

HOOD RIVER NEWS
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
January 15, 2003

Come together

I appreciate many Hood River County residents' belief that a recreational resort (Cooper Spur Mountain Resort) appears to be the best and most reasonable solution to the county's shrinking tax base and job shortage problem. However, I ask them to consider the true offerings such a resort might provide.

Mt. Hood Meadows may not have come forward with a solidified plan, but its vision and whisperings of development follow suit with many of the larger corporate ski conglomerates, which are redefining the mountain and skiing experience – developing real estate and services that win greater profits for the corporation.

Anyone who has been a part of the skiing culture could see that a resort development on the north side of Mount Hood has little to do with the skiing experience. In my opinion, a resort on this side of the mountain doesn't make a lot of sense. As an Upper Valley resident, I don't get it: golf courses seem to fare best where there is a greater amount of sun and fair weather. Ski resort condominiums and entertainment retail villages tend to be quaint with fresh snow on the ground and trees.

The areas in consideration for resort development have questionable snowfall year to year, and this area's forests are beautifully dense and damp, hardly the airy and bright alpine forests associated with the "alpine resort experience." It's hard to picture a sunny, snowy year-round resort there. The only way to change these basic hindrances that I see is to cut down a lot of trees (more sun) and pray for below freezing temperatures for snowmaking (more snow, less water.) There. Problem solved.

Regardless of these seemingly large obstacles, there are other issues that make this development so divisive and challenging to this county and its residents. For a county that is struggling financially, a resort seems to be a shortcut solution. Hood River County has one of the lowest per capita incomes due to the already high number of part-time resort, recreation and retail jobs. Another resort will only encourage low wage job trends.

Corporate ski resorts today have had to change their marketing strategies from skiing to real estate to increase their profits. The number of skier days (ski tickets purchased) nationwide has been stagnant for over a decade. Encouraging a ski resort development will only take skiers away from other ski areas, and could lead to an irreversible real estate venture that has few, if any, statistics that indicate its success.

Most importantly, this development and its profits are ultimately about the bottom line for this ski/real estate corporation-profits.

If we encourage development to occur in our wildest and most beautiful places in the county, we are corroding that which sets us apart from other regions of Oregon. Let us be leaders in a trend of growing communities that stand together to value the natural gems they hold and seek sustainable alternatives. I'm trying to think of scenarios that would preserve the beauty of the county, yet provide higher, livable wage jobs. It's not easy, but let's take the time to seek alternatives to a resort. Let's come together on this!

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