

Crested Butte, Colorado

December 1, 2009

The US Forest Service rejects a proposal to expand lift-served skiing onto Snodgrass Mountain in the Gunnison National Forest!

Gunnison National Forest Supervisor Charles Richmond told Crested Butte Mountain Resort and their owner CNL Lifestyles: ***"your site-specific proposal to build and operate lift-served ski facilities on Snodgrass Mountain is rejected."***

The decision was the culmination of five years studying the mountain and the proposed project. The Forest Supervisor stated that, as the result of a detailed Pre-NEPA analysis, ***"I have significant concerns about the limitations of Snodgrass Mountain for lift-served skiing development based on the numerous studies and environmental issues that have been identified over the years."*** The shortcomings of the proposed expansion would have included: terrain unsuitable for lift-served skiing; adverse impacts on complex hydrology; the substantial earthmoving required to create ski slopes; geological hazards; Roadless Rule conflicts; Lynx habitat damage; avalanche safety issues; inconvenient public access to the proposed ski slopes; out-of-bounds management issues; and adverse impacts on nearby ranches. Further study would have continued to divide an already divided community, only to confirm the major obstacles already identified. The Forest Service is calling it ***"death by 1,000 cuts."***

While CBMR now proclaims ignorance of the Pre-NEPA process, its former President John Norton described it as follows: ***"The Forest Service has a new way of doing things, one that's probably better than the old way: they've become unwilling to study bad plans from ski areas... We will accept no more plans into the public process that are Dead On Arrival. We will not waste time and resources on bad plans..."*** (Gunnison Country Times, 1/13/05)

Snodgrass is known to visitors and locals for its easily accessible, year-round, FREE, recreation; intact forest ecosystem; economically valuable open space; and a protective buffer for the internationally-renowned Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (www.rmbl.org), which conducts unique, high-altitude climate research in Gothic, Colorado. Protection of these benefits was also named as having been a component of the final decision.

In a May 2008 the **Town of Crested Butte** asked the Forest Service to ***"Help Crested Butte and the Gunnison National Forest become the place that everyone else tries to emulate... We feel this could be an opportunity for the Forest Service to be an inspiration and a leader by using public land for something other than private fiscal speculation by a few people."***

Business owner and former Town Councilwoman Loree Mulay-Weisman wrote this week: ***"Embrace the fact that the community and Forest Service stood up and protected our land from being developed unnecessarily... We all need to wake up to the fact that the ski industry is not and has not been thriving for a very long time... As a community let's invest... our time and money in what is going to bring us the biggest return in our economic future. Standing up tall and proud of who we are, offering some of the best skiing in North America, the coolest town, tons of mountain biking trails, endless hiking, festivals, events, conferences, educational opportunities... Can we get our heads around the fact that we already have it all and could be an eco-tourism destination? Let's share that with the world."***

Forest Service Supervisor Richmond concluded his November 5, 2009 letter, saying, ***"I believe that... the NEPA process would... likely uncover additional environmental concerns. Acceptance of [the] proposal would require a large commitment of both our resources and [CBMR's]. In addition, local governments, stakeholders, and interested parties would need to expend time and energy engaging in the NEPA process. To proceed, I must be convinced that such an effort could lead to a decision which serves the public interest and for which there is a high likelihood of success. I am not convinced of this but rather am convinced otherwise..."***

It is my finding that it is not in the public interest to continue to consider development on Snodgrass Mountain any further."

FRIENDS OF SNODGRASS MOUNTAIN, LLC

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