

Meadows triggers zone study

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By RaeLynn Gill

Mt. Hood Meadows, Ltd., has triggered the process of mapping of sites eligible for destination resorts within Hood River County.

On Monday, county planners received the formal request for that work, along with a \$8,300 reimbursement offer. By policy, the county must now undertake the review that will determine whether all or part of Meadows private land in the vicinity of Cooper Spur meets the criteria of the state's Goal 8 land-use planning regulations.

Dave Riley, Meadows vice-president and general manager, said the county has also been notified that a development proposal will be arriving at a later date. However, he said the design and scale of that project have not yet been decided and will be based on the results of the mapping process.

"We are in a listening mode right now. We have thrown out a few concepts in order to generate some local feedback, and we have considered numerous alternatives in-house, but we have not decided upon a final plan, on what land it will be located, or exactly what uses will be included," said Riley.

Mike Benedict, county planning director, has hired the Portland consulting team of Cogan, Owens, Cogan to conduct the study of potential destination resort sites. He said those experts will take about one month to complete the survey of county properties that, by law, must exclude the following areas:

- * Land within 24 air miles of the Portland Metro, Salem and Eugene-Springfield urban growth boundaries.
- * Sites with 50 or more contiguous acres of unique or prime farm land.
- * Land within three miles of a concentration of high value crop areas.
- * Parcels within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.
- * Sites mapped by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as especially sensitive big game habitat.

"The county has already identified destination resorts as a preferred strategy in its adopted Economic Development Action Plan, and has approved Goal 8 destination resorts on F1 and F2 forest lands as a conditional use," said Riley. "We believe Hood River County should follow through with the Goal 8 process which would identify those areas in the county that meet siting requirements."

If the land Meadows owns does not meet the siting criteria for a Goal 8 destination resort,

Benedict said Meadows can still apply to have the development under the more difficult Goal 2 exception process.

Riley said the Bandon Dunes Resort in Coos County was recently approved under the Goal 2 process because it met the requirements except that it was located across a state highway from cranberry bogs.

"If Meadows were to apply under a Goal 2 exception like Bandon Dune did, then the siting requirements of Goal 8 are not applicable and we would not be constrained by them," said Riley. "Goal 2 would also allow us to propose a larger resort so this is an interesting situation because we may be in a position of deciding to scale back or expand the area and uses of a resort proposal based on the outcome of the mapping process."

Benedict said the draft map and ordinance will be reviewed by the Hood River County Commission in a legislative hearing, although he has not yet set a date for that forum.

Meanwhile, Riley is inviting county citizens to share their ideas about what the resort should look like and offer in terms of entertainment and lodging.

He said five informal community meetings have already been held and he has received numerous e-mails, letters and phone calls with suggestions. Residents interested in commenting may reach Riley by calling (503) 337-2222, ext. 259, or by email at driley@skihood.com.