



ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILD



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Slow Economy a Double Edged Sword:

Ski Area Environmental Report Card shows little investment in ski area expansion or sustainable practices

Ski resorts across the west for the first time in five years did not significantly increase their activities related to renewable energy and energy efficiency according to the 2011 Ski Area Environmental Report Card. The report also found that ski resorts did very little degrading activity during the same period.

“The good news is that ski areas for the second year in a row had minimal increased impacts to endangered species and wetlands on public lands,” according to Ski Area Citizens Coalition Director, Paul Joyce. “This is great news for wildlife and the health of our watersheds.”

The bad news is that ski area investment in renewable energy and implementing energy efficiency measures has declined compared to the previous season.

“In previous years we have seen ski areas concentrating on energy efficiency through upgrading windows, employing solar power and improving public transportation,” said Research Director Warren Rider of the Ski Area Citizen Coalition, “but that increased investment was not as evident over the past

year. It is unfortunate that current economic conditions may have led to the scaling back of environmental upgrades that help reduce green house gas emissions.”

“I’m disappointed that the resorts didn’t increase their investment in renewable energy and implementation of energy efficiency measures compared to the previous year,” said Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance. “With snowpack at risk, ski resorts need to be pushing full speed ahead with greenhouse gas reduction measures and energy efficiency. Skiers and boarders expect the Resort Industry to be leading examples of addressing climate change.”

Ski Area Citizens Coalition Pledges more Environmental Scrutiny of Resort Summer Activities for 2012/2013

The Ski Area Citizens Coalition also announced today that, for the next season 2012-2013 Report Card, they would be scrutinizing summer activity expansion at ski resorts more closely. The Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act was just signed into national law making it easier for ski resorts that are wholly or partially located on federal land to get special permits to allow activities other than nordic or alpine skiing. Activities could include zip lines, frisbee golf, and advanced mountain biking.

“The Ski Area Citizen’s Coalition supports injecting revenue during slower months in ski towns provided that strong environmental stewardship standards are used,” said Paul Joyce. “We look forward to evaluating resorts’ expanded summer activities on our public lands to ensure that they are creating jobs that are good for endangered species and clean water.”

Summer ski resort activity if done improperly could have significant environmental impacts. For example, bike trails can be created using best stewardship practices or they can be created in ways that increase water pollution. Zip lines can be put in non-sensitive wildlife areas creating new recreational opportunities – or they can be sited in a way that is a significant threat to local wildlife.

“The learning curve is going to be tough for many of these operators as they manage for new wildlife, water resources, and erosion impacts within their permit areas,” said Mr. Rider. “It isn’t just about ‘keeping your tips up’ anymore.”

The Ski Area Citizens Coalition (SACC) www.skiareacitizens.com has been publishing the Ski Area Environmental Scorecard (now Report Card) for the past 10 years. The Report Card evaluates the environmental policies and practices of ski areas based on a system of 35 criteria. The criteria to evaluate performance in each category includes the ski areas’ preservation of sensitive lands within the ski resort areas, their actions related to water conservation and quality, and demonstrated commitment to green programs such as recycling and alternative energy use.

To view each resort’s score and details on their environmental management practices, visit: www.skiareacitizens.com. Skiers and snowboarders can easily send emails to resorts through the website, thanking resorts for their environmental stewardship or encouraging them to improve their environmental policies and management.

Scorecard data is obtained from an annual survey, public records from government agencies, and from the resorts themselves. Freedom of Information Act and Public Records Act requests are filed with appropriate land managers to identify ski area development projects and management plans each spring. Resorts are also asked to fill out surveys and regarding their on-mountain environmental programs. All source documents can be viewed on the website.