directly in a room with us. There is a terrible habit of looking over their heads during the public comment meeting and never coming back to hear what they have to say...

To conclude this long list of concerns and reasons why this project should not gain approval, I urge you to reconsider. It is my sincere hope that these reasons and the sheer numbers of letters pouring into your inbox can sway your opinion in favor of continuing to preserve the safety of wildlife, maintain the character of Lee Vining and our emergency staff’s ability to safely handle issues, protect the stunning expanse of night sky, prevent unnecessary traffic hazards, and protect the inherent value of the area that a lucky few can call home and that thousands lovingly visit. We are inextricably connected to this place, and the development of this project has the potential to make irreversible change that will affect all of us.

Sincerely,

Ava Johanna Stavros

Michael Draper

From: Nick Stavros <n.stavv@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 9:03 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Letter about the proposed inn project

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern,

I am a Mammoth Lakes local and community member, having lived here as a kid and gone through Mammoth Elementary, Middle, and High schools. I now teach fourth grade at Mammoth Elementary school.

I think that the proposed Inn and expansions are unnecessary. Mammoth Lakes and June Lake already have ample hotels and places for visitors to stay. The reason I love visiting the Mono Basin and Mono Lake is because of its small town charm and wide open spaces. The nights are dark and beautiful! I think that a big expansion like the proposed project is an attempt to keep up with Mammoth and June, which makes me sad. Not every place needs to be like Mammoth and June. If Lee Vining began to have the same crowded feeling as those towns, it just wouldn't be the same.

I know change is inevitable, but I don't think it has to happen fast. Large scale projects like the Village in Mammoth offer some fun events, but they cater mostly to tourists and not residents, and it seems really difficult for businesses to afford the rent there. Once a large project like that is established, it's there for good. There would be a lot of traffic and congestion in the peak season, and probably a big empty structure during the off seasons.

Please don't try to Mammoth Lee Vining!

Gratefully,
Nick Stavros
Fourth Grade Teacher, Mammoth Elementary School
n.stavv@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: Sandy Steinman <sandysteinman@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 25, 2019 7:49 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Comments on Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment #3

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I oppose the building of the Tioga Inn hotel, workforce unit and restaurant.
It will have the following significant adverse impacts on the area:

- Interfere with wildlife movement or migration
- Impacts on police, fire, schools, other services
- Impacts associated with intersection hazards
- Impact scenic resources, visual character
- Create new sources of light and glare

I believe that this project is opposed by almost the entire Lee Vining Community and feel the county should respect the community wishes as well prevent the adverse impacts.

Sandy Steinman
sandysteinman@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: Simone Stemper <simona.oxala@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 11, 2019 10:39 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Gas Mart Expansion

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Michael Draper,

I strongly oppose the upcoming plans for the Tioga Gas Mart Expansion in the pristine gateway to Yosemite. This area is beloved for its scenic views, as a home for wildlife, a haven for people from around world to come and feel calm and peace, to backpack, hike, and enjoy the dwindling natural places we have left in America. Not only would this be a threat to all of that, but it would also be an incredible blow to the economy for the local towns, specifically Lee Vining. This corporation doesn't care about or know the workings of this special place. They should not be the ones to be stewarding business in this fragile area. It would mean loss of jobs and financial stability for much of the local community.

There is so much damage to be done to this fragile, beloved, treasure of the Eastern Sierra from this corporate expansion. The local community, the wildlife, the birds, the plants, the views, and the sanctuary of this place to so many depends on it not happening.

Save what makes this place special!

Thank you for your time,

One-time visitor to Mono Lake, which I fell completely in love with last year, and will be out there again in a month to enjoy the uniqueness of Mono Lake and learn more about its ecology.

Simone Stemper

Michael Draper

From: Ross Stone <enotsr22@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 11:40 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Proposed protect

Categories: Tioga Inn

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello I'm a Mono Paiute Indian and don't like the idea of have more people being around mono lake/lee vining. GD!
There are too many tourists as is and we DONT NEED ANY MORE.

20 August, 2019

Bentley Regehr

Mono Basin Planner

Mammoth Lakes, California

bregehr@mono.ca.gov

Dear Mr. Regehr,

I am writing in response to the Tioga Inn Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR).

Thank you for extending the comment period.

The current project consists of 150 new workforce housing bedrooms, a third gas pump island, wastewater treatment system, replacement water tank, 30,000 gallon propane tank, and various modifications to boundaries and land use designations.

I am a former Mono Basin resident and spend most of my precious vacation time rambling around Mono County and the Mono Basin.

The project as currently designed is too large, has a significant negative impact on the viewshed, and likely has a significant impact during dry years on instream flows available for Lee Vining Creek.

I concur with others that it will likely degrade Lee Vining Canyon wildlife. The restaurant already attracts garbage-eating gulls, and increased development/garbage will attract and provision common ravens thus decreasing Mono Basin populations of bi-state sage grouse, snowy plover, and other avian species.

Likewise, I agree that the project could deleteriously affect the Casa Diablo deer herd and that an updated study must be conducted before any further planning for this project. The deer suffered during the wet years from heavy snowpack and reduced availability of forage. The deer suffered during dry years from a reduction in forage. Anyone who has resided in the Eastern Sierra knows that many deer are killed by automobile traffic during fall migration. Increased human use from construction of the Tioga Inn will bring more off-leash deer-chasing dogs into the area. Dogs/cats/pets must not be allowed in the workforce housing.

During a keyword search of the DSEIR, I found mention of but no analysis of the presence of any of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife sensitive natural communities that have potential to occur in the project area. I quickly perused the CDFW California Natural Community List (see: [https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities/List#sensitive natural communities](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities/List#sensitive%20natural%20communities)) (examined on 20 August 2019) and noted potential to occur of multiple sensitive plant communities including but not limited to series:

87.020.12 *Pinus jeffreyi*/*Purshia tridentata* var. *tridentata*/ *Wyethia mollis*

87.020.21 *Pinus jeffreyi*/*Purshia tridentata* var. *tridentata*,

and

35.200.05 *Purshia tridentata* – *Artemisia tridentata*/*Eriogonum umbellatum*.

Both the project footprint and a 5-mile radius around the project must be surveyed by a competent plant ecologist to determine (and map) presence of any sensitive plant communities.

Thank you for consideration of my comments.

Emilie Strauss

Berkeley, CA

To the Mono County Development Department,

My name is Ava Stavros, a year-round Mono City resident. I am writing today to convey my numerous concerns about the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three, the “workforce housing village.” As an individual born and raised in the Eastern Sierra who cherishes the small towns it holds, I oppose both the hotel (which was approved *26 years ago*) and the workforce housing to accompany it. Below I’ve listed the reasons why this project should not be approved. The following items of concern listed have been brought up at community meetings and amongst many residents of Lee Vining, myself included. I am extremely concerned with the already immitigable impacts that the plan addresses, yet offers no solutions to. Namely:

- **Interference with wildlife movement and migration.**

The Eastern Sierra is home to thousands of animals, some year round, others that pass through on migration. One of the animals most at risk should this project proceed as planned is the mule deer. The highways in our area are already streaked with the blood of countless deer. Building the hotel and the housing village will draw more permanent residents and seasonal visitors and increase the likelihood of more deer fatalities with the potential to significantly decrease the population of these large and graceful ungulates. Also, in the interest of continuing to bring visitors to appreciate this area, many photographers would like the opportunity to admire living deer, rather than the sad remains strewn on the roadways.

Allowing more of these bloody streaks to stain the roadways signifies that the project developers do not appreciate or care to protect these animals.

- **Impacts that both the hotel and the workforce housing village could impose on the fire services, schools, and other infrastructure of Lee Vining.**

Lee Vining proper is a town of about 150 people. The remaining 250 or so live in small communities around the basin, like Mono City, and Lundy Canyon. The housing village alone has the potential to *double* the number of people living within the town limit—and that is if we only count the number of bedrooms to be built. If this housing is

expensive, it's likely that tenants will fit as many as possible per unit to lower costs of rent. This would have significant problems for our *volunteer* fire department, many of whom are friends of mine and frequently respond to medical emergencies in the area alone. These medical emergencies include car accidents, heart attacks, altitude sickness, and dehydration, among countless others.

If we include the number of potential guests at the hotel, we face the possibilities of being grossly unprepared to adequately handle medical emergencies with our limited number of personnel and limited resources. Plus, the hotel is to be two-stories high, which our volunteer fire department staff will have considerable trouble accessing. Additionally, the project includes a *single* entrance and exit to the development, the one that is currently in existence. In the event of a fire emergency, this single entry and exit point could be disastrous if residents and visitors needed to evacuate safely. There is no guarantee that safe entrances and exits will be constructed.

Also, the local schools are not staffed to successfully handle the number of new residents with K-12 students that might live in the workforce housing. Not only do our schools not have sufficient staffing for a sudden increase of student population, they are already short-staffed, with many positions currently vacant. One of the things that makes our school system successful and effective is the ratio of students to teachers. Each student is well known and valued, and has a personal rapport with the school staff. Seasonal students and an increased number of students from the workforce housing village will negatively affect this relationship here.

The majority of businesses in the town of Lee Vining operates on a *seasonal* tourist-based economy, in which they close during the winter when Tioga pass is completely inaccessible due to snow. In light of this, what will the supposed visitors of the hotel be doing here in the winter? Will visitors merely be commuting to Mammoth and June Mountain Ski Areas to recreate, further adding to drivers on the road who likely have little to no experience driving in the snow and risking their lives and the lives of others in doing so? Will there be enough staff present to operate a larger restaurant and large hotel, or will many of those housing units sit empty? And, rather than having those

units sit empty, will the workforce housing village be rented out and subsidized by Mammoth Mountain for their own seasonal employees? (Again, adding to inexperienced winter drivers on the highways). Since the housing is intended for staff of the Inn, but also allegedly be open to community members, will community residents be evicted come spring to make room for summer employees of the proposed Tioga Inn or Mammoth Mountain? Will the families living seasonally have their kids in our schools while they're around? Each of these questions has arisen at public meetings, and Sandra Bauer had few direct answers regarding them. Most of her responses simply stated that it was not clear what the outcome would be. This eventually came off as exposing the draft SEIR as extremely unprepared for the needs and concerns of the community.

Another big concern of mine is that the landowner claimed he was doing the town a favor by building housing. However, if given the choice, most residents will not want to live in employer-owned housing for the following reasons: the housing is often completely dependent on the employment of that specific owner, and if employment changes, the employee could find themselves facing eviction and having nowhere else to move. Also, as one of the community members pointed out at a meeting, just because staff housing is built does not mean that staff will move in. If these housing units are built and sit empty, there is no going back to the open vista that once graced the hilltop. In that case, why not consider building a few private homes well back from the crest of the hill and out of sight from the congressionally designated scenic area, where community members would gladly live and the views of the Mono Basin will not be irreversibly damaged? Why not designate an area for undeveloped camping, as countless people sleep in their cars at the flagpole every summer night already?

- **Traffic hazards will be created at an already busy intersection at the base of 120 West and Highway 395.**

The project sits at the base of highway 120 west, or Tioga Pass, which is the *only* road heading in and out of Yosemite National Park from the east. There is an enormous number of visitors heading up and down this stretch of two-lane road into an intersection already struggling slightly beyond its simple capacity of two lanes and a turning lane

each direction. Most of these visitors are driving cars; however, there is a significant amount of bicyclists who make use of this route as well. Putting a two-storey hotel and 150 housing units, each with the space for 2 vehicles out front, will create extremely dangerous conditions along the highway. As a previous bicycle commuter who religiously stays in the bike lanes and obeys traffic laws hoping for safety, who STILL got hit by a car while doing everything in my power to avoid it, I cannot emphasize enough the fear that distracted drivers will bring as they come into the basin. The location for the plan provides a sudden and breathtaking view from Highway 120 of Kuzaba (more widely known as Mono Lake) and the mountains beyond. Not to mention the fact that many drivers will have picked up speed while letting gravity assist them down the steep mountain highway. This, combined with the increase in pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists funneled into a single busy intersection is a recipe for disaster, with no guarantee that outside entities (such as Caltrans) will be able to amend.

Also, the *current* lack of safe passage for pedestrians and cyclists between the project location and the town of Lee Vining is already apparent. There are no sidewalks along the busiest section, there is no easily visible bike lane, which means there is little or no incentive to save gas and walk or bike this distance. (Speaking of saving gas—we are at a time of upheaval for natural resources. The plans to create an additional gas island will only prolong our reliance on limited fossil fuels when the project could instead be supporting efforts to make renewable power resources more widely available.) This will encourage visitors of the hotel and residents of the workforce housing village alike to hop in their cars to get to town, and increase the number of cars on an intersection with little safety features, into a town that is already overrun by distracted drivers who speed through and risk the pedestrians on crosswalks. More cars on the road further endangers the resident community and any visitors who will make use of this space on their travels or their vacations to spend time here. From personal experience, I can vouch that being hit by a car is an ordeal absolutely no one will look forward to on their vacation, or ever.

In respect to the housing proposal, there is much to be said for the questionable uses of the workforce housing village. By my understanding, there is no way to ensure

that these units will truly be accessible to the community, as the landowner claims. If the units are rented out and subsidized by a larger entity like Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, there will be an increase in the population, with no valuable return, no benefit to the community. On the other hand, seasonal staff in workforce housing tend to isolate themselves, and will not be in town long enough to truly contribute anything to the town in terms of volunteering for the fire department, or building lasting or meaningful connections to the people or the unique and beautiful location in which we live.

- **Unavoidable impacts that this project would have on sources of light and increased sound.**

One of the most spectacular features of visiting the Mono Basin comes from the incredible views of the night sky. This area is one of the darkest and brilliantly celestial places I have ever had the joy of inhabiting. Not only do visitors who come from all over the world find beauty in the stars, but residents as well. As a matter of fact, one of the main things that brought me back to the Eastern Sierra after spending 8 years in the fog of the Pacific Northwest was the ability to see the immense number of stars and planets at night, in addition to wanting to return to a *small community* where my family has been living for over 40 years. We are lucky to live in a town so small that even when all the houses have the lights on, we would still be able to see the Milky Way at night while standing in the street. This is especially true for visitors who come to the area specifically to photograph the night sky. If this project is approved and carried out, the many lights of the workforce housing village, the hotel, parking areas, and the new gas island will be clearly visible from most scenic vantage points in the Mono Basin, as from South Tufa State Natural Reserve, Conway Summit, where there is a stunning vista of the open desert, the lake, the islands, and the mountains. And of course, coming down the mountains from Highway 120, Tioga Pass.

- **Irremovable visual impacts on the scenic values of the area, as well as community.**

The proposed project sits less than one thousand feet away from the congressionally designated scenic area of the Mono Basin, which thousands of people both local and abroad fought for decades to protect. Building 150 housing units and a two

storey hotel at this distance does not render them invisible. Imagine visiting this area for the first time, having driven east on Highway 120 through the stunning granite domes of Yosemite National Park, or south on Highway 395 past the open meadowlands and the jagged skyline of the Sawtooth ridge outside of Bridgeport, or north on Highway 395 in view of the Minarets, and through one of the deepest most visually spectacular valleys of the continent under Winuba (Mt. Tom) and Tumanguya (Mt. Whitney, the tallest peak in the lower 48 states). All of these routes lead to Kuzaba, or Mono Lake. Along all of these routes we find places that inspire awe in the natural world that people have valued for thousands of years. Imagine now that this view of 3-million-year-old Mono Lake, surrounded by sage steppe, volcanoes, and glacially carved mountains is interrupted by a fresh scar on the land, filled with a hotel, swimming pools, parking lots, a new gas island, and 150 housing units that may or may not ever be inhabited. The proposed project makes it clear that this location, this incredibly unique and fragile place is not the focus to be valued and appreciated, rather just another attraction to draw people where they will spend their money. The project is clearly intended to cater to the desires of visitors, rather than meet the housing needs of the local community as my previous questions addressed.

As an individual who was born in Bishop and raised in Mammoth Lakes, this project feels uncomfortably close in relative scale of full time community to development, to the Village in Mammoth where people come to take selfies and leave their trash, a place that caters to the visitors by having some sort of party every weekend, a place that gives nothing back to the community. Having lived in Mammoth with parents in the service industry before that particularly congested and decidedly elitist part of town had been built, I have watched the character of my home change so drastically so that I now hardly want to visit my family on the weekends when town will be flooded with visitors (dangerous driving in the icy winter months). It is a place where the few businesses that can afford to pay the rent sell absurdly high-priced merchandise, something that the residents will not be able to afford.

I understand that there are currently no high-end retail shops in the works for this plan, but this particular kind of “progress,” these developments have the undeniable root

in getting profit from people passing through at the expense of the location and the living quality of the locals. This proposed development is huge for our area. In this case, the location is the Mono Basin, a place where people have united across *international borders*, in spite of differences, to make compromises with each other in the interest of preserving the land.

Many people have moved here, have been born and raised here, specifically for the character and the quality of the town. Parents are comforted knowing that their children are safe playing in the quiet streets, where the few cars that pass have familiar drivers who know to proceed slowly and cautiously. The schools and businesses are close-knit, and everyone knows everyone else. There is a connection that people have developed that is unique, lovely, and compassionate. Many of the residents do not lock their front doors (some don't actually have the keys to the locks) for the knowledge that nothing bad will happen here where neighbors are caring for one another, oftentimes in spite of politically different views that would create divisions elsewhere. There is a true sense of community, of unity here that I have not experienced in any other towns where I have lived. Building this hotel and the workforce housing village would completely change the character of our home. The sheer amount of people alone will place strain on the infrastructure as mentioned previously, and it will make this small, charming, unified community suddenly an overcrowded place where folks from all over are merely passing through and giving nothing back. This does not create a stable community in which people want to raise their kids and enjoy their neighborhoods, particularly given the seasonal nature of our community that slows down once Highway 120 West closes for the winter and the question of whether or not there would even be sufficient employment to offer to the workforce housing village residents.

While there is much concern over the lack of available housing in the Eastern Sierra, the needs of the town of Mammoth Lakes are often seen influencing the development of homes and projects in other towns of Mono County. Take Benton, for example. There are limits based on how new homes can be built based on snowfall. This is clearly a regulation that is intended for the town of Mammoth, where large snowfall is

a significant issue; however, Benton does not receive nearly a fraction of the snow. Yet, residents there feel the presence of such regulations because Mammoth's influence extends well into the rest of the county. Benton is not Mammoth Lakes. Lee Vining is not Mammoth Lakes. We do not want to become a satellite town, a suburban area for more new housing being built across the street from our year round homes for workers who will only ever commute from home to work, keeping themselves separate, or even to have new housing continually out of reach for Lee Vining residents who would actually be looking for a home. This proposed sudden development is enormous for our area, which has seen very little, if slow growth in decades.

- **Not addressed in the specific plan's immitigable impacts, but of great concern is the lack of local indiginous voices heard at the meetings.**

While again considering the constant efforts to protect and conserve the land, the character of our town, and natural resources, I am reminded of a looming absence in the conversations that were had in both of the meetings open to the public. This is of course the absence of the people who have inhabited and cared for the Mono Basin for *thousands of years*, the Kutzadika'a Paiute. During the first meeting, at the Mono Lake Indian and Lee Vining community center in town, there were only two members of the local First Nations folks present sitting in the front row. When presenting the draft SEIR, Sandra Bauer overlooked their raised hands on a few occasions. When asked about whether this project (though now on privately owned land) would impact historic and meaningful sites of the Kutzadika'a, she gave a very brief and undetailed response claiming that an archeologist had looked at the site and found nothing of significant value. Was that archeologist white? Did the archeologist account for the fact that white folks have been in this area since the 1800s and that many artefacts would likely have been seen and collected before there were laws to protect them? Can anyone with any sense of conviction say that this site is not meaningful, if what was originally there has been taken away?

In my previous list of concerns, I *intentionally* use the indiginous names for some of the most widely known places, places that since white colonization of the area have

been renamed by white folks. This is a constant practice of erasure that has been going on across the United States, since before this land was called the United States of America. The very idea of “wilderness” that comes to mind to most people is proof of this. Take a moment to consider what the implications of the word “wilderness” bring to mind for you. Do you envision open, undeveloped areas, with not a single person on them? If so, you are not alone in the way we have come as a culture to understand this word. This is a common idea, that wilderness has no people in it, that the people themselves, in particular the indigenous people, have been removed from the land both figuratively and historically (more often than not violently) to create this “wilderness.” As a country we have a terrible habit to speak of the First Nations people as if they are gone. We have a terrible habit of teaching through textbooks and use of words that the First Nations peacefully stood aside, and use the past tense to refer to them as if they were not sitting directly in a room with us. There is a terrible habit of looking over their heads during the public comment meeting and never coming back to hear what they have to say...

To conclude this long list of concerns and reasons why this project should not gain approval, I urge you to reconsider. It is my sincere hope that these reasons and the sheer numbers of letters pouring into your inbox can sway your opinion in favor of continuing to preserve the safety of wildlife, maintain the character of Lee Vining and our emergency staff’s ability to safely handle issues, protect the stunning expanse of night sky, prevent unnecessary traffic hazards, and protect the inherent value of the area that a lucky few can call home and that thousands lovingly visit. We are inextricably connected to this place, and the development of this project has the potential to make irreversible change that will affect all of us.

Sincerely,

Ava Johanna Stavros

August 16, 2019

Mr. Michael Draper
Community Development Dept.
P.O. 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

RECEIVED
AUG 22 2019
Mono County CDID

Dear Mr. Draper:

I write to oppose further development of the HWY 395/120 Junction area. A project as described (Tioga Inn) at this site will destroy one of the most sublime views in the world. From the upper overlook, currently in place, I have watched the sun rise and the sun set in the evening. The sun rise is especially dramatic. It is hard to imagine their experience after the proposed development is built. The light, noise, traffic, people it would bring to this spot cannot be mitigated through design improvements at the margins. The project should not be built at all. There will be no more dark sky experiences, it will all be gone forever. That is the pity.

I hope you have the vision and courage to stand against this. Sincerely, Pat A. [unclear]

Nathan Taylor

P.O. Box 373

Lee Vining, CA 93541

T 805.748.4866

sierra.grit@gmail.com

August 20, 2019

Mono County Community Development Department

P.O. Box 347

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Re: Tioga Inn Specific Plan and SEIR

Mr. Draper and Mono County Community Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan and SEIR. I currently live in Mono City, but before that I lived in Mammoth for the 12 years after college and before college I grew up there. My present life in Mono County is a direct result of the affordable housing opportunities offered in Mammoth. I owned a deed restricted condo in the Aspen Village complex for 8 years. Before that I was renting a small cabin that was expensive to rent, expensive to heat and had many issues with snow removal. Despite having a job that most here would have considered well paying, I would have had to leave the area to improve my situation. The Aspen Village unit was the reason I was able to stay in the Eastern Sierra and maintain a decent standard of living. I know and can attest to the importance of affordable workforce housing in Mono County.

The proposed Tioga Inn housing is not the kind of workforce housing that Mono County needs. The County does not need more market rate units that are promised to be affordable. The County does need more deed restricted units administered and enforced by the County. Under normal circumstances the Tioga Inn would have been required to build deed restricted units on site. Based on the numbers in the SEIR and the Mono County housing ordinance, it looks like the proponent would have been required to build 17 units along with an undefined in lieu fee. With the housing ordinance on suspension, the proponent could apply for a building permit for the hotel and restaurant portions of the project any time before December 31 of this year, and he would be required to build zero deed restricted units. This would be a disaster for the Mono Basin community and Mono County as a whole. Fortunately that does not seem to be the proponent's intention or within their ability to execute on such a short time frame. But it underscores the importance of making sure that the community is getting what it needs from this specific plan especially if there is no backstop to get it later.

The current proposal amounts to an approximately 125% increase in density. A density bonus of this size would usually be incentivized by Mono County with things like LEED certified green building, construction of public amenities and an increase in the number of required deed restricted housing units. The proposal claims intent to do all of these things, but the specific plan presented does not require them. And without the housing ordinance there is no baseline number of deed restricted units to increase from. In my eyes a reasonable exchange would be double the deed restricted units (34) for double the density. Without deed restrictions this project is essentially getting a 125% density bonus of market rate (not affordable) rental housing while offering nothing in return.

My fear is that the proponent really does want to build affordable, environmentally friendly workforce units, but underestimates the expense required to do this and will ultimately need to raise rental rates or cut corners in order to recoup investment. Or the more cynical fear is that the proponent is just trying to boost the market rate density in order to make the property more appealing to a prospective buyer, who will ultimately use the extra density in any way they like. Either way the end result is more market rate housing that is beyond the reach of the workforce in Mono County.

I would also like to point out that the design (or lack there of) in the proposal is concerning. The original specific plan at least had elevations of all the proposed buildings and a massing study of the hotel. Considering that the unit count and, in all likelihood, the square footage of the housing greatly exceeds that of the hotel, it seems prudent to request similar visual aids. Based only on the plans we have been given in the proposal, it looks like the workforce will be living in army barracks around a parking lot. I realize that the specific plan doesn't necessarily require a greater level of detail, but a better presentation might go a long way toward creating goodwill.

The list of unavoidable impacts from the SEIR would be enough to deny this application. Negative impacts to scenic resources, wildlife, dark skies, public services like schools police and fire just aren't justified for workforce housing that has no guarantees of affordability now or in the future. The proposal should be denied and the proponent should reapply with a revised plan that includes lower density, a guarantee of deed restricted units, a better project description and modifications to address as many of the impacts as possible.

Regards,



Nathan Taylor

Sarah Grimke Taylor

Post Office Box 451
Lee Vining, CA 93541

August 20, 2018

Dear Mono County Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan SEIR. I have lived in Lee Vining full-time since 1999 and I have three children who attend the Lee Vining schools (although one has just graduated from LVHS and is moving on to college in September). My husband and I both work in Lee Vining and live in Mono City. We love our community and realize that some new housing could benefit our community, but thoughtful and reasonable growth of affordable, rental units and single-family homes is what Lee Vining needs, not 100 units of private workforce housing that will visually mar our scenic community and harm our schools.

I urge you to develop new alternatives to the current proposal for a 100-unit development of workforce housing because the proposed Tioga Inn development will not actually provide useful housing for our community. It will merely build for-profit housing on top of our community. The community of Lee Vining would benefit by a much smaller number of single-story, single-family units (about 20). We do have an affordable housing shortage in Lee Vining, but the Tioga Inn Proposal will not alleviate that shortage because the proposed housing is entirely designed to serve the needs of an unbuilt hotel and restaurant. It will also result in many unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the SEIR (including deer migration, traffic, visual impacts, and safety).

Another negative impact of a 100-unit development is the impact on our schools. This is not identified in the SEIR and I request that further analysis be conducted. Our current schools are staffed by dedicated teachers, secretaries, custodians, and aides who do an amazing job of teaching our children and helping them to thrive and excel in our small schools. The family-feel and true care of our school staff could not easily be extended through the rapid increase in student numbers anticipated. The SEIR estimates 25 new students to a 51-student high school, an increase of 50%. A moderate increase of new students could be beneficial to our schools, but only if those students came with increased, continued funding as a permanent mitigation. One-time development fee funding does not pay for additional teachers. Because our schools are on a Basic Aid funding system rather than ADA (Average Daily Attendance), our school district would not receive any additional money for all the new students generated by the Tioga Inn project and would not have the necessary funding to hire the additional two teachers necessary for the elementary school, or additional staffing for the high school. This could potentially increase some of the class sizes to above 30 students and we would lose the huge benefits of small classes and the individual attention that the students receive. We are very proud of our three daughters and all of the other students in Lee Vining who have excelled academically and socially in our nurturing, small schools. We want our small schools to continue to thrive. The project plan should reflect these impacts and provide mitigation.

Please reject the current proposal for a 100-unit development of workforce housing (for a hotel and restaurant that will likely never be built) and fully develop a reduced development alternative of 20 single-story units located in a new, less visually obtrusive location (off of the bluff, not visible from Mono Lake or Highway 395). Please require the developer to fund sidewalks and bike paths between the new site and the town of Lee Vining so that children and adults can travel safely and not feel cut off from the rest of Lee Vining. If the hotel and restaurant are ever built, then the developer can request to build more workforce housing that would meet the actual needs of the hotel and the Lee Vining community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please require the developer to meet the needs of our community, follow the Community Plan, and to pay to mitigate the impacts on the community. Our county and community should not have to apply for grants to mitigate the impacts of a for-profit development. Please re-direct the Tioga Inn development to become much smaller, less visually obtrusive, and less environmentally harmful. Please make sure the project benefits Lee Vining rather than harming our wonderful small town.

Sincerely,

Sarah Taylor

To: Mono County Board of Supervisors

c/o Mr. Michael Draper, Community Development Department

Mono County

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I have been volunteering in the Mono Basin since 1994 and although I am not a resident of Lee Vining, I feel deeply about the Mono Basin and appreciate the opportunity to express of my concerns about the proposed Draft Subsequent and Specific Plan for the Tioga Inn Project.

In 2012, Mono Basin residents prepared The Mono Basin Community Plan. It describes their vision for the future of Lee Vining. According to the Plan, they want a community that preserves quality of life, provides for diverse economic opportunity and protects the Basin's spectacular natural beauty and ecosystems. The plan recognizes a future need for workforce housing but wants it to be in previously disturbed areas and where view sheds are not impacted. The intent is to retain the small town character by directing future development to occur in and adjacent to the town. The proposed project with its 100 units of workforce housing, tall and unshielded from view and separated from town by such a distance is not in agreement with the vision described in the Community Plan. It should be.

The guidelines in the Plan are also important for the experiences of tourists and those who come to Mono Basin regularly. The Plan requires that development complies with dark skies regulations. Kayaking from Navy Beach on a night with a full moon is one of my favorite Mono Basin activities. To be at the Lake and to see no light except the moon and stars is an unforgettable experience that would certainly be diminished by lights from three story units at the Tioga Inn Project. The project should not be visible from Navy Beach, South Tufa, the Tioga Pass Road or from #395 south of #120 – day or night. Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

Sherryl Taylor

P.O. Box 1638

Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Michael Draper

From: Tess Taylor <tess_taylor@mac.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 10:18 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: re lee vining

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

8/16/2019

Dear Mono County Development Department,

I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan & SEIR. Thank you for your work on this EIR. Please note that I am making these comments from the perspective of my background: I was raised near Lee Vining and love it, and I visit the Mono Basin seasonally, though I currently live in the Bay Area

The proposed Tioga Inn development is completely out of character with the current development of the Mono Basin and Lee Vining area, and would result in many unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the SEIR.

The SEIR considers a “Reduced Development Alternative,” which would reduce the housing development from 100 to 50 units, and states it is the “Environmentally Superior Alternative.” The SEIR also rejects a “No Project” alternative, which is also identified as environmentally superior. A modified Reduced Development Alternative (with a greater than 50% reduction in the proposed housing development) should be considered and recommended in the SEIR, and the project as proposed should be rejected, along with rejection of any alternatives that include 100 units of housing, including the Cluster Design Alternative and the Apartment Design Alternative. As explicitly laid out in the SEIR, there are unavoidable negative impacts with any of the projects that involve that much housing—including on deer migration, traffic, visual impact, and safety.

Reasons cited against the Reduced Development Alternative and the No Project Alternatives are that they do not meet the project objectives of providing “sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel, the full-service restaurant and other onsite land uses (page 3-5).” The biggest problem with this entire project is that objective, which justifies the scale of the housing project based on a non-existent (though approved) hotel and a theoretical “workforce” need. There is no guarantee that this hotel will ever be built (it has been approved for decades and not been built), and there is no current need for housing for its non-existent employees. Thus, we are stuck evaluating whether the housing project meets the needs of the hotel, which may or may not ever exist—we may end up with a 100 unit housing development for 300 people, more than doubling the size of Lee Vining, and no hotel for them to work at.

If this project were evaluated for what it is, a simple housing development for the sake of rental housing, the Reduced Development Alternative would be a perfect solution for providing housing on a scale that is actually currently needed in Lee Vining (in my view, housing for 30-60 people). I recognize the difficulty perhaps in changing the proposed goals and taking the hotel out of the equation, though I strongly urge you to do so—but a simple solution is project phasing. Please consider a Phased Project Alternative, where a small amount of housing (I propose 15 units) can be approved for current construction but the remainder of the “workforce” housing is contingent on there actually being an increased workforce when the hotel is built.

Please also change the title of the project to take out the word “workforce.” This title is misleading for the reasons I just explained—this housing is not contingent on a real workforce need and is really just a general rental housing development project. It is not going to be affordable housing (as stated by County officials at the public meeting in Lee Vining in July), and any regulations that residents must be working in Mono County are unenforceable. In the very title of the proposed project, the developer (and by extension, the county) is egregiously misleading the public of Mono County by using the word “workforce.” This is just rental housing, and any employed person can be housed in it, regardless of whether they are “workforce” for the Tioga Inn or not. This was made abundantly clear at the July public meeting in Lee Vining, with both the county and developer flip-flopping between justifying the project based on the hotel workforce and saying it is needed to provide general housing for areas as far away as Mammoth Mountain.

Because this proposal is not “workforce” housing, and because it is not contingent in any way on the construction of the hotel, I recommend you modify and re-evaluate the Reduced Development Alternative as defined in SEIR (a 50% decrease in units). I also urge you to consider another alternative which I’ll call “Reduced Development Alternative 2”, which would be a reduction in housing units of 80%, from 100 units to 20 units. Based on the calculations in the SEIR (100 units housing 300 people), 20 units would provide housing for about 60 people, which is much more fitting with the nature of the Mono Basin and would reduce negative impacts to non-significant levels, and would provide the amount of housing actually needed in the area, at a reasonable pace of development. As stated in the SEIR, the Department of Finance projects that the populations of Lee Vining and Mono City will increase by 52 and 41 people, respectively by 2040.

The current SEIR considers a 50% reduction in housing units for the Reduced Development Alternative. In my original comments on the draft EIR I recommended a 50% reduction from the 80 units proposed then (I proposed 40 units). In the SEIR, the number of units has been inexplicably increased from 80 to 100 with no justification I could locate in the SEIR document. At the public meeting in July, county officials and the people who wrote the SEIR were also unable to explain the justification for the 20 unit increase in units from the draft to current version of the EIR. Please include a justification in the next draft of the SEIR for why 100 units are needed instead of 80.

If it is impossible to consider this project in separation from the approved hotel plan, please consider another alternative that I'll call "Phased Development Alternative." This alternative would allow a small amount of housing development (15 units) to be built immediately, with the remainder of the housing being contingent on actual workforce need at the Tioga Inn site (i.e., the hotel is being built and more housing is needed for real-life employees, not imaginary ones).

My final recommendation is that the project as proposed in the SEIR be rejected (i.e. "not recommended or selected"), along with the Clustered and Apartment Design Alternatives, because as the SEIR clearly states, these three alternatives include significant negative impacts that cannot be fully mitigated. These proposals would forever change the character, nature, and quality of life in the Mono Basin and Lee Vining through the following impacts identified by the SEIR:

- Significant visual impacts. Any approved project should reduce aesthetic and visual impacts to an insignificant level. Visual impacts should also be considered along with the impacts of the approved hotel and gas station, and not piecemeal (the visual impact will not be piecemeal)
- Significant, cumulative impacts on deer migration. Any mitigation for this would be contingent on outside agencies and not the developers; as such, the mitigation is unenforceable and not guaranteed, which is unacceptable.
- Impacts on public safety and traffic. Mitigation of these factors likewise depends on uncertain funding and approval from outside agencies, and is likewise unenforceable and not guaranteed.

To summarize, I recommend the following to be included in the Final SEIR:

- Reject (i.e. "do not recommend or select") the current project proposal, the Clustered Development Alternative, and the Apartment Development Alternatives because they have too many negative impacts that cannot be mitigated.
- Modify the stated project goals to strike reference to "sufficient workforce housing on the project site to accommodate a majority of employees of the hotel..." Re-word the project goal to be to provide a reasonable amount of general rental housing as needed for the Mono Basin/Lee Vining community.
- Take the disingenuous word "workforce" out of the project title. Replace with "Rental Housing."
- Re-consider the Reduced Development Alternative (at a 50% reduction in housing level) considering the project as a simple rental housing development for current real housing needs, and not as housing for the theoretical future hotel.

- Consider a Reduced Development Alternative 2 in which the amount of housing is reduced by 80% to 20 units.
- Consider a Phased Development Alternative in which 15 units are allowed to be built immediately, but the remainder of housing development is contingent on actual workforce need at the site.
- Justify in the Final SEIR why the development proposal was increased from 80 to 100 units; if there is no reasonable justification, please drop the proposal back to 80.

To conclude, the circular reasoning of this proposal is bizarre, with the housing development being justified by a hypothetical hotel that has been approved for decades and not yet been built. The amount of housing requested is also completely out of sync with the character of the local community. Can you imagine a proposal that in one fell swoop doubled the size of June Lake, Mammoth Lakes, or any other town to be met warmly by the local community? This proposal, as currently defined, would without a doubt forever change the character of the Mono Basin, through visual impacts, increased traffic, and negative impacts on deer, as well as the more than quadrupling of population of the town of Lee Vining (the SEIR states that 89 people currently live in Lee Vining). The Mono Basin and Mono County deserve an honest and straight-forward proposal that does not try to justify an inappropriately scaled, destructive rental housing development with an imaginary "workforce" at a hypothetical hotel.

Thank you,

Tess Taylor

Norman A. (Tony) Taylor
PO Box 1638 – 340 Fir Street
Mammoth Lakes CA 93546
August 20, 2019

Michael Draper
Mono County Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I have reviewed much of the documentation related to the Tioga Inn (TI) proposed for development adjacent to the intersection of highways 395 and 120 in Lee Vining (LV). While some of the project has been approved over 20 years ago and now new elements are being proposed, I will share my concerns related to both of these proposals.

The project potentially offers to Mono County, Lee Vining and its residents benefits that have been sought and documented in planning documents over the last 2 decades. The potential for job growth in LV, the prospect of economic expansion in the town and the county, and the inclusion of workforce housing are features that are all potentially positive. But as the devil is always in the details I do have a number of concerns as the process proceeds.

Significant Population Increase in Lee Vining

With the amount of workforce housing that is planned for this project, the impact on LV and the County will be dramatic. Public services such as education, law enforcement, fire protection, social services and more will have to be greatly enhanced. The cost of these enhancements and other items I will mention below must largely be the responsibility of the developer and the ongoing operation of the new facilities.

While the LV Community Plan encourages establishment of worker housing within the existing town footprint, e.g. near the local schools, the community center, etc., the TI plan will create these facilities over a mile from such facilities. In addition, the hotel to be built will be a similar distance from the existing LV commercial area. This distance is more than what can be measured in feet; To travel from TI into LV by any means other than a car is daunting and unsafe. A necessary element of the TI development must be a pedestrian and biker friendly, ADA-compliant paved pathway that doesn't require crossing the 5-lane wide highway 395.

One Lee Vining Community, Not Two

Item #2 in the Mono Basin Community Plan is "Safe, friendly communities where people interact and feel connected." It is impossible to review the TI project plan without realizing that this project by its location and design will become a separate community and not readily an integral part of LV. The pedestrian and bike path mentioned above is only one means to

facilitate the needed integration. The developer and operator of TI and the people of LV will have heavy lifting to do to assure that there is one productive and healthy town of Lee Vining.

Traffic and Parking at the 395/120 intersection and in LV

TI hotel patrons as well as employees and work force housing residents at TI will, at certain times of the day, create a major traffic buildup at the 395/120 intersection that the current facilities will not adequately handle. In addition, for those who will use their vehicles to travel from TI into LV, the already limited parking available in the town will be overwhelmed creating a very unsatisfactory visitor experience.

Design of the TI hotel and other structures

I was recently in Oakhurst, California where a large hotel/apartment complex is being built on Route 41 at the north end of town. It is all too obvious that no effort was made by the town of Oakhurst or the developer to create a building that fits into the town and foothill environment. As design work is done for the TI project it is critical that the project fit into the rural mountain setting of our area. And of course, while the hotel portion of the project was approved over 20 years ago, the addition of a 3rd floor is inappropriate and should not be allowed.

In addition, because the TI project in whatever form it is finally approved will unfortunately be visible from important scenic venues around Mono Lake (a violation of the community plan), it is imperative that the developer and operator be responsible for landscaping that will shield the structures from view for visitors at South Tufa Reserve and other locations.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on some of the concerns and issues related to the Tioga Inn project.

Sincerely,

Tony Taylor
TonyTaylor8164@gmail.com
(760) 914-2085

Michael Draper

From: telliard@msn.com
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:10 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report regarding the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and the associated specific plan amendment number three.

I am a frequent traveler along Highway 395 and through Mono County, Mono Lake and the Mono Basin. I always stop for gas and food at the Mobil Station there. Through the years I have gotten to know the owner of the station, Dennis Domaille, and have been impressed with his store, with him personally, his family and all his employees. This is a very diverse group of people who have been very kind and helpful. I feel this proposed plan would be a great benefit to not only the immediate area, but the surrounding towns as well. The housing shortage for all the part-time and full-time workers from Mammoth Mountain, Yosemite and Lee Vining is a serious concern and this plan addresses it. I think it would be a huge benefit to the community. Nothing that the Mobil Mart has done has negatively impacted any views. It has created some very nice views.

It's too bad that the "NOT IN MY BACKYARD" type of people that already have housing will try to interfere with a lovely plan to provide housing to working class people who really need housing. I feel confident that Mr. Domaille would not put anything on this property that would adversely affect the area.

Sincerely,

William R. Telliard
121 Arbor Lane
Sequim, WA 98382
telliard@msn.com
360-565-6096

Sarah Grimke Taylor

Post Office Box 451
Lee Vining, CA 93541

August 20, 2018

Dear Mono County Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Tioga Inn Specific Plan SEIR. I have lived in Lee Vining full-time since 1999 and I have three children who attend the Lee Vining schools (although one has just graduated from LVHS and is moving on to college in September). My husband and I both work in Lee Vining and live in Mono City. We love our community and realize that some new housing could benefit our community, but thoughtful and reasonable growth of affordable, rental units and single-family homes is what Lee Vining needs, not 100 units of private workforce housing that will visually mar our scenic community and harm our schools.

I urge you to develop new alternatives to the current proposal for a 100-unit development of workforce housing because the proposed Tioga Inn development will not actually provide useful housing for our community. It will merely build for-profit housing on top of our community. The community of Lee Vining would benefit by a much smaller number of single-story, single-family units (about 20). We do have an affordable housing shortage in Lee Vining, but the Tioga Inn Proposal will not alleviate that shortage because the proposed housing is entirely designed to serve the needs of an unbuilt hotel and restaurant. It will also result in many unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be mitigated, as identified by the SEIR (including deer migration, traffic, visual impacts, and safety).

Another negative impact of a 100-unit development is the impact on our schools. This is not identified in the SEIR and I request that further analysis be conducted. Our current schools are staffed by dedicated teachers, secretaries, custodians, and aides who do an amazing job of teaching our children and helping them to thrive and excel in our small schools. The family-feel and true care of our school staff could not easily be extended through the rapid increase in student numbers anticipated. The SEIR estimates 25 new students to a 51-student high school, an increase of 50%. A moderate increase of new students could be beneficial to our schools, but only if those students came with increased, continued funding as a permanent mitigation. One-time development fee funding does not pay for additional teachers. Because our schools are on a Basic Aid funding system rather than ADA (Average Daily Attendance), our school district would not receive any additional money for all the new students generated by the Tioga Inn project and would not have the necessary funding to hire the additional two teachers necessary for the elementary school, or additional staffing for the high school. This could potentially increase some of the class sizes to above 30 students and we would lose the huge benefits of small classes and the individual attention that the students receive. We are very proud of our three daughters and all of the other students in Lee Vining who have excelled academically and socially in our nurturing, small schools. We want our small schools to continue to thrive. The project plan should reflect these impacts and provide mitigation.

Please reject the current proposal for a 100-unit development of workforce housing (for a hotel and restaurant that will likely never be built) and fully develop a reduced development alternative of 20 single-story units located in a new, less visually obtrusive location (off of the bluff, not visible from Mono Lake or Highway 395). Please require the developer to fund sidewalks and bike paths between the new site and the town of Lee Vining so that children and adults can travel safely and not feel cut off from the rest of Lee Vining. If the hotel and restaurant are ever built, then the developer can request to build more workforce housing that would meet the actual needs of the hotel and the Lee Vining community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please require the developer to meet the needs of our community, follow the Community Plan, and to pay to mitigate the impacts on the community. Our county and community should not have to apply for grants to mitigate the impacts of a for-profit development. Please re-direct the Tioga Inn development to become much smaller, less visually obtrusive, and less environmentally harmful. Please make sure the project benefits Lee Vining rather than harming our wonderful small town.

Sincerely,

Sarah Taylor

Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe Draft Comment on Tioga Inn and Housing Proposal:

1. Tribal Monitors

The Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe feels strongly that the current proposal insufficiently accounts for the protection of culturally significant artifacts found during the initial stages of construction, grading and other ground-disturbing activities. Currently, the proposal provides the tribe with 10-days' notice of grading or earthwork, and allows tribal monitors to observe without compensation. In the event of an inadvertent discovery of archeological resources, ground disturbance is suspended until the discovery can be evaluated by a "qualified archeologist." Tribal monitors must be compensated for their time and effort to ensure that the project proceeds, not only legally, but ethically and respectfully. These individuals are highly trained experts who represent the Tribe, educate others, and ensure valuable resources are not overlooked in the process. Specifically, the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe, Bridgeport Indian Colony, and Developer must come to agreement on the designation of the qualified archeologist. This must be decided before the initial construction for the project. The EIR is also silent on the compensation of any qualified archeologist; the Tribe expects – and would like to see made explicit – that any qualified archeologist needed receive reasonable compensation. No qualified professional should ever be expected to donate their services, which are vital to the completion of the project.

The Tribe is encouraged that the current proposal does compensate tribal monitors post-discovery of archeological resources, however the presence – and reasonable compensation – of tribal monitors PRE-discovery is equally, if not more, important. The discovery of archeological resources do not occur unless someone is there to discover them.

As the EIR notes, thirteen cultural resources properties have been recorded within a half-mile radius of the project area (§ 5.4.3.2) and 11 artifacts were encountered during the project site survey in November 2016. Standing alone, these numbers underrepresent the cultural significance of the project site area. These numbers are much lower than they would have been had these lands, which are especially close to public places, not been disturbed and searched by looters over the years.

Though the survey concludes that potential impacts would be "less than significant", the Tribe disagrees, and asserts that the potential to uncover culturally significant artifacts is high. Indeed, during the widening of Hwy. 395, not far from the proposed project, human remains were uncovered (and after a long process, repatriated to the Tribe). Additionally, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Bridgeport Indian Colony, Joseph Lent, has determined that one or more undocumented Native American Burials could be encountered during grading and excavation. Moreover, the last survey of the project site was done over 2 years ago. A new survey must be done immediately before construction begins so as to account for changes in the landscape and wind that may have revealed items of cultural and historical significance that were concealed at the time of the first survey.

In sum, The Tribe insists that Tribal Monitors be compensated at the going rate during all ground-disturbing activities. This is consistent with the analysis of Mr. Lent regarding the potential discovery of undocumented burials, and is also consistent with his recommendation that a tribal monitor be present during ground disturbance activities (§ 5.4.10). The local tribes must also come to agreement on the designation of the qualified archeologist, who must be provided reasonable compensation.

The Tribe would like to see additional and targeted support in these matters from the Mono County Board of Supervisors. Specifically, the Tribe requests that the Board develop a policy mandating the planning department to require the compensation of tribal monitors before approving any development project over a certain size.

2. Impact on Groundwater

The Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe is additionally concerned with the proposed project's effect on the watershed, and specifically the potential effect on neighboring Indian allotments. The proposed well to support the Tioga Inn and housing development is an 8-inch cased well drilled to a depth of 600 feet, capable of a sustained pumping rate of 100 gallons per minute, or 160 acre-feet per year. Neighboring the proposed expansion is an Indian allotment that has been in the family of a tribal member since the early 1900s. This family has already had one well go dry and had to install a deeper well on the allotment. The tribe is concerned that the proposed well and water usage from the same aquifer will have an adverse impact on neighboring wells.

The analysis conducted was a point-in-time examination on the effects of groundwater pumping and fails to address other scenarios with dry year, and likely multiple dry years from climate change. Further analysis is needed.

The Tribe is additionally concerned that this project's substantial well will adversely impact the level of Mono Lake and its recovery.

3. Loss of Habitat

The Tribe is concerned that the building and infrastructure footprint would be a permanent loss of habitat for sensitive plant species. This could potentially have a significant unavoidable cumulative impact for the sensitive plant species within the project area.

4. Failure to provide affordable housing

This substantial development project does very little to meet Mono County's general plan for increased affordable housing. There are many people already in the local community of Lee Vining and the surrounding area in need of affordable housing, and this project does not meet that need. This project creates "workforce housing" to provide the Mammoth ski resort and forthcoming hotel a steady supply of labor. This project is not for the benefit of the local people, but for the companies that seek to extract more profit from our ancestral homeland.

5. Paleontological resources

The EIR notes that "paleontological resources are likely to be present in numerous locations throughout Mono County, most particularly in the Mono Basin . . ." (§ 5.4.9). Given this likelihood, a paleontologist should also be involved in this project to protect and ensure resources and other items of historical significance for the Mono Basin.

6. Special Status Species

Table 5-3-1 should include BLM special status species and Tribal traditional plant species in order to provide a complete picture of impacts to plant species and habitat. As is, the analysis is incomplete and a determination of significant impacts for special status species cannot be made at this time. Special

Status Plant Species such as the Masonic Rockcress have protections. There is no mention of how the proponents plan to preserve and conserve this species for the long term. The mitigation proposed only addresses construction. A long term plan is need to protect this species from increased human density within a small confined area.

7. Noxious weeds

Each land owner is responsible for the control of noxious weeds on private property. With the discovery of noxious weeds on the property and proposed effluent irrigation, the site will be altered such that noxious weeds will find favorable conditions to thrive on the property. A noxious weed plan is needed. If the project is approved there will be hundreds of people and cars coming in and out of the property, spreading weed seed to areas throughout California and other states. Simply stating that control is not feasible given the extent of noxious weeds is not a solution to the problem. Each land owner must do their part.

8. Increased human population to area

The analysis of the effects of a dramatically increased human population is incomplete and understated. The effects need to consider the increased human density and resulting impacts not only of the proposed 150 new bedroom units but also the 120 room hotel. In total there would be 280 units available for accommodation. If one assumes occupancy at 1.5 per unit, it is conceivable that 420 people, two times the current population of Lee Vining, could be living, recreating and taxing the local and county services beyond capacity.

The 150 bedroom units are rentals only. A rental-only housing situation does not meet the local housing needs. People want to own their own home. Homeowners are more vested in the community and are more likely to create a long-term sense of belonging and care more deeply about the region and its delicate resources. A renters-only situation creates a demographic of people who may not stay for long periods of time within the Mono Basin and may not have the same degree of ownership within the area. The Tribe is concerned about the large increase of people and their impacts upon cultural and natural resources.

The Tribe is concerned about increases in looting of artifacts, increases of human-caused wildfires, occupation and desecration of sacred sites, increases of unauthorized motorized trails within sensitive areas and the uploading of pictures and descriptions of sacred objects, sites, petroglyphs, antelope traps, grave sites and more into social media sites, all of which can lead to increased impacts associated with increased visitation of these areas. There is an insufficient number of county and agency law enforcement officers to patrol and protect fragile, irreplaceable traditional resources.

Impacts to human remains, sacred lands, tribal trails/travel corridors and tribal cultural resources cannot be mitigated. The impact of this project will be a permanent loss and desecration of tribal ancestors, tribal burial grounds, sacred lands, travel corridors and tribal cultural resources. This is a significant direct and cumulative impact.

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Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe Draft Comment on Tioga Inn and Housing Proposal:

1. Tribal Monitors

The Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe feels strongly that the current proposal insufficiently accounts for the protection of culturally significant artifacts found during the initial stages of construction, grading and other ground-disturbing activities. Currently, the proposal provides the tribe with 10-days' notice of grading or earthwork, and allows tribal monitors to observe without compensation. In the event of an inadvertent discovery of archeological resources, ground disturbance is suspended until the discovery can be evaluated by a "qualified archeologist." Tribal monitors must be compensated for their time and effort to ensure that the project proceeds, not only legally, but ethically and respectfully. These individuals are highly trained experts who represent the Tribe, educate others, and ensure valuable resources are not overlooked in the process. Specifically, the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe, Bridgeport Indian Colony, and Developer must come to agreement on the designation of the qualified archeologist. This must be decided before the initial construction for the project. The EIR is also silent on the compensation of any qualified archeologist; the Tribe expects – and would like to see made explicit – that any qualified archeologist needed receive reasonable compensation. No qualified professional should ever be expected to donate their services, which are vital to the completion of the project.

The Tribe is encouraged that the current proposal does compensate tribal monitors post-discovery of archeological resources, however the presence – and reasonable compensation – of tribal monitors PRE-discovery is equally, if not more, important. The discovery of archeological resources do not occur unless someone is there to discover them.

As the EIR notes, thirteen cultural resources properties have been recorded within a half-mile radius of the project area (§ 5.4.3.2) and 11 artifacts were encountered during the project site survey in November 2016. Standing alone, these numbers underrepresent the cultural significance of the project site area. These numbers are much lower than they would have been had these lands, which are especially close to public places, not been disturbed and searched by looters over the years.

Though the survey concludes that potential impacts would be "less than significant", the Tribe disagrees, and asserts that the potential to uncover culturally significant artifacts is high. Indeed, during the widening of Hwy. 395, not far from the proposed project, human remains were uncovered (and after a long process, repatriated to the Tribe). Additionally, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Bridgeport Indian Colony, Joseph Lent, has determined that one or more undocumented Native American Burials could be encountered during grading and excavation. Moreover, the last survey of the project site was done over 2 years ago. A new survey must be done immediately before construction begins so as to account for changes in the landscape and wind that may have revealed items of cultural and historical significance that were concealed at the time of the first survey.

In sum, The Tribe insists that Tribal Monitors be compensated at the going rate during all ground-disturbing activities. This is consistent with the analysis of Mr. Lent regarding the potential discovery of undocumented burials, and is also consistent with his recommendation that a tribal monitor be present during ground disturbance activities (§ 5.4.10). The local tribes must also come to agreement on the designation of the qualified archeologist, who must be provided reasonable compensation.

The Tribe would like to see additional and targeted support in these matters from the Mono County Board of Supervisors. Specifically, the Tribe requests that the Board develop a policy mandating the planning department to require the compensation of tribal monitors before approving any development project over a certain size.

2. Impact on Groundwater

The Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Tribe is additionally concerned with the proposed project's effect on the watershed, and specifically the potential effect on neighboring Indian allotments. The proposed well to support the Tioga Inn and housing development is an 8-inch cased well drilled to a depth of 600 feet, capable of a sustained pumping rate of 100 gallons per minute, or 160 acre-feet per year. Neighboring the proposed expansion is an Indian allotment that has been in the family of a tribal member since the early 1900s. This family has already had one well go dry and had to install a deeper well on the allotment. The tribe is concerned that the proposed well and water usage from the same aquifer will have an adverse impact on neighboring wells.

The analysis conducted was a point-in-time examination on the effects of groundwater pumping and fails to address other scenarios with dry year, and likely multiple dry years from climate change. Further analysis is needed.

The Tribe is additionally concerned that this project's substantial well will adversely impact the level of Mono Lake and its recovery.

3. Loss of Habitat

The Tribe is concerned that the building and infrastructure footprint would be a permanent loss of habitat for sensitive plant species. This could potentially have a significant unavoidable cumulative impact for the sensitive plant species within the project area.

4. Failure to provide affordable housing

This substantial development project does very little to meet Mono County's general plan for increased affordable housing. There are many people already in the local community of Lee Vining and the surrounding area in need of affordable housing, and this project does not meet that need. This project creates "workforce housing" to provide the Mammoth ski resort and forthcoming hotel a steady supply of labor. This project is not for the benefit of the local people, but for the companies that seek to extract more profit from our ancestral homeland.

5. Paleontological resources

The EIR notes that "paleontological resources are likely to be present in numerous locations throughout Mono County, most particularly in the Mono Basin . . ." (§ 5.4.9). Given this likelihood, a paleontologist should also be involved in this project to protect and ensure resources and other items of historical significance for the Mono Basin.

6. Special Status Species

Table 5-3-1 should include BLM special status species and Tribal traditional plant species in order to provide a complete picture of impacts to plant species and habitat. As is, the analysis is incomplete and a determination of significant impacts for special status species cannot be made at this time. Special

Status Plant Species such as the Masonic Rockcress have protections. There is no mention of how the proponents plan to preserve and conserve this species for the long term. The mitigation proposed only addresses construction. A long term plan is need to protect this species from increased human density within a small confined area.

7. Noxious weeds

Each land owner is responsible for the control of noxious weeds on private property. With the discovery of noxious weeds on the property and proposed effluent irrigation, the site will be altered such that noxious weeds will find favorable conditions to thrive on the property. A noxious weed plan is needed. If the project is approved there will be hundreds of people and cars coming in and out of the property, spreading weed seed to areas throughout California and other states. Simply stating that control is not feasible given the extent of noxious weeds is not a solution to the problem. Each land owner must do their part.

8. Increased human population to area

The analysis of the effects of a dramatically increased human population is incomplete and understated. The effects need to consider the increased human density and resulting impacts not only of the proposed 150 new bedroom units but also the 120 room hotel. In total there would be 280 units available for accommodation. If one assumes occupancy at 1.5 per unit, it is conceivable that 420 people, two times the current population of Lee Vining, could be living, recreating and taxing the local and county services beyond capacity.

The 150 bedroom units are rentals only. A rental-only housing situation does not meet the local housing needs. People want to own their own home. Homeowners are more vested in the community and are more likely to create a long-term sense of belonging and care more deeply about the region and its delicate resources. A renters-only situation creates a demographic of people who may not stay for long periods of time within the Mono Basin and may not have the same degree of ownership within the area. The Tribe is concerned about the large increase of people and their impacts upon cultural and natural resources.

The Tribe is concerned about increases in looting of artifacts, increases of human-caused wildfires, occupation and desecration of sacred sites, increases of unauthorized motorized trails within sensitive areas and the uploading of pictures and descriptions of sacred objects, sites, petroglyphs, antelope traps, grave sites and more into social media sites, all of which can lead to increased impacts associated with increased visitation of these areas. There is an insufficient number of county and agency law enforcement officers to patrol and protect fragile, irreplaceable traditional resources.

Impacts to human remains, sacred lands, tribal trails/travel corridors and tribal cultural resources cannot be mitigated. The impact of this project will be a permanent loss and desecration of tribal ancestors, tribal burial grounds, sacred lands, travel corridors and tribal cultural resources. This is a significant direct and cumulative impact.

Michael Draper

From: Bob Tyson <rertyson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 6:11 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org; Bob Tyson
Subject: Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

I live in Bishop and I have been coming to Yosemite, the High Sierra, Mono Lake, and the eastern desert regions since I was a child. I am a visual artist, retired geologist, and Sierra Club life member.

The project documents do not provide alternatives or mitigation for the permanent impacts the project would create. I will begin with my disgust at the visual black eye this project would plant in one of the world's most spectacular viewsheds, the Eastern Sierra flank and the panorama over Mono Lake. The project as envisioned could not have been more poorly sited or conceived and will jut out, breaking the contour of the desert slopes from whatever angle it will be seen. The existing Mobil Mart is bad, but at least relatively small. This new project will dwarf that, and be in a class of its own. Residents and visitors alike deserve much better. I am aware of comments from numerous visitors I meet from Europe, Asia, and other parts of the United States who comment on the beauty and purity of the visual environment around Mono Lake. They would not be pleasantly surprised, I'd guess, to know what is up with the Tioga Inn Project, let alone to discover on a future visit that what had to them been so beautiful and precious is now reduced by the intrusion of shabby commercial architecture completely at odds with this magnificent setting.

I see no discussion in the SEIR that addresses this, describes mitigation or screening, or discusses alternative and better siting than this particular one.

My main concerns about the Tioga Inn project as presented in the Draft SEIR are the following:

- The project's visual impacts are significant, and the proponent has not considered sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village.
- The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to essentially zero with respect to the location at present under consideration.

- This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Hwy 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.
- The project should, without exception, abandon the present site altogether and seek a location out of the public eye and which does not impact, as this proposal does, the enjoyment and pleasureable use of the Mono Basin.

Mono Lake, the Gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed. The previously approved hotel and restaurant already received special Mono County approval to create permanent adverse visual impacts. Now the proponent seeks to expand the project and create significant new visual impacts that will affect highway travelers and Mono Lake visitors every day. All visual impacts should be evaluated, and mitigated, at once—not in pieces.

I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place. The current draft project does not consider the aspects I have discussed and should therefore be rejected until a viable alternative that avoids the identified impacts can be considered.

Thank you for considering my concerns with the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Bob Tyson
211 Mesquite Rd
Bishop CA 93514
Tel: 650 475 6293

dott. Bob Tyson

Docente di Fotografia
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Michael Draper
Community Development Department
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
mdraper@mono.ca.gov

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing to register my cautions and concerns about the environmental impacts of Tioga Inn and Restaurant's Amended Development Plans for the Mobil Mart site. I recommend this project not be approved in its present form without the points below being addressed and mitigated by the developer.

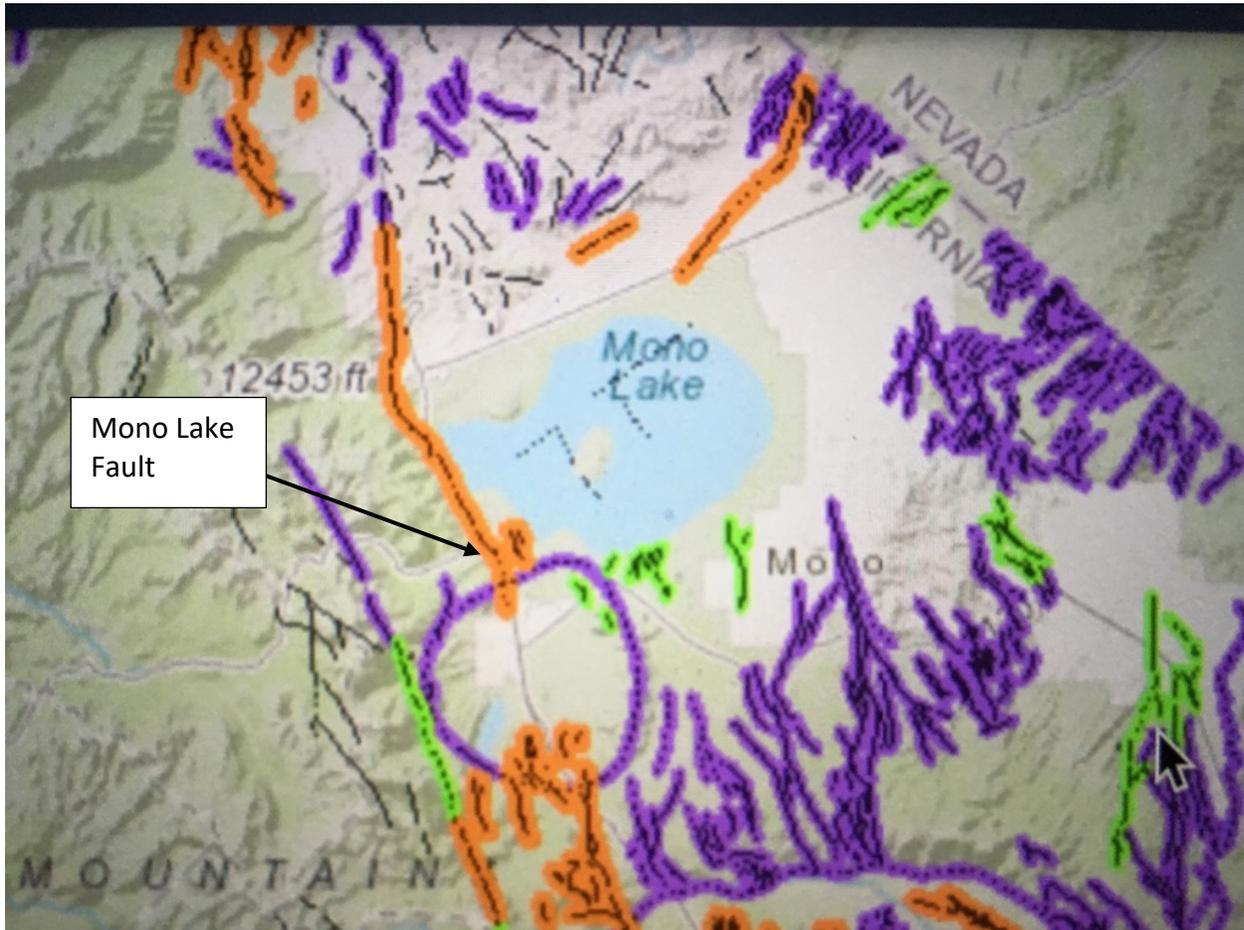
My husband and I are frequent visitors to the area from out-of-state, choosing to stay in Lee Vining for many summer vacations to be in the midst of the stunning beauty and an undisturbed natural setting. I am a geologist by profession. Mono Lake, the Sierra Crest, the Mono Craters, and the entire Owens Valley comprise an extremely rare match-up of discrete environments. This has been documented over many years, with calls to protect the area from the inception of Yosemite National Park and the National Forest lands, to the efforts to re-establish and protect the level of Mono Lake over the past 40 years.

I appreciate that the Tioga Inn developers are making an effort to provide housing for the workers at their facility. That is a perennial need in resort areas. My objection is that it appears that Tioga Inn is re-negotiating the original approved development and introducing a very large expansion of the workers' housing complex, siting it on land they have already purchased. Why does the public have to be held hostage to a plan that has numerous irreversible environmental impacts simply because it is the land that Tioga Inn already had available? It also begs the question: was their plan all along to submit the amendment to the already approved project so that it would be approved more easily?

Following are the other major reasons why I recommend this project not go forward in its present form:

In Section 9.2 of the SEIR, the potentially significant and unavoidable adverse impacts associated with implementation of the proposed Tioga Workforce Housing Project are listed and evaluated as Yes or No. I disagree with the Developer's claim in section 5.1, under Soils and Geology, that the project will not cause "exposure of people and structures to unstable geology". I submit for your review a close-up image of the State of California's published map of major documented faults, showing the Mono Lake Fault running directly along Route 395, including the area of the junction with Rt. 120, the site of the Mobil Mart (see image below). Furthermore, the listed age of fault activity on the Mono Lake Fault is Holocene, which in geologic terms means anytime within the last 10,000 years. Geologists know that there is continued faulting along the scarp of the eastern side of the Sierra. The proposed site is well

within the zone of activity and impact from such faulting. See photo of California State Fault Map.



And furthermore, the site is on the moraine structure that extends to the valley from Mt. Dana and Mt. Gibbs. Moraines are composed of a mix of gravel, boulders, sand, etc., all materials that can become unstable and create landslides during seismic activity. The proof of this potential risk is the well-documented notch in the glacial moraine just north of Rt. 168 near Bishop, CA, caused when the land on the valley side dropped about 40 feet. Therefore, the developer's claim of no risk to people or structures due to unstable geology is false. I would not put my own house there, and I would not in good faith approve the siting of the workers' housing units on the moraine.

The project's visual impacts are significant, and the proponent has not considered sufficient mitigation to screen the Tioga Inn Workforce Housing Village.

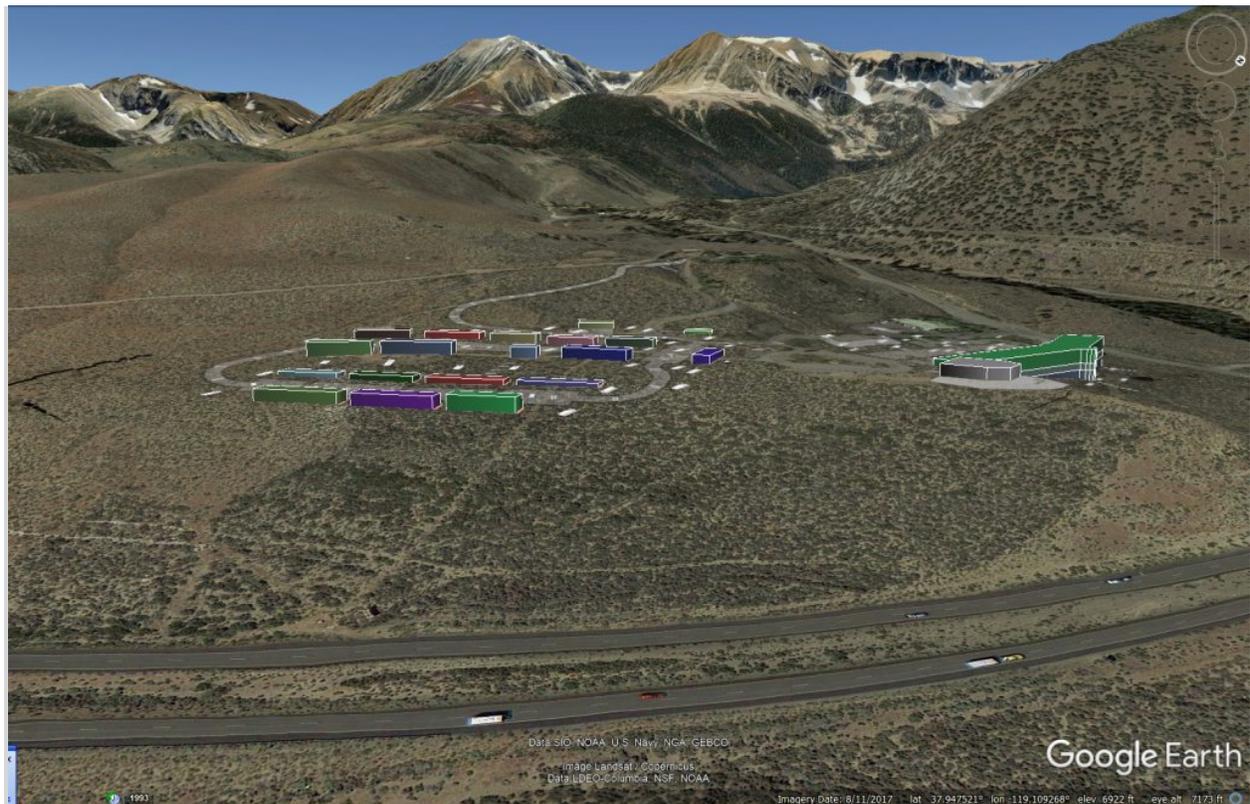
The Final SEIR needs to include project alternatives that reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.

This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction.

I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to balance the needs of the project with the unique, wild, and beautiful nature of this special place. The current draft project does not include alternatives that mitigate the identified impacts so that a good project can go forward.

Mono Lake, the gateway of Yosemite National Park, the community of Lee Vining, and scenic Mono County deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed.

I have included the overlay of the proposed project for your reference.



Overview of the project area with the proposal components overlaid. Building roof elevations are per current site

Thank you for considering the issues I have raised before permitting this project as it now stands. You can reach me for further comments at 215-247-4742.

Sincerely Yours,

Jane Uptegrove, M.S., P.G. (PA)
8021 Winston Rd.
Philadelphia, PA 19118
janeuptegrove@icloud.com

Michael Draper

From: Margy Verba <margyverba@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:27 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

I am both a resident and small business owner in the Mono Basin (specifically Mono City). Living in a remote sparsely populated rural area has its challenges, and my husband and I have often considered moving down to Bishop. So what keeps us here? Very specifically, the quiet (other than sounds of nature) and the dark night skies. The latest stat I read was that 80% of Americans cannot see the Milky Way. I am here precisely because we still can! And my constant parade of out-of-the-area visitors who contribute to our tourist based gas/food/lodging economy all comment on our amazing night skies and lack of development. I am a friendly person and end up chatting with many tourists: universally they comment on how lucky we are to live in a place with so little development and our dark night skies. It is inevitable that the previously approved hotel and restaurant on the site in question will have significant negative impact to the undeveloped, wild nature of the Mono Basin that attracts tourists. I shudder to think how much worse the impact will be of the proposed expansion.

Selfishly (I have a view of Mono Lake and I see the lights of Lee Vining already), and for the sake of our tourist-based economy, and for the sake of the inherent value of dark night skies, and for the sake of the inherent value of wild undeveloped places, I urge you to to ask for meaningful plan alternatives and to explore further viable options for eliminating the project's significant unavoidable adverse impacts, which include permanent visual and aesthetic changes to the area. Please protect the treasure that is the Mono Basin!!!

Thank you for considering my input,
Margy Verba
P.O. Box 88/652 E. Mono Lake Dr.
Lee Vining, CA 93541

Michael Draper

From: Mike Virgin <mtnmikev@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 8:21 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn

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To whom it may concern,

Hello my name is Mike Virgin and I am a resident of Bishop for 15 years and a visitor to the East side for over 25 years.

I am writing to express my support for the Mono Inn project. I realize that the Mono Lake basin is a natural wonder and is to be protected but feel this project serves a need and will be greatly beneficial to not only the Lee Vining area but to the East Side as a whole.

Thank you for your work and consideration on this matter.

Be well,

Mike Virgin

Mono County Community Development Department

Re: The Tioga Inn Specific Plan Amendment and Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tioga Inn SEIR and Specific Plan Amendment. I have been a visitor to the Mono Basin and Eastern Sierra for over 60 years, worked in Mammoth Lakes in the summer of 1972 and 1973, worked in Lee Vining for 4 months in 1979 and spent another 100+ weeks in the Mono Basin and Lee Vining for recreational, academic and professional purposes. I am hydrologist with Phd coursework in environmental planning and have worked as a consultant to Eastern Sierra non-profits and to Inyo and Mono County on water management and land use issues. I have observed Lee Vining evolve from the sleepy back-door entrance to Yosemite to a vibrant community, welcoming visitors from all over the United States and the world who come to appreciate the Mono Lake Scenic Area and the surrounding Sierra and Great Basin environments.

The multiple significant and unmitigated adverse impacts underscore the fact that Specific Plan amendment is an inappropriate and inadequate development plan for Mono County and Lee Vining, its residents and businesses and everyone who enjoys the Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra. Besides the irreversible impact of the buildings and infrastructure on the visual, aesthetic and dark sky qualities that makes the Mono Basin a special place, the concentration of people and housing will negatively impact the economy, public services and character of the Lee Vining community, particularly in the effort to provide for the public enjoyment, safety and welfare of visitors and residents.

The issue is not whether there is a need for employee housing in Mono County- clearly there is- but where it should be located so that it does not unfairly impact one community in Mono County and unduly impact the world-famous environment of one area- the Mono Lake region- of the County.

At minimum Mono County should consider alternatives that reduce the severity of the impact of the additional development. Some ideas include:

1. Lower the placement of the buildings lower down the property, inseting it into the hillside, and employing terrain screening to reduce the visual impact.
2. Work with LADWP and other private and public landowners in Lee Vining to accommodate additional multi-unit housing in the current footprint of Lee Vining.
3. Construct foot and bike paths to connect the property to Lee Vining to provide for safe non-vehicular travel between the two areas.
4. Offset the increased water use and withdrawals from the groundwater aquifer by investing in indoor and outdoor water use in the surrounding communities. Although the project water use is relatively small in the context of the larger water balance of the Mono Basin, every drop consumed and not directly flowing unimpaired through the groundwater system to Mono Lake is an incremental impact on the aquatic resources of the streams and Mono Lake itself. The developer and interested public and private

entities, including foundations, can work together to maximize the water efficiency on-site and in the surrounding communities to off-set the increased water consumption. I work with the Water Efficiency Trust, a program within the Water Foundation, and am interested in helping maximize water efficiency in under-resourced rural areas to improve water supply reliability for single-source systems, enhance fire safety, and protect aquatic resources.

The Mono Lake region is recognized world-wide as a special place for its scenic qualities including its Dark Sky and this project will diminish that special character. Mono County can do better in accommodating the need for employee housing and meeting the needs of its visitors. Feel free to contact me at 415-272-4209 if you have any questions.

Peter Vorster

Michael Draper

From: George Ward <george@georgeward.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 8:10 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: Arya Harp
Subject: Tioga Inn expansion

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Dear Friends,

This is regarding the Draft SEIR for the Tioga Inn expansion development. As a visitor to the Basin for over thirty years, I am greatly saddened by this proposal. These new structures would significantly erode the scenic views—from every direction—that make this an internationally renowned destination. I believe that this project on this hill is wildly inappropriate and would permanently destroy part of what makes this area so special. I hope the County will continue their fine work in preserving the scenic beauty of the Mono basin and reject this plan in the proposed location.

Sincerely,

George Ward

[GEORGE WARD](#)

415.488.7188 | george@georgeward.com | georgeward.com
524 San Anselmo Avenue, Suite 209, San Anselmo, California 94960

“God bless America. Let's try to save some of it.”

~ Edward Abbey

Michael Draper

From: Wilma Wheeler <wilma88bryce@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 9:17 AM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Proposed Tioga Inn Development

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Dear Michael Draper,

Please accept my comments on the proposed Tioga Inn Development. This is a very big proposed development especially in view of where it is adjacent to Mono Lake, the small town of Lee Vining and open land. As proposed I fear it will stand out like an eyesore. Does our scenic area deserve this, especially at the Eastern Sierra gateway to Yosemite Park, a world treasure and magnet for millions of visitors?

This proposed development would be visible from visitor attractions such as Panum Crater, South Tufa, and Highway 395. I don't want that for our visitors and residents.

The night sky would no longer be dark for maximum enjoyment of stars nearby.

As proposed, this development would also affect wildlife, especially the deer migration.

Has the impact on Lee Vining been considered? The schools could be overwhelmed by the additional population growth. This would be like plopping down a small city in the middle of undeveloped land except the impact on the nearby town would be great as this small city would not be self-contained and would need additional services.

There is a significant problem in California now with with the increase in wildfires. Spreading development outside of cities makes protection from wildfires much more costly and dangerous. Consider the current fire near Mono Lake and how much more difficult control would be with a significant development and population adjacent.

Certainly, better planning could mitigate some, if not all, of the troublesome aspects of this proposed development. I ask that this proposal be sent back to address the negative impacts that would affect residents and tourists.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Wilma Wheeler
PO Box 3208
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
760 934-3764

Michael Draper

From: Judy Mason-White <maswhite@sonic.net>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 5:02 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

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Dear Mono County Community Development Dept,

As a 30+ year visitor to the East Side of the Sierra I am very concerned about the Tioga Inn Draft SEIR, specifically, the Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the "Tioga Inn Project and associate Specific Plan Amendment Number Three."

Mono Lake, Lee Vining and the Tioga Pass area hold a very dear place in my heart. No summer is complete without a visit to go kayaking on Mono Lake, camping, backpacking and simply enjoying the serene beauty of this ecosystem. My worry is that this proposed housing project (along with the approved hotel) will forever change the area... and NOT for the better! The visual impact, the adverse effect on wildlife and migration and the light pollution this project will create are all impacts on the area that your department should be very concerned about. You all need to take the time and effort to make sure that whatever plan is approved mitigates all these problems. There is plenty of science, innovative design and creativity out there to draw upon to create a more environmentally sound plan.

The community you represent is so fortunate to live in such an amazingly beautiful place. Mono Lake, Mono Basin, Yosemite National Park, and the community of Lee Vining deserve a better project design than the one currently proposed. As professionals, you all must know development in the Mono Basin should be done in an environmentally conscientious and sensitive manner. It saddens me that by not trying to do better and approving this plan, generations to come will never be able to experience the beauty of Mono Basin as I have.

Respectfully yours,
Judy Mason-White
P.O. Box 3382
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95402

Michael Draper

From: Lane White <lane314@icloud.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2019 2:09 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

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Mono County Community Development Department,

Please consider a compromise that would serve the needs of the Tioga Inn Project while limiting environmental impact in this area. In Mono County where residents, visitors and other businesses already respect their surroundings I encourage you to find a solution that would limit the infringement on an already fragile environment.

This project should not be visible from South Tufa or Highway 395 south of the Tioga Pass junction. Light pollution should not be allowed as seen from anywhere around Mono Lake.

Thank you,

Lane White
California resident and frequent visitor to Mono County

August 18th, 2019

It saddens us/me to see that a project like this is even in the works. The mono basin is a beautiful serene; untroubled, peaceful place.

To see it overrun by motor vehicles, motor homes, off road vehicles, people from all over the world... breaks my heart. Not just that but all the trash, human feces, bear traffic, and on and on that will pollute our land and waters is of great concern. We love Lee Vining, Mono Lake, June Lake, TPR, Mt. Dana, the entrance to Yosemite... and want to see it unclogged. To be honest, waiting at the entrance "EAST" station over the past 10 years has sometime been a wait of 30 minutes to get to Tuolumne. Yuck. We love our mountains. I am here to support you

RECEIVED

AUG 23 2019

Mono County CDD

Hello Michael Draper,

My name is Shelley White & I am just writing you & the CDD of my concern for the Mobil Station expansion, in Lee Vining, CA.

My concern is over use, over population of your darling town. Hwy 120 through Tioga Pass is already to impacted... We have been staying at T.P.R since 1961, every year since I was 2 years old. (Sorry it's closed due to the heavy snow 3 winters ago ☹) So now our family stays in Mammoth & June. We still enjoy the high-country hiking, fishing, peak climbing & rock climbing, biking, running... etc... What we are concerned about is the traffic and all the tourists the Mobil-Expansion will draw.

P.S. I just read It's for work force
Housing...
oh my - can you believe how
clogged I20 will be
in the summer?
Yug...



Thanks for taking time to read my
thoughts...

I appreciate what ever you
and your team are doing to
STOP this from happening.

From my T.P.R. ♡ heart

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Skellely White ~



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Climb high. Climb far.
Your goal, the sky.
Your aim, the star.

-Anon.

Michael Draper

From: Mary Jane Wilder <mjwilder@stanford.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 4:25 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Draft SEIR Tioga Inn

Categories: Tioga Inn

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Dear friends,

The value of the area around Mono Lake exceeds any dollar amount. The Eastern Sierra is among my favorite places on the planet. A former Midwesterner relocated to California, I am writing to express my concern for any development in the Tioga/Highway 395 area, and particularly any beyond what may have already been approved.

History has taught us that use of natural resources has consequences beyond what is expected. I beg the Mono County Community Development Department to consider strong science, impact on surrounding ecosystems, and all stakeholders, present and future, before you commit to any decisions. Make choices that the children of the future will thank you for!

With great respect,
Mary Jane

Mary Jane Wilder
Natural Capital Project | [Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment](#)
327 Campus Drive, Bass 123, Stanford, CA 94305
Office Phone & Fax: 650.736.6194 | Cell: 816.405.0099
<https://naturalcapitalproject.stanford.edu>

Pioneering science, technology, and partnerships that enable people and nature to thrive.

Michael Draper

From: David Wilkins <davegwilkins@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 11:55 AM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Comments on DSEIR for Tioga Inn Project

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I enjoy visiting Mono Lake to photograph the natural beauty and especially night photography. There are few truly dark sky areas left in California and Mono Lake is one of the best. I am concerned that one of the adverse impacts is light pollution from this project. Dark skies cannot be reclaimed once they are gone. Steps need to be taken to preserve the dark skies in this area. In addition sunset shots taken from the South Tufa area would include this project so I am concerned about the potential for visual pollution.

I urge Mono County to make additional efforts to ensure that the effects of this project do not create permeant adverse effects on the dark skies and/or visual pollution.

Sincerely,

David Wilkins
43046 Sachs Dr.
Lancaster, CA 93536

Michael Draper

From: Erin Wilson <wilson.erin00@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 12:54 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: regarding Tioga Inn Draft SEIR

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Dear Mono County Community Development Department:

I am writing a personal letter to comment on the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report that has been prepared for the proposed expansion of the Tioga Inn Project and associated Specific Plan Amendment Number Three.

I am a recreational photographer who recently discovered that magic of Mono Lake and the incredible, precious resource of dark night skies at Mono Lake. I live in the San Francisco Bay Area and have been searching for dark night skies to view and photograph night stars. My search has taken me to designated dark sky locations including Anza Borrego/Borrego Springs and Joshua Tree National Park. Nothing compares to the dark skies at Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park.

The designated dark sky locations I noted at Anza Borrego/Borrego Springs and Joshua Tree National Park suffer from significant light pollution from distant locations. Mono Lake is shielded from that distant light by the natural barriers of mountain ranges. In addition, the less densely populated areas of Mono County generate minimal light at night in the basin. The proposed development will add a significant amount of ambient light into the area. The location of the proposed development is concerning as the light generated will generate a glow that will erode night photography in the Mono Lake area. The ambient light generated by this proposed development could also impact possibly night photography along Tioga Road and Far Eastern Yosemite.

The dark night skies are a vanishing resource; many individuals have not seen the Milky Way with their own eyes. Preservation of these resources is key.

The geographic features of the Mono Lake area make Mono County a world class destination for dark sky viewing and night photography. Introducing more light at night will degrade this resource. As the Draft SEIR notes, the impact of light and glare are identified as some of the 6 significant unavoidable adverse impacts. I find it hard to believe that there aren't more things that can be done to preserve this special resource and urge you to require the applicant to come up with a project that takes further mitigation into account and not change people's opportunity to experience the precious night sky.

On a personal note, having discovered the wonderful dark sky resource at Mono Lake, I have visited Lee Vining and Mono Lake multiple times. Each time I've stayed in and conducted business with Lee Vining merchants. If the dark skies are eroded, I will take my tourist dollars elsewhere as I search for dark skies and likely remove Mono County from my frequent travel list.

Please protect the night skies and photographic opportunities of this precious resource. Thank you for considering my concerns with the expansion of the Tioga Inn project.

Sincerely,
Erin Wilson
3061 Windmill Canyon Drive
Clayton, CA 94517
Wilson.erin00@gmail.com

Michael Draper

From: Gordon Wing <gordonwing1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2019 1:09 PM
To: Michael Draper; arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn project

Categories: Tioga Inn

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M. Draper,

I'm writing to express my concern over the scale of the Tioga Inn project that will have significant impact on the Mono Lake Basin.

As a photographer and night sky fan it's so nice to see the sky in a way that's not possible where I live. I'd hate to see that significantly impacted. There are communities that have taken steps to lessen the impact of lights.

Visiting Mono Lake is a special treat that shouldn't be marred by a large commercial property's visual growth.

I realize that there will be a project in some form but I hope that a good faith effort to mitigate its significant impacts will be made/required.

respectfully, gordon wing

Lynn R. Wunderlich
2035 Union Ridge Rd.
Placerville, CA. 95667
wunderlichlynn@gmail.com

Michael Draper

Community Development Department
PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA. 93546

August 16, 2019

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing to urge you to request revisions to the Tioga Inn Project development so that it does not adversely impact the unique beauty of the 395 scenic highway corridor. I live and work in Placerville, but I travel to the east side of the Sierra several times every year for recreation. I spend time (and money) in Mono Lake, Lee Vining, Mammoth Lakes, Yosemite-Tioga Pass and the unique camping and hiking areas along the 395 and 120. I love the region for its natural beauty that is celebrated by many.

I would be appalled to do my favorite drive only to see an ugly new development. Panum Crater is one of my favorite vistas. I am a hobbyist painter and I spend hours looking at the Mono craters from several views. I also go to the region to view the night sky unadulterated from lights, and to see the wildlife and birds. The whole feel of the region would change dramatically, in a distasteful way, if this project goes forward as currently planned.

I understand that communities need affordable housing. But this project can be revised to protect the tourism and environmental quality the region benefits from.

Sincerely,
Lynn Wunderlich

Michael Draper

From: Jeff W. <jeffwyneken@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 11:48 PM
To: Michael Draper
Subject: Public comment: Tioga Workforce Housing DSEIR

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Draper,

I am writing in strong opposition to the proposed “Workforce Housing” Project at the Tioga Gas Mart. The only alternative I support is “No Action.” I also oppose the addition of a new gas tank and expanded parking area, and related projects.

I have been a homeowner in the Mono Basin for 25 years, and a frequent visitor since 1980.

The construction of homes accommodating 300–400 new residents in Lee Vining would triple or quadruple the population of the town, with overwhelming harm to the community, to the Mono Lake National Scenic Area, and to the Yosemite portal. Further, new residents would have essentially no local employment opportunities once this and related projects are built out.

* **Services.** The Lee Vining fire chief has recently stated, in contradiction to the developer’s recent remarks, that community fire services would be totally inadequate to support this level of population and structural expansion. This would endanger the entire community, which has endured several wildfires over recent years.

Further, impacts on traffic congestion and safety in and out of Lee Vining from this site would likely be unsupportable and therefore hazardous to life and property.

Any statements from the developer about augmenting traffic amenities or increasing fire services would be, and are, meaningless without prior formal planning, regional authorization, community buy-in, and *secured, guaranteed funding*.

* **Resources.** Lee Vining and the Project site are contiguous with the Mono Lake National Scenic Area, which is defined and defended in part by its natural, undisturbed state and related scenic and natural-resource values. These resources would be impacted and irreparably compromised by a significant increase in build-out and population in our small community, especially as this project constitutes sprawl outside the main town.

What’s more, as water is a critical, defining, and highly limited resource on which the health and sustainability of Mono Lake—its ecosystems, habitats, and scenic values—depend, the

no-doubt greatly increased demand on public water usage would be in direct violation of the intent of the Scenic Area's mandate of preservation and protection.

The community, and especially the 120/395 junction at the Project site, is a gateway to Yosemite National Park; the expansion project—building an entirely new, and much larger, community here—would lead to the problems that are rife in national park gateway communities throughout the country. See <http://plannersweb.com/1999/04/gateway-communities/>:

“[Gateway communities] are also portals to our most cherished landscapes. Indeed, they define the park experience for many visitors. Gateway communities are also ‘ground zero in the struggle between haphazard development and planned growth.”

The present expansion Project at Tioga Gas Mart, expanding the population of the town by three or four times, is without question “haphazard.”

* **“Workforce.”** Lee Vining is not a bedroom community for Mammoth Lakes, the most likely place where jobs may be found in the county. Building housing here to support a distant job market is the worst sort of wasteful and destructive sprawl and urbanization, experienced all over the state. Must we join that sorry club?

In fact, Mammoth Lakes is in dire need of affordable housing. Mammoth is where such projects should be located, and where there is infrastructure to accommodate it. A recent *Mammoth Times* article highlighted this problem:

“The Town’s [Mammoth Lakes] 2018 workforce housing needs assessment identified a shortage of 250 units. By 2024, the shortage will increase to well over 500 units. Living in cars and vans isn’t a solution, nor is busing employees to Bishop.” I’ll add Lee Vining in the present case.

If jobs in our community are being considered, then new job opportunities in Lee Vining should go first to local residents, who are already underemployed. Jobs to build the homes of the workers themselves would of course be temporary, and would lead inevitably to a population of unemployed residents. (This pertains too to jobs constructing related buildings mentioned in the proposals.)

The permanent job market in Lee Vining is unable to support this population growth. To make matters worse, business and employment in this area dry up drastically for about half the year (as everyone knows) when the passes are closed and when tourist and other business is dead.

The new community would be a further strain on an already hard-pressed local economy. The jobs simply aren’t here (and 300-400 new residents won’t find jobs at a new motel or gas island—if that is being floated).

* **Conclusion.** This proposal has overwhelming impact potential on the stability and resources of our small community, on public safety, and on the world-class unique scenic and natural values of the Mono Lake area and Yosemite National Park, both of which are under federal protection.

Something of this scope and impact *must* have far more county/regional planning, coordination with state and federal agencies, genuine assurance of expanded services and infrastructure, and consideration of alternatives. The voters and taxpayers of this county and community deserve that.

Thank you for considering these remarks.

Jeffrey Wyneken
PO Box 201
Lee Vining CA 93541

Michael Draper

From: irwin zim <irwinzim@prodigy.net>
Sent: Sunday, August 18, 2019 3:04 PM
To: Michael Draper
Cc: arya@monolake.org
Subject: Tioga Inn

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Attention Michael Draper

Please make a major effort to effectively screen the proposed Workforce Housing Village and preserve the

visual ambiance of this very special place.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.

Irwin D. Zim, M.D.