

MOUNTAIN MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPROVED

Durango Mountain Resort and Colorado Wild reach agreement on mountain improvement plan

Durango, CO – Durango Mountain Resort and Colorado Wild are pleased to announce the approval of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a Record of Decision on the resort’s Mountain Master Development Plan. Working together to ensure the resort’s mountain improvements meet the needs of locals and visiting guests while limiting the impact on the natural environment, Colorado Wild and Durango Mountain Resort (DMR) reached an agreement to encourage the US Forest Service to implement the majority of the planned improvements while deferring a decision on the proposed lifts and trails in the Ice Creek area.

The San Juan National Forest’s approval of the Master Development Plan will allow DMR to move forward with on-mountain improvements, including new lifts, trails and upgraded snowmaking systems. The improvements represent the biggest change for skiers and snowboarders at Purgatory Mountain since the installation of the Purgatory Village Express Chairlift in 2001. Approved on-mountain improvements include:

- New high speed detachable quad chairlift replacing Chair 8
- Fixed triple upgrade to Chair 4
- Installation of Gelande Lift for direct access on the mountain
- Gelande Parking Lot expansion and Ticket Office
- New gladed trails in the Legends Area
- New trails on the backside of the mountain for all levels
- “Subway” surface lift system improving access between Chairs 3, 5 and 8
- Expanded Snowmaking system on frontside, new snowmaking capabilities on backside
- Plus many other mountain improvements

Based on the agreement between DMR and Colorado Wild, Forest Service approval of the proposed new trails and lifts in the Ice Creek drainage has been deferred to allow further study into environmentally preferable alternatives. Ice Creek, located on the eastern portion of Hermosa Park, adjoining the Twilight Lift and Hermosa Park Lift areas, was proposed to expand the Level 3 Beginner experience. This area, known to be important habitat for the Canadian Lynx and the headwaters of the East Fork of Hermosa Creek, is very important biologically. DMR and Colorado Wild are working together to identify alternatives to protect this important area and still meet DMR’s need for additional learn-to-ski terrain.

“Colorado Wild is pleased with the level of analysis that was done and comfortable with the project moving forward as it has been agreed to,” says Ryan Demmy Bidwell, Director of the Durango-based Colorado Wild. “It makes sense to upgrade outdated facilities at the resort, and DMR has taken care to address environmental impact issues for the majority of the plan.”

Part of the resort’s Master Plan includes initiatives to help reduce and mitigate the environmental impacts of historical logging, grazing and related practices that were permitted within or near the resort’s Special Use Permit area. These initiatives include re-vegetation of logging and grazing access roads, preservation of un-compacted areas to offset new winter trails that will compact snow, restoration of Purgatory Creek stream channel, erosion and sediment controls installed on new trails, drainage improvements and the creation of a Lynx mitigation fund providing significant funding for Lynx habitat improvements in SW Colorado.

“I studied the Draft EIS extensively this winter and kept coming back to concerns related to the Ice Creek area improvements,” says Bidwell. “It’s not often our concerns about a ski area improvement plan are as geographically isolated as they are here.”

This agreement between DMR and Colorado Wild is a furtherance of the ongoing cooperative working relationship between the two entities that began when Colorado Wild opposed DMR’s private land development several years ago and sponsored a referendum challenging the development agreement for DMR’s proposed resort community. After DMR made modifications to address Colorado Wild’s core concerns, Colorado Wild eventually supported DMR’s development agreement and the referendum of La Plata County voters upheld the County Commission’s decision. This ongoing cooperation now means that all aspects of DMR’s mountain improvements, except the Ice Creek area, can proceed without appeal and protracted litigation. In this instance, both DMR and Colorado Wild felt the majority of the plan was solid and could move forward to implementation while the parties were granted time to research alternative solutions for the proposed Ice Creek improvements.

“We formed a strong working relationship with Colorado Wild during the approval process for our 2002 development agreement,” says Gary Derck, CEO of Durango Mountain Resort. “And we have maintained continued collaboration with this important local organization on numerous issues and interests. We hope that this agreement will demonstrate DMR’s commitment to doing the right thing...and to showing how conservation organizations and the ski industry can work together to find mutually beneficial resolutions to allowing mountain improvements that are very much desired by our local and destination customers.”

More information about the Mountain Master Development Plan is available online at www.durangomountainresort.com/mmdp and <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/projects/projects.shtml>.

Colorado Wild is a Durango-based non-profit organization that works to protect and restore the native plants and animals of the Southern Rocky Mountains. Colorado Wild spearheads the annual Ski Area Environmental Scorecard, which evaluates the land use and sustainability practices of ski areas throughout Western North America.

Purgatory at Durango Mountain Resort is a year-round vacation destination in Southwest Colorado ideal for families, friends and groups of all ages. Purgatory’s spectacular location, world-class ski and snowboard terrain, slopeside lodging, and multitude of year-round activities, plus the genuine mountain town of Durango, make the resort a true slice of Colorado Heaven.