

## Forest Service Further Protects Snodgrass Mountain

Contributed by Lydia Johnson  
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Crested Butte has always been a town that holds on to its resources dearly. It was the site of a yearlong dispute over molybdenum mining rights in 2008 and multiple disputes over Crested Butte Mountain Resort's possible expansion to Snodgrass Mountain, a major backcountry skiing destination. But the Forest Service recently denied Crested Butte Mountain Resort's latest attempt to expand.

In 2004, when CBMR presented a proposal for expanding into Snodgrass, locals stepped into action. A group of citizens formed Friends of Snodgrass Mountain (FOSM) in 2005, said Vicki Shaw, one of the group leaders. They "began to gather petition signatures to keep the mountain lift-free," Shaw said; the result was more than 1,500 signatures, or about one third of residents in the towns of Crested Butte and Mount Crested Butte.

CBMR owners Triple Peaks LLC believe that an additional area of intermediate terrain would increase revenue and that the ideal place to put this area would be Snodgrass Mountain. The Friends of Snodgrass organization disputes this claim, saying that the mountain does not have enough intermediate terrain to justify the expansion. The Forest Service also disputes it, stating "it has become clear through various analyses that Snodgrass does not offer the intermediate terrain presumed in the 2005 discussions." The possibility of increasing the number of customers coming to the resort is also a point of contention: resort owners think the expansion would attract more resort skiers, but town citizens believe that visitation would decrease with the loss of Snodgrass as a backcountry resource.

The Forest Service denied the proposal in part because of lack of community support for the expansion. Forest Supervisor Charles Richmond stated in his report that "CBMR was repeatedly urged by the Forest Service to meet with and work with all segments of the community, including those who opposed development plans. They did not." It's probable that the resort's reluctance to admit that the expansion was a divisive issue was a point against them.

The Forest Service also identified several environmental factors that drove them to deny the proposal. One is the geological stability of the mountain; landslides are a clear danger. According to Richmond, two studies "demonstrate that the potential exists for reactivation of certain landslides." Another is concern over heightened avalanche risk from the increase of skiers that would flock to the mountain after development. A third reason is that the mountain is habitat to "threatened, endangered or candidate species, including lynx" according to the Forest Service Report.

Sources: Vicky and Chuck Shaw, Alison Gannett, [friendsofsnodgrass.org](http://friendsofsnodgrass.org)