

Crested Butte Community Rallies for NEPA

Mt. Crested Butte, Colo. - On Nov. 5, 2009, Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) received a letter from the U.S. Forest Service denying the resort the ability to enter into the public review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for its Snodgrass Mountain expansion proposal. With its decision the Forest Service did not follow the procedures it follows at other ski areas, and handed down a final decision that directly impacts the economic stability of the East River Valley in Gunnison County without preparing objective formal studies and without asking for public comments. Since the letter became public, the resort has received an outpouring of support from the community urging CBMR to appeal.

Despite a statement in the Forest Service letter denying the opportunity for appeal, CBMR does believe this decision is appealable under Forest Service regulations and is initiating an action. "The statement is terribly flawed and is another example of the Forest Service's high handedness and disregard for public due process rights," added Tim Mueller, president of CBMR.

Support for CBMR and fair public process continues to swell locally, regionally and nationally. Approximately 300 community members attended a rally on Friday, Nov. 13, at local Crested Butte restaurant Maxwells, to show support for CBMR and to voice their concern with the recent Forest Service decision rejecting the NEPA process for Snodgrass. The vast majority of the community is shocked at the denial of due process. During the event, community members signed a petition to allow the NEPA process to proceed, and gathered information about further efforts to affect the reinstatement of the public's right to comment and the public's right to participate in this decision about public lands.

In an independent survey conducted last week by the Crested Butte/Mt. Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce, 83 percent of the 700 respondents voted in support of Snodgrass entering the NEPA process. In addition, protesters of the Forest Service decision have found a voice via an already over 600-participant-strong Facebook page called "Friends of Ski Lifts on Snodgrass," created seven days ago.

Mt. Crested Butte Mayor William Buck, joined by community supporters, will stage a protest of the Forest Service decision to deny due process on Friday, Nov. 20 at 11:45 a.m. at the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office located in Golden, Colo. The Forest Service decision regarding Snodgrass will have a long-term economic impact on the Crested Butte community and the protest offers an outlet for voicing public opinion, which was denied with this action.

The proposed Snodgrass expansion will increase the amount of intermediate and advanced terrain at CBMR with 276 acres of skiing served by three lifts, a beginner carpet and a connector gondola from Crested Butte Mountain. Snodgrass Mountain is located adjacent to Crested Butte Mountain.

For more information about the Snodgrass Mountain proposed expansion visit snodgrassfacts.com.