

HOOD RIVER NEWS

Map change favors Meadows

Ski company land gains footing on revised county resort map

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By RaeLynn Gill

A revision to Hood River County's inventory of possible destination resort sites is goodnews for Mt. Hood Meadows, Ltd.

But the Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition, opponents of large-scale development in the forest zone, are "very curious" about why the changes were made after Meadows complained – especially when the public was never given the opportunity to first review the map and supporting documents.

"It is worrisome to the Coalition that this is supposed to be a public process and these are public documents that should have been released, but have not been, and we'd like to know why," said Heather Weinstein, spokesperson.

Mike Benedict, county planning director, said the public will have ample opportunity to scrutinize and comment on the materials submitted by the Portland consulting firm of Cogan, Owens, Cogan. However, he said the first mistake on the map has underscored the need for his staffers to review the information before it is released to correct any further technical problems.

"We're reviewing the map parcel by parcel to ensure its accuracy," said Benedict. Corrections to the draft map have added about 75 acres of the 155-acre Cooper Spur Inn property that Meadows purchased in July of 2001. Benedict said the change was made after the company pointed out that several of its tax lots had been left off the first document unveiled in mid-November.

Dave Riley, Meadows general manager, believes that oversight was an "honest mistake" since the Portland consulting firm was looking at old maps that incorrectly showed 320 acres of private land as U.S. Forest Service property in the Cooper Spur area. Benedict said the draft map, and proposed land-use ordinance, will be made available to citizens about 30 days before the formal review by the Planning Commission on Jan. 22. The time and location of that public hearing will be advertised at a later date.

Several weeks ago, Meadows was told that its private Parkdale property did not make the cut of forest parcels meeting state Goal 8 planning rules for a destination resort. At that time, Riley said Meadows would seek a development under the Goal 2 state exception process. He said although it was more arduous to get projects approved under the zone change, there was much more flexibility for the design and scale of construction. "For several reasons we believe that whether our land falls underneath Goal 8 or Goal 2, the Cooper Spur area is clearly the best place in the county to expand a destination resort," said Riley.

For example, he said the current Inn is an existing Goal 2 approved destination resort and 50 units of overnight housing already exist in the Cooper Spur area. In addition, Riley said the land-use

pattern for recreation and resort activities have already been established in that vicinity and adequate road capacity for access is available. He also said conservation easements can be used to protect the Crystal Springs watershed location and wildlife corridors.

"I realize that some people want to see an application right now, but we want to take the necessary time to plan this correctly," Riley said.

In July, Meadows made the formal request that triggered a mapping process and paid the \$8,300 fee for the consultants. However, Benedict issued a clear directive while the study was underway that Cogan, Owens, Cogan was to have no communication with Meadows or the team would be fired.

The county's new draft map also identifies three other timbered properties that have met the Goal 8 destination resort requirements.

One parcel lies on the southeast side of the county line and is primarily owned by Longview Fibre Company. The second is largely an SDS Lumber Company holding near Lost Lake and the third is county forest near Kingsley Reservoir.