

Meadows purchases Cooper Spur

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by Dave Leder

Parkdale – The cozy backyard ski resort known as Cooper Spur got a big lift this week when Meadows Development Corp. announced it has agreed to purchase the single rope tow, single T-bar snow park.

Meadows North, LLC signed an agreement with EcoSpur, LLC over the weekend to acquire Cooper Spur Ski Area for an undisclosed amount – Meadows' second major purchase this year after acquiring the Inn at Cooper Spur in July.

Meadows vice president Dave Riley helped broker the deal for the 50-acre ski resort on the northeast side of Mt. Hood, and although the new lift won't actually appear until summer of 2002, he said Meadows' influence will be immediate.

"The support and assistance Mt. Hood Meadows will lend to Cooper Spur will be noticeable for day one this year," he said. "We are very excited to assume responsibility for Cooper Spur and look forward to creating a fun, family-oriented resort that is more affordable."

Riley said EcoSpur owner Coco Yackley contacted him two weeks ago about a possible sale of the 74-year old resort. Both parties believed a change in ownership would benefit the ski area, and finalized the details last weekend.

"I believe this transaction is in the best long-term interest of the ski area," Yackley said. "I'm most interested in assuring Cooper Spur's stability and future for the community, and Meadows has the resources and experience to enhance the resort."

Today, Cooper Spur Ski Area consists of one rope tow and one T-bar, along with about 50 acres of developed ski terrain. Riley said upgrading Cooper Spur will be a multi-step process, but Meadows has already implemented some changes for this year.

In addition to providing a state-of-the-art grooming machine, Meadows also plans to upgrade the ticketing and rental facilities and provide all-new rental equipment by opening day in mid to late December.

They also plan to replace the T-bar with a chairlift next summer and consider options for the 1,400 acres of Forest Service permit land attached to Cooper Spur.

"We're considering many alternatives right now," Riley said. "We will be putting together a master plan for the next 15 years, but we have to evaluate everything to decide on the best long-term plan before moving ahead."

Despite all the present and future changes, Riley said Meadows will adhere to the same basic principles which have made Cooper Spur a haven for Gorge-area families since 1927.

"We want to enhance a friendly, family experience and offer a relatively cheap alternative," he said. "We have the opportunity to create something very special that the residents of Hood river County and the Gorge community can really call home."

Riley said his company plans to manage Mt. Hood Meadows and Cooper Spur independently of one another and would not link the two business plans.

"Our strategy for Cooper Spur is quite different from Meadows," he said. "We do not intent to create another Mt. Hood Meadows in our own backyard to complete with ourselves."

When asked whether the two ski areas might one day be combined, Riley said it was "too soon to say", but he did talk about long-term plans for Cooper Spur's slopes.

"We want to think about components of a master plan while we operate the ski area this winter," he said. "I'm sure we'll learn a great deal talking to the people who have been using the area for so long, as well as studying the topography".

Yackley purchased Cooper Spur in 1999 and added a tubing area while renewing a focus on snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and junior ski racing in a family environment. Riley would like to continue and contribute to the tradition at Cooper Spur.

"Coco had some really good ideas and cares deeply about the role of Cooper Spur in the lives of local residents," he said.

"We want to emphasize a variety of activities – skiing, snowshoeing, cross-county skiing, snowboarding, tubing... and the occasional snowball fight."