

APRIL 2019

SUMMIT SKI AREA
DEVELOPMENT VISION PLANNING PROCESS
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH REPORT

AUTHORED BY:



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
2. INTRODUCTION TO SUMMIT SKI AREA
 - A. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND
3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH
 - A. PURPOSE AND APPROACH
4. PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS
5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH RESULTS
 - A. KEY THEMES AND STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS
 - I. BEGINNER EXPERIENCE
 - II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING
 - III. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
 - IV. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
 - V. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
6. CONCLUSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summit Ski Area is the oldest ski area in the Pacific Northwest and provides some of the most accessible beginner skiing and riding terrain in the region. In July 2018 the lease to operate Summit Ski Area was acquired by J.S.K. and Company, sister company to long-time operator of Timberline Lodge, R.L.K. and Company.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Company leadership hired Sustainable Northwest, a regional non-profit specializing in public engagement processes and public lands management, to organize and facilitate a series of stakeholder meetings. The purpose of the stakeholder meetings was to gather input and ideas that may be integrated into the development vision for Summit Ski Area. Three stakeholder meetings were held between March 1 and March 7, 2019, and collectively brought together 76 community leaders, businesses, environmental organizations, and county, state, and federal agency partners.

KEY THEMES

There was broad public support in Government Camp and Portland for the development vision at Summit Ski Area, and five themes emerged through the stakeholder engagement meetings:

1. Beginner Experience
2. Affordable Housing
3. Transportation and Infrastructure
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Local Economic Development and Community Engagement

Summit Ski Area is recognized as the **premier beginner skiing and riding experience** in Oregon. Stakeholders expressed a strong desire to maintain the family-friendly atmosphere and affordability of Summit into the future.

As communities along the south side of Mount Hood have grown, affordable housing has become a more important and pressing issue. There is broad recognition among stakeholders for the need to attract and site **workforce housing that supports a high-quality of life for residents and area workers.**

Transportation issues were consistently raised by stakeholders, namely traffic and congestion, parking, and public safety concerns associated with the rest area and intersection near Summit Ski Area. There was enthusiastic support for emerging opportunities for alternative forms of transportation, including an aerial connection between Government Camp and Timberline Lodge, along with deeper investments in public transportation.

Millions of people visit the Mount Hood National Forest each year, and many of them access the forest through Government Camp. Stakeholders suggested that Summit Ski Area could **“set the bar” for sustainable development** and help foster an environmental ethic among guests.

Stakeholders expressed strong support for **year-round recreation** at Summit that compliments existing businesses and supports local entrepreneurship.

Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for **on-going community engagement and shared that collaboration and partnerships will be essential** to accomplishing the Summit Ski Area Development Vision.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH | FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION TO SUMMIT SKI AREA

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Established in 1927, Summit Ski Area is the oldest ski area in the Pacific Northwest. Started as a simple warming hut and some open glades for skiing, Summit has grown into a family-oriented ski area and tubing hill known for its accessible terrain and affordability.

R.L.K. and Company, long-time operators of Timberline Lodge, acquired Summit Ski Area in July 2018. Summit Ski Area was purchased to inspire and catalyze smart planning and development on the south side of Mount Hood and in Government Camp. The 52-acre ski area is within walking distance of historic Government Camp and serves a diverse range of beginner skiers.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

R.L.K. and Company hired Sustainable Northwest, a regional non-profit organization, to engage ski area staff and key stakeholders in articulating a development vision for Summit Ski Area. Sustainable Northwest works to resolve conflicts around natural resource management issues, and the organization has worked for more than 25 years to bring together disparate stakeholders engaged in public lands management.

R.L.K. and Company and Sustainable Northwest organized a series of three meetings to engage key members of the public and stakeholder groups. The first meeting was held on March 1, 2019 and focused on gathering input from staff at Timberline Lodge and Summit Ski Area. Two meetings were held with external partners and stakeholders, one on March 5, 2019 in Government Camp and another on March 7, 2019 in Portland. Collectively these three meetings engaged 76 unique organizations and stakeholders.

During each of the stakeholder meetings, company leadership, including Jeff Kohnstamm, President/Area Operator, and Jon Tullis, Director of Public Affairs and Planning, shared a presentation that highlighted Summit Ski Area's history and development vision.

The development of Summit Ski Area will build on the following core tenets, which were outlined at each of the public meetings:

1. Respect the rich history of the area, including Native American connections to the land as well as pioneer and early ski history.
2. Serve diverse populations through a high quality, accessible, and affordable mountain experience and that is rooted in an educational alpine ethic.
3. Tier development to existing land use designations in the Mount Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and other relevant county, state, and federal planning processes and documents.
4. Improve public health and safety and the livability of Government Camp through smart planning and serve as a catalyst for transportation solutions that are responsive to existing issues.
5. Support year-round recreation and spur local economic development in Government Camp.

6. Creatively solve problems through public-private partnerships and collaboration with government, businesses, and other allied organizations.

R.L.K. and Company leadership recognize that operations on public lands benefit from engagement with a diverse range of interest groups and community members. While not a formal requirement, robust public engagement prior to submission of a Conceptual Master Plan for Summit Ski Area is a voluntary, proactive approach to mitigating risk of future conflict and building broader support for potential future projects. Stakeholder input is not required for approval of the Conceptual Master Plan, but all future capital improvements are subject to public review and comment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS

Representatives from the following businesses, organizations, and agencies were invited to participate in this process. Invited groups are listed in alphabetical order. Organizations in italics were not able to attend, but will receive this report.

BARK
Bremik Construction
Charlie's Mountain View
Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs Office Mount Hood Territory
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde
Crag Law Center
Crag Rats
Doug's Sports
Fat Tire Farm
Friends of Mount Adams
Friends of Mount Hood
Friends of Timberline
Government Camp Community Planning Organization
Government Camp Snow Removal Company
Hoodland Fire District
Hoodland Women's Club
Hood River County Board of Commissioners
Huckleberry Inn
KEEN Footwear
Mazamas
Mountain Resort Lodging Company
Mountain Shop
Mount Hood Area Chamber of Commerce
Mount Hood Coffee Roasters
Mount Hood Cultural Center and Museum
Mount Hood Meadows
Mount Hood Ski Bowl
Mount Hood Ski Patrol
National Forest Foundation

Office of Congressmen Earl Blumenauer
Office of Governor Kate Brown
Office of State Representative Anna Williams
Office of State Senator Chuck Thomsen
Office of Senator Ron Wyden
Office of Senator Jeff Merkeley
Office of Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler
Oregon Cultural Trust
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
Oregon State Parks and Recreation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Oregon Wild
Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association
Portland Mountain Rescue
Powder Hounds Ski School
Rhododendron Community Planning Organization
Sandy River Watershed Council
Second Wind Sports
Sierra Club
Summit Ski Area
Thrive (formerly Hood River Valley Residents Committee)
Travel Oregon
USDA Forest Service Mount Hood National Forest
Valian's Ski Shop
Welches Mountain Properties

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH RESULTS

KEY THEMES AND STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS

The following themes emerged through the stakeholder engagement meetings: Beginner Experience, Affordable Housing, Transportation and Infrastructure, Environmental Stewardship, and Local Economic Development and Community Engagement. Each theme is briefly described and followed by a summary of stakeholder recommendations captured during the public meetings. The themes are not presented in a prioritized order.

KEY THEME: BEGINNER EXPERIENCE

Locals and visitors alike know Summit Ski Area as the best place to learn to ski and ride in Oregon. Summit serves a unique niche by offering affordable and accessible skiing and riding just steps from Government Camp.

Stakeholder recommendations:

- Maintain and leverage Summit's niche as a beginner focused ski area.
- Provide guest services tailored to the needs of first-time skiers and riders.
- Continue to support adaptive skiing and riding for visitors with disabilities.

- Preserve the character of the mountain experience and maintain the unique Oregon ski culture that exists at Summit Ski Area and in Government Camp.

KEY THEME: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Stakeholders recognize the unique challenges facing Government Camp and nearby communities in developing affordable housing for residents and ski area employees. In each of the public meetings stakeholders shared a desire for housing solutions that promote a high quality of life for ski area workers and residents.

Stakeholder recommendations:

- Promote the development of employee housing options in partnership with a local developer and relevant state and federal agencies.
- Serving as both an employer and landlord creates unique challenges. Stakeholders suggested finding the right partner to effectively manage employee housing.
- Attract and retain a high-quality workforce through a suite of quality housing solutions tailored to the existing and anticipated future needs of ski area workers, visitors, and residents.

KEY THEME: TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

There was broad recognition at each of the stakeholder meetings that transportation and infrastructure planning will be critical elements of a community-supported development vision at Summit Ski Area.

Stakeholder recommendations:

- Embrace the south side of Mount Hood as an area for skiing and managed recreation. Revive the essence of the historic Skiway and develop an aerial connection between Government Camp and Timberline Lodge. Stakeholders offered enthusiastic support for a gondola and the potential access provided to Timberline and Mount Hood.
- Address public safety concerns associated with the rest area and the intersection at Highway 26 near Summit Ski Area. Stakeholders suggested moving the rest area out of the Summit Ski Area parking lot. Stakeholders recognize that truckers and other members of the public use the rest area and a viable alternative would need to be provided. Stakeholders suggested working with truckers and other partners to find a solution that better meets the needs of the public, improves the safety of the intersection, and promotes an improved guest experience for Summit visitors.
- Provide parking solutions at Summit Ski Area to better meet current demand and reduce the potential for further congestion and parking problems by promoting the development of park and ride options further down the mountain. Stakeholders suggested a series of park and ride options from Sandy to Government Camp to more effectively move visitors, residents, and employees up and down Highway 26.
- Continue to invest in busing and mass transit options for visitors. Consider how to provide visitors using mass transit with a high-quality guest experience on the mountain, for example, by providing lockers and appropriate places to put your shoes while skiing or riding.
- Stakeholders recognized the wildfire risks facing Government Camp and suggested that future developments should include water storage for fire suppression.

KEY THEME: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The Mount Hood National Forest is in Portland’s “backyard” and represents an important way that millions of Oregonians and visitors connect with nature and public lands.

Stakeholder recommendations:

- Integrate educational signage that helps guests understand the natural heritage and unique ecology of the Cascade mountains.
- Partner with local school groups to get kids outside and help them learn to ski or ride.
- Pursue low-impact development alternatives that “set the bar” for sustainability in mountain operations and ski area management.
- Advance a business model that contemplates how to reduce fossil fuel consumption of visitors by promoting alternative forms of transportation and the walkability of Government Camp. Stakeholders suggested integrating electric car charging stations to promote more sustainable forms of transportation. Stakeholders shared interest in a pedestrian overpass or other solutions that help people move safely across Highway 26 and around Government Camp.

KEY THEME: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Summit Ski Area holds tremendous potential as a catalyst for community-driven planning and business development in Government Camp.

Stakeholder recommendations:

- Partnerships and collaboration are essential elements of long-term success, especially when operating on public lands. Stakeholders offered support for bringing together different organizations, businesses, and agencies to drive collective action and solve problems.
- Create opportunities and incentives for volunteerism and stewardship. For example, stakeholders suggested offering discounted lift tickets or season passes to community members that volunteer a certain number of hours each year.
- Support improved connectivity between Government Camp and Timberline by modifying the ski area boundaries, as originally contemplated in the 1974 Timberline Winter Sports Complex.
- Support the maintenance and connectivity of the local trail network in Government Camp, especially hiking and cross-country skiing trails near Summit Ski Area.
- Stakeholders shared interest in integrating community-oriented event spaces and facilities into the development vision for Summit Ski Area. Ideas include a medical center, performance center and/or amphitheater, and an education or interpretive center for skills training.
- Stakeholders suggested that the development vision for Summit Ski Area incorporates year-round recreational pursuits that help Government Camp businesses thrive. Specific suggestions centered around mountain biking, a mountain coaster, and zipline. Year-round recreation is also anticipated to support more reliable employment and promote workforce retention.
- Stakeholders expressed a strong interest in development that is complimentary to existing businesses in Government Camp, and a plan that strikes a balance between economic viability and the capacity of Government Camp.

CONCLUSION

Summit Ski Area holds a unique place in Oregon’s ski history and culture. Stakeholders recognize Summit’s niche as a beginner-oriented, family-friendly, and affordable skiing and riding experience, and

there is a stated desire among stakeholders to intentionally work to maintain the essence of Summit in any future developments.

Stakeholder feedback during the public meetings suggests that there is broad public support for a development vision that addresses existing transportation and infrastructure challenges in Government Camp. While transportation and infrastructure challenges will not be solved by R.L.K. and Company alone, the development vision for Summit represents an important opportunity to catalyze actions that will work to resolve parking, congestion, and public safety concerns.

R.L.K. and Company's commitment to community engagement, highlighted by their investment in organizing and hosting this series of stakeholder meetings, helped surface a number of ideas and potential projects. Ultimately, many of the ideas and opportunities shared during the meetings fall outside the scope of Summit's development vision but nonetheless represent an important suite of actions that collectively help achieve important goals for the future of Government Camp and the south side of Mount Hood. Continued stakeholder engagement and collaboration will be required to achieve these broader community goals and the development vision at Summit Ski Area.