The Next 50 Years

Our Vision for the Future

RLK & Company, Operators of Timberline Lodge

Est. 1955
A Brief Introduction

RLK and Company, operators of Timberline Lodge, are presenting a vision for the future: This is not just a "5 year plan." Instead, this is a conceptual development plan, or perhaps more accurately, an "idea blueprint" that contemplates how Timberline will look, feel, and function, for all who visit the site, well into the future. This can become a briefing document for all future participants, as well as a shared document with our many stakeholders, and particularly our partners in the United States Forest Service. It can also be used to share our vision with the local community, the media, and the general public.

RLK and Company recently celebrated its 50th anniversary of operating the ever popular ski area and National Historic Landmark ski lodge, Timberline Lodge. Leaders and enthusiasts from Oregon’s diverse community of winter recreationalists, mountain enthusiasts, historic preservationists, and environmentalists gathered to celebrate the fun of the last 50 years and the company's achievements in hospitality, historic preservation, and outdoor recreation. First, the Lodge was saved from near-certain ruin and made presentable for the public. The on-going restoration of Timberline Lodge had begun. Then, in the late 1950s, chairlifts were built and new trails were cut. Top European skiers came to Timberline to learn the ski school and encourage Americans to enjoy the slopes. During the 60s, the popularity of skiing grew in America and Timberline enjoyed the ski boom as hotshots and families alike flocked to the slopes. In the 70s, the Wy'East Day Lodge was built to offer quality skier services and provide additional capacity. In the early 80s, our summer ski program grew by leaps and bounds, attracting interest from around the world. In the mid 80s snowboarding burst onto the scene. While considered a passing fad by some in the industry, it was embraced and encouraged at Timberline, and this new means of sliding down the hill literally evolved before our eyes. In the 90s, high-speed quads were built to replace the old slow-movers. Timberline built a reputation for being at the forefront of state-of-the-art grooming and terrain park construction. In 2007, the Still Creek Basin area was developed and made accessible with the new Jeff Flood Still Creek Basin chairlift.

A Sustainable Future

Our skiing and snowboarding guests come time after time for the sheer thrill and excitement of sliding down a snowy mountain. While primarily a popular day-use ski area serving the Pacific Northwest during the wintertime, Timberline is recognized throughout the world as one of the premier summer ski destinations. Timberline’s high elevation locale, and the ski area’s vertical layout is a "sense of place" that the Kohnstamm family has believed in since 1955. Although many different things draw people to Timberline, we recognize that the accessibility and public nature of the Lodge is chief among them. The Lodge’s beautiful natural surroundings, unique architecture, and rich history combine to create a compelling source of pride and even a sense of ownership among Oregonians. It has been said that "Timberline is where historic preservation, stewardship, recreation, and hospitality come together to provide an unforgettable experience." Because Timberline provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature as well as family and friends, the result can be more than just a memorable experience; it can be a renewal of the human spirit.

Because Timberline provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature as well as family and friends, the result can be more than just a memorable experience; it can be a renewal of the human spirit.

Now a continued commitment to quality and a new vision is being crafted for "the next 50 years." Team Timberline is ready to meet the challenges of the future and will continue to evolve and bring ingenuity to our business, while always respecting our rich history. We will work to provide the vision and leadership necessary to continue to offer quality recreation within the capabilities of the ecosystem.

“RLK and Company is seeking to develop a vision for addressing the long-term opportunities and needs of Timberline and the Government Camp area.”

Jeff Kohnstamm, President and Area Operator
temperature fluctuations that are predicted to come with
global warming. Abundant snowfall at the 8500 foot level
of the Palmer Snowfield allows us to offer the longest ski
season in North America, and one of the finest summer ski
facilities in the world.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND
ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY
RLK and Company is dedicated to the preservation
and stewardship of Timberline Lodge and it’s natural
surroundings, while continuing to accommodate large
levels of public visitation and ensuring a competitive
position in the marketplace. RLK and Company will
operate within, and be dependent on, natural
systems including ecological, climatic, and hydrological
systems. We will also recognize the objectives,
and operate within the
man-made systems of forest
planning and recreation
management practices.

We are committed to
working with stakeholders
to help understand and balance the diversity of these
systems and their natural resources. We particularly
recognize that we are operating within a cherished
natural landscape that is valued for its scenic, historic,
recreational, cultural, and economic characteristics.

“RLK and Company is dedicated
to providing quality recreation
within the capabilities of the
ecosystem.”

Our biggest challenge for the future is in
Timberline’s growing popularity. When coupled with
a growing population, and an arterial highway and
parking system that already exceeds their comfortable
carrying capacity, we believe future planning must
present alternative transportation and local parking
solutions that create a connectivity to US Highway 26,
the town of Government Camp, and the overall Mt.
Hood National Forest.

PARTNERSHIPS
Timberline’s vision for the future is invested heavily in
genuine partnerships that share a belief in common goals.
RLK and Company practices
a three-way “collaborative stewardship” with our
primary partners, the United States Forest Service and
the non-profit Friends of Timberline. We also
work closely with various volunteer and corporate
groups as well as various
allied industry organizations, environmental groups,
historic preservation organizations, local communities,
and state and local governments. The collective energy,
inspiration, and overall value of these diverse partners
will continue to play a vital role in our future, and
in the end, it is the American people that will have
benefited most by an economically and environmentally
sustainable Timberline.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
The overall operational goal for RLK and Company,
which is shared by the United States Forest Service, is to
provide for future generations a continued preservation
and enhancement of the lodge as well as the year ‘round
recreational facilities at Timberline. Together, we are
dedicated to providing hospitality to our many visitors.

By ensuring a competitive place in the visitor and skier
market, we are able to secure our success into the future
and ensure that Timberline Lodge continues to be a
recreational and historic site of national significance.

In recent years, Timberline has committed significant
capital towards improving the quality of its skiing and
snowboarding operation. Projects have included upgrades
to the lift system, and the addition of the new Jeff Flood
Still Creek Basin Chairlift and its new associated trails.
The lodge operates under a lease that authorizes the
party completes the “build-out” of
the permit area. However, our vision for the future
contemplates a number of on-site customer service
improvements, and a connection to the growing ski town
of Government Camp.

One of the most pressing issues for Timberline is
an awkward and substandard arrival via the access
road, and a lack of adequate parking. Consequently,
Timberline is not able to fully accommodate even
current levels of visitation. Quite simply, parking
demand exceeds supply. While systematic terrain
analysis (i.e. slope gradients and conceptual egress
studies) show that there are opportunities for improving
this situation and developing additional parking lots
within Timberline’s SUP area, a number of regulatory
constraints indicate that the full compliment of
necessary parking at the site may not be consistent
with ODOT or USFS management direction. That
assessment, paired with RLK and Company’s desire to
provide a welcoming sense of arrival at
the Lodge. A welcome plaza will then be built just east
of the entrance to the Wy’East Day Lodge, which will
act as a place for visitors to get information and orient
themselves to the site, and in the summer time to the
hiking opportunities.

A Landmark Entrance Sign
and a “Sense of Arrival”

Perhaps the most fundamental idea in our future
plans is to build a landmark entrance sign at the junction
of US Highway 26 and the Timberline Road. This sign
will be of a design and quality that is representative
of what lies ahead...the magnificent Timberline Lodge.
Corresponding welcome signs will be installed further
up the road to provide a welcoming sense of arrival at
the Lodge. We are able to secure our success into the future
and ensure that Timberline Lodge continues to be a
recreational and historic site of national significance.

In recent years, Timberline has committed significant
capital towards improving the quality of its skiing and
snowboarding operation. Projects have included upgrades
to the lift system, and the addition of the new Jeff Flood
Still Creek Basin Chairlift and its new associated trails.
The lodge operates under a lease that authorizes the
party completes the “build-out” of
the permit area. However, our vision for the future
contemplates a number of on-site customer service
improvements, and a connection to the growing ski town
of Government Camp.

One of the most pressing issues for Timberline is
an awkward and substandard arrival via the access
road, and a lack of adequate parking. Consequently,
Timberline is not able to fully accommodate even
current levels of visitation. Quite simply, parking
demand exceeds supply. While systematic terrain
analysis (i.e. slope gradients and conceptual egress
studies) show that there are opportunities for improving
this situation and developing additional parking lots
within Timberline’s SUP area, a number of regulatory
constraints indicate that the full compliment of
necessary parking at the site may not be consistent
with ODOT or USFS management direction. That
assessment, paired with RLK and Company’s desire to
not over-shadow the Lodge with on-site development, has resulted in an innovative plan which includes minor egress improvements, small on-site parking additions, and a look towards developing primary off-site parking and alternative transportation solutions in the area of Government Camp. This vision is currently being explored and promoted in conjunction with local, state, and federal management directions.

The conceptual plan for improved egress to the site includes the possibility of re-routing the one-way approach to the site to improve driving conditions and make room for 1 or 2 new, small parking areas. Up closer to the Lodge, the plan is to essentially bury the upper parking lot in front of the Lodge, thus removing most of the cars from the Lodge’s immediate landscape, and restoring the original landscaping plan for the front of the Lodge. Upon arriving by car at Timberline Lodge, one would enter a new underground parking garage that would also provide underground access to the Lodge, via an entrance elevator. Efforts to further improve the environs of the Lodge’s landscape include burying the uphill portion of the Wy’East Day Lodge. The remaining exposed southern portion of the day lodge would be clad in timbers that are more in keeping with Timberline’s Cascadian architecture. In addition to a mountain-wide shuttle bus system operating out of a public parking area in Government Camp, alternative transportation to Timberline would also be provided via gondola. The gondola would follow the original alignment of the Skyway to Timberline, which operated out of Government Camp in the 1950s. This corridor remains today and is used for the main power line to Timberline. This exciting proposal employs modern technology to provide a cleaner, alternate method of travel to Timberline, while also providing an attraction in and of itself that offers a memorable site-seeing experience. This alternative transportation can be provided with minimal environmental effects, and would provide a long-term carbon offset by taking vehicles off the Timberline Road. We believe a gondola would also enhance visibility and provide an economic boost for the entire Mt. Hood area and especially the town of Government Camp. Further opportunities to incorporate summer and winter recreation into this Timberline/ Government Camp connection include hiking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, site seeing, snowshoeing, alpine skiing and Nordic skiing.

The gondola’s upper terminal would be located at the west of Timberline Lodge, in the vicinity of the lower Magic Mile chairlift. Access to Timberline Lodge from the top terminal of the gondola would be developed to provide accessibility, and protection from the weather, via an underground tunnel leading to the underground parking lot garage in front of the Lodge. This underground access could also conceivably include underground egress to the Wy’East Day Lodge.

Snow Making

While Timberline has never relied on snow making, it is important to consider snow making capabilities to combat the devastating economic effect that low snow years can have on the operation of Timberline Lodge. While elevation and conditions on the Palmer Snowfield provide some insurance during warm or low snow years, skis and snowboard terrain lower on the mountain that is geared towards all ability levels is necessary. Plans are being developed to provide limited snow making for the main trail served by the Pucci chairlift.

Improved Beginner Area

Timberline’s ability to attract and serve beginner skiers and snowboarders is of utmost importance to the area’s long-term viability. The new design configuration for improved road egress will present an opportunity to lengthen and upgrade the Bruno’s chairlift and beginner area. The objective would be to extend the Bruno lift and beginner area, and thus open up significant new beginner terrain.

New Maintenance Shop, Ski Patrol, and A Day Care Facility

The growing need to replace Timberline’s current undersized and substandard outdoor maintenance facility provides an opportunity to address another issue facing the ski area, the lack of a day care facility. Current space constraints limit Timberline’s ability to offer this important skier service, and inhibits Timberline’s ability to fully accommodate young families. A new maintenance shop, which is designed to also house a new and improved ski patrol facility, has previously been approved to be built just below and adjacent to the existing maintenance shop. This Ski Patrol component will vastly improve Timberline’s ability to care for injured skiers, and host rescue operations during mountaineering accidents. Once RLK and Company is able to build this building, and move the ski patrol from its current location in the Wy’East Day Lodge, to the new location, plans will be pursued to build a state-of-the-art day care facility in the day lodge space previously occupied by the ski patrol.
**Satellite Base Area**

Roughly 3 miles up the Timberline Road, lies an ideal spot adjacent to the bottom of the Molly’s Express chairlift. This appears to be an ideal location to offer a modest amount of additional parking and essential skier services such as ticketing, lockers, and bathrooms, to our frequent visitors. It also is a potential site for congregate overnight housing for summer ski camps, if Forest planning would permit. Here, at the lower reaches of the Timberline permit area, outside the viewshed of the Lodge, we envision services housed in a Cascadian-style building to accommodate some of the growing needs facing Timberline and the Government Camp area.

**Summary**

Timberline is a popular ski area, a public building of national significance, and is one of Oregon’s most highly visited tourist attractions. Given its location roughly 60 miles due east of Portland, Oregon, directly alongside US Highway 26, and close to the growing town of Government Camp, Timberline will continue to attract a growing number of visitors and provide the passer-by with a gateway experience to the history, majesty, and beauty of Oregon’s Mt. Hood. We need smart planning to allow us to continue to accommodate the public in a way that does not diminish from the experience, or harm or overshadow Timberline. Recognizing the importance of Timberline as a year ‘round ski destination is paramount to this preservation of Timberline Lodge and to the long-term success of the area. These conceptual development proposals for Timberline’s future seek to balance the preservation of the aggregate resources that compromise the Timberline experience, with the growing demand to visit the site. By working closely with the United States Forest Service and the local mountain community, and by focusing on innovative and long-term solutions, RLK and Company hopes to sustain Timberline as a truly authentic and special place for generations to come.

**Comments**

We would sincerely appreciate your comments. Please send your thoughts to Jeff Kohnstamm, Timberline Lodge, OR 97028 or visit the "About Us" section on our website.