

So, what's with Snodgrass?

Gunnison Times 1/13/05

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.



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COMMENTARY

Here's how it used to work. Ski areas submitted master plans to the USFS, some of which were pretty good and some of which were pretty bad. It's unfair to say the USFS didn't have opinions going in, but it kept its own counsel and worked through the NEPA process, whether in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Study.

More than infrequently, the USFS' willingness to accept bad plans for study led to disruption in the life of the local community, years of wasted work and wasted resources, and a shaken partnership with the ski area. In the end, opponents of bad planning, even when successful, wished they hadn't had to go through the brain

damage of fighting the proposal in the first place.

So the USFS said "enough." 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.

Simple enough.

So, here's where that leaves Snodgrass: in the pre-planning stage.

I thought the ski area had a good plan to submit last October, and still do, but the USFS wants to think about it. Can the ski area establish legitimate need? What about the geology of the mountain - will skiing/riding add to instability? Where will the water for snowmaking come from? How much will be needed?

The ski area and the Forest Service are doing a lot of homework right now to answer some of those questions, and until such

time as the USFS deems a plan legitimate (important: "legitimate" shouldn't be confused with "approved" - at least two years and an intense NEPA process separate the two words) whatever plans might come forward will never see the light of day.

CBMR favors a plan very much like the one that wound its way through the county master planning process, which we called Snodgrass Light. Three main lifts, nothing back in the Gothic Valley, current Town Center as an embarkation point, etc. etc. So the community should expect no big surprises - it's the plan that's been kicked around for a couple of years.

When there's a legitimate plan, you'll all be the first to know - hopefully, this spring.

Have a great day, and see you on the mountain (where some of the steps are now open)! You can always reach me at jnorton@cbmr.com.

