

## VERMONT SKI AREAS RECORD 4 MILLION SKIER VISITS IN 2008-09

Contributed by The Editors  
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KILLINGTON, VT – At the Vermont Ski Areas Association's 40th Anniversary Annual Meeting today, the industry trade group announced that Vermont's ski resorts recorded 4,068,696 skier visits for the 2008-09 season.

"Vermont's ski industry held up very well in spite of the enormous challenges of the current economic climate," said Parker Riehle, President of the Vermont Ski Areas Association. "Skiing and snowboarding are lifestyle sports that have historically proven to be recession-resilient, and this season was no different. With the tight economy, skiers and riders stayed closer to home and Vermont's winter tourism economy benefited from our day's-drive proximity to 80 million people coupled with our unique and unrivaled mountain brand identity."

Nationally, preliminary reports put Vermont's numbers on track with the country's overall average, with Vermont resorts and the northeast faring better than airline-dependent destinations. The season saw an above-average start with a strong Thanksgiving opening and a string of Ski Vermont 'powder alerts' matching those of the 2007-08 banner snow year. Despite a Christmas thaw, little new snow in March and the worst economic downturn ever seen by the ski industry, Vermont's tally of just over 4 million skier visits stands about on par with the five-year average.

The Annual Meeting held at the Killington Resort Grand Hotel also celebrated the remarkable showing of Vermont ski areas at this year's National Ski Areas Association's Annual Awards presentation where the Green Mountain State garnered an unprecedented eight national awards for safety programs, environmental excellence, marketing and industry achievement.

"The environmental excellence awards earned by Stowe, Stratton and Okemo, the marketing awards won by Jay Peak, Mad River Glen and Sugarbush, the helmet safety award given to Okemo and the NSAA Lifetime Achievement Award presented to industry icon Hank Lunde are an incredible testament to Vermont's role in the ski industry and our state's contributions to developing and promoting the sport," said Riehle.

At the association's gathering of over 200 alpine and Nordic members, marketing partners and associate members, Stratton Mountain Resort's Sky Foulkes was elected Chair of the VSAA Board of Directors, taking over for longtime chair Bill Stenger from Jay Peak Resort. Kelly Pawlak, General Manager of the Mount Snow Resort, was elected Vice Chair of the board.

Vermont Governor Jim Douglas offered welcoming remarks at the 40th Anniversary gathering and was presented with the Friend of the Industry Award. The Industry Achievement Award went to industry veteran Hank Lunde, former president of both Killington and Stowe Mountain Resorts. The Career Employee Awards went to Peter Ingvaldstad and Peter Delaney, both of whom were employed over 25 years at Smugglers' Notch Resort.

NSAA President Michael Berry discussed the national perspective on the past season and future opportunities, and keynote presenters Jim and Joy Spring with the Leisure Trends Group provided their insight into consumer trends in travel and recreation.

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