

Need cooperation

The recent Mt. Hood Summit could have been an excellent opportunity for the public to work together in a visioning process for future multiple use management on Mt. Hood. Unfortunately, certain groups viewed it as simply another forum to throw insults around and further polarize the stakeholders.

For example, Steve McCarthy decided it was an excellent opportunity to bash the Mt. Hood National Forest Supervisor in front of 300 people by telling him that the culture of the Forest Service was lacking, and that the agency should not have partnerships with ski area permittees. This was after Mr. Larson just finished his panel presentation where he described the importance of public/private partnerships, and unveiled a new collaborative Recreation Initiative.

Mr. McCarthy must not be aware that in 2002, Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service and Mark Rey, Under Secretary of United States Department of Agriculture renewed and signed a nationwide Master Service-Wide Memorandum of Understanding (SMU) between the National Ski Area Association (NSAA) and the USDA Forest Service. The SMU clearly outlined the importance of partnerships between ski areas and the Forest Service.

The purpose of this SMU is to establish a general framework of cooperation between the USDA Forest Service and NSAA to achieve the common goals of managing and promoting active participation in alpine recreation and sports by all people in a manner that emphasizes: recognition of the value of developed recreation; the role developed recreation plays in the health, physical fitness, and well being of Americans; the importance of public/private partnerships in providing recreational facilities; multiple use national forest management; sustainable communities; viable local economies; ecosystem health.

It is well understood that the definition of sustainability is where the environment, society, and the economy are mutually successful for current and future generations.

I care about the environment. The staff within our company cares about the environment. Our business depends upon a healthy environment. We are engaged in a serious, long-term effort to adopt sustainable practices across all resort operations. That does not mean that we will cease planning to accommodate our future: it means the principals of sustainability are the foundation stones of any further resort development, as well as our day to day operations.

We are stewards of our permit areas and our private land, just as the farmers of the Hood River valley are stewards of their orchards. Being a sustainable farmer doesn't mean the farmer rips out the orchard next week to improve the bio-diversity of the ecosystem (that would not be sustainable), it means she works to continually improve the operation so that the farm will continue to coexist with a healthy environment, be economically viable, and provide for the family.

Being a sustainable resort does not mean we "shrink" the ski resorts on Mt. Hood, as Jurgen Hess suggested at the Summit (Hood River News, Aug. 13). It means we operate and develop in a way that protects sensitive ecosystems and provides outdoor recreation for the public in an economically viable manner. Just like the farmer.

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