

HOOD RIVER NEWS

**County readies resort map for public review**

**Inventory of eligible development sites will be looked at during Jan. 22 Hearing**

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By RaeLynn Gill

The Hood River County Planning Commission gave the nod Wednesday to open up the draft map of destination resort sites for public scrutiny.

Following a two-hour worksession, the commission accepted the materials prepared by the Portland consulting team of Cogan, Owens, Cogan, with collaboration by planning staffers. The inventory of resort sites will now be dissected by the Commission in a legislative hearing at 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 22 in the Gorge Room at the Hood River Inn.

County planners and consultants will spend the interim time researching whether possible sites within the Mt. Hood National Forest should also be listed.

These officials will also pinpoint the definition of a commercial farm since state law prohibits resorts to be constructed within three miles of a concentration of high value crops.

Even though no public testimony was allowed at Wednesday's forum, about 25 people attended to quietly watch the proceedings. They included Dave Riley, general manager of Mt. Hood Meadows, Ltd., and Heather Weinstein, chief spokesperson for the Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition.

Meadows has about 70 acres of its private Cooper Spur Mountain Resort property included on the draft map. In July the company requested the formal mapping process and paid the \$8,300 fee for that work. However the consultants were warned not to have any communication with Meadows during the development of the inventory or they would be fired.

Shortly after the mapping was initiated, the Coalition formed to fight against any development on the Meadows property. The organization is also opposed to any expansion of the 1,400 acres of Cooper Spur ski area that Meadows leases from the U.S. Forest Service in the southern sector of the county.

Riley maintains that a destination resort would be good for an economically-depressed county that is already 74 percent in public ownership.

Weinstein said environmental and recreation groups across the state have banded together to protect the cultural, natural, scenic, and historical resources of Mt. Hood from further commercial development.