

TAKE ACTION NOW!

Comments

The most important thing you can do is to send a comment or comments to the DEC. Comment on any or all aspects of environmental impact: mountain and forest erosion, water quality, flooding and stormwater, traffic, economic impact, impact on community character or sense of place, air or noise pollution, loss of the night sky, viewshed, or any other matter you choose.

Public comments must be received by June 24, 2013 and must be sent to the following contact person at the DEC, so please write, call, or email:

Daniel T Whitehead
NYSDEC Region 3 Headquarters
21 South Putt Corners Rd
New Paltz, NY 12561
(845)256-3801
belleayre@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Help us take the next step

\$500 \$250 \$100

\$50 \$25 Other _____

Please make your check payable to CHA and send it, **along with this form**, to:

CHA Treasurer, P.O. Box 88
Shandaken, NY 12480

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____

The Catskill Heritage Alliance is a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving the harmony between the villages of the central Catskills and the surrounding wilderness through community revitalization and open space conservation. The CHA is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, and your donation is tax-deductible to the full extent provided by law.

Sign Our Petition and Spread it Via Social Media

<http://tinyurl.com/d4bj6k6>

Then use your Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc. accounts to post the petition and other links.

Speak Out

The public hearing will be held on May 29, in the Discovery Lodge of the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. The first session of the hearing will begin at 3 p.m. and the second session will begin at 6 p.m. Please attend and speak out.

The Discovery Lodge at the Ski Center is located just off state Route 28 at Highmount; the intersection is 37 miles west of the Kingston exit #19 on the NYS Thruway. The official address is 181 Galli Curci Road, Highmount, NY 12441.

DEC has also scheduled an informational presentation of the proposed project—no public commenting or participation—for May 22, 2013, at 7 p.m. in the Discovery Lodge.

Contact Public Officials

Governor Andrew Cuomo

<http://www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php>

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS Capitol Building
Albany NY 12224
518 474-8390

Find your State Assembly Representative:

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/?sh=search>

Find your State Senator:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/report/member-directory-3042013>

Letters to the Editor, On the Page and Online

Keep it short (about 150 words), simple, and civil.

Catskill Mountain News:

<http://www.catskillmountainnews.com/content/letter-editor>

Kingston Daily Freeman:

letters@freemanonline.com

Woodstock Times:

woodstocktimes@ulsterpublishing.com

Watershed Post:

<http://www.watershedpost.com>

Albany Times Union:

tuleters@timesunion.com

Albany Times-Herald Record:

letters@th-record.com

Source Documents

Find documents at: www.catskill-heritage.org, or at two local libraries:

Skene Memorial Library

Main Street, Fleischmanns, NY 12430
Opening hours: Tuesday-Friday 1-5pm,
Saturday 10am-2pm

Phoenicia Library

9 Ava Maria Drive, Phoenicia, NY 12464
Monday-Friday 1-6pm
Tuesday 10am – 4pm
Saturday: 10am-3pm

Contact DEC at 845 256-3000 for an appointment to see documents at DEC headquarters in New Paltz.

Stay Current

www.catskillheritage.org

Check it regularly for news and updates about the proposed resort project and the unit management plan for Belleayre.



Report on the Resort

Layout and Design: Just Say Supersize...

Crossroads Ventures' proposed Belleayre Resort totals 739 acres, roughly the size of the hamlet of Phoenicia, and straddles Ulster and Delaware Counties in the towns of Shandaken and Middletown. It lies just west, both down- and uphill, of the state-owned Belleayre Mountain Ski Center (BMSC), whose management was transferred in 2012 from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA).

The 739-acre footprint falls on both sides of Route 49A as you drive uphill from the Routes 49A/28 intersection. The lower resort, Wildacres, is a 254-acre parcel with a 250-unit hotel (proposed as a 3.5-4 star resort), 163 lodging units in multi-unit, multi-story (some as high as three floors) buildings, restaurants, spa, retail space, tennis courts, pool, conference center, and an 18-hole golf course, with driving range and clubhouse.

The upper resort, Highmount Spa (a 5-star resort), a layered pancake structure built into the Belleayre Ridge, includes the old Highmount ski area. The eastern boundary touches the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. It's sited on 237 acres and includes a 120-room spa hotel with 53 fractional ownership units, a multi-level lodge with 27 fractional ownership units, 16 "detached" lodging units in 8 duplex buildings, restaurants, a shop, and conference and fitness facilities. The originally proposed 24 units on the top of Belleayre Ridge have been relocated to the third-floor units in Wildacres; the upper access road has thus been eliminated.

The developer has in the past made no secret of its intentions to partner with a large corporate resort developer. Make no mistake, the proposed Belleayre Resort is not a folksy mom-and-pop operation; it's a speculative corporate real estate deal designed to be flipped to corporate developers at a healthy profit to the investors.

The totals: 629 units of lodging, 34 lodging structures, 215 developed acres (read: clear-cut, blasted, bulldozed, graded, re-contoured, replanted), 1.5 miles of roads, some 28 acres of impervious surfaces (including the vegetated "roof" of the Highmount Spa and the engineered drainage of an 18-hole golf course). Although the elimination of the original eastern portion of the Resort subtracted structures and one golf course from the package, this move concentrated the footprint west of BMSC. The number of lodging units has diminished only by 19 percent, or 143 units. Hotel rooms, for example, dropped only from 400 to 370; while less ground has been disturbed, the size and number of lodging units are nearly the same.

On A Full Build-out Day...

The 629 lodging units alone are about equal to the populations of the nearby hamlets of Pine Hill (275 in 2010) and Fleischmanns (350 in 2011) combined, although of course each unit houses more than one person. A full workforce

What We Need You to Do

By CHA Chairman Kathy Nolan

In the words of the immortal Yogi Berra, it's not over till it's over. And it's what we all do now that can change the course of what happens at Belleayre and in our communities. So here are six things we ask you to do as soon as possible:

- 1 Send a comment expressing your disapproval of the resort as proposed to New York's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- 2 Attend the public hearing on May 29 at the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center and let your voice be heard.
- 3 Write a letter to the editor of a local or statewide newspaper; use the comments you submitted to the DEC if you like.
- 4 Sign our online petition and post it to social media.
- 5 Recruit friends and family to do the first, second, third, and fourth steps above, and
- 6 Donate what you can to help us hire the best possible experts to make our case.

Check the Take Action Now box and find information on our website to help shape your comments and guide your letter-writing; the website also has contact information for members of the Executive Committee you can call on for additional help.

For whatever you do and for all that you do, thanks...

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of 771 would serve these guests, a number that surpasses the local hamlets' populations by over 100. What are the costs to a community of a resort this size? Traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, greater demand on town services and infrastructure, strain on town aquifers, stormwater runoff that fuels flooding when the "100 year" storms arrive—three so far in the past 15 years—a new "hamlet on a mountainside" visible both day and night from Route 28, a nighttime "glow" of light pollution, the noise and dust of construction, and competition (and likely higher prices) for scarce housing to house workers. And 215 forested, mountainside acres in the Catskill Park adjacent to the Forest Preserve forever lost—through conversion to development.

"Marginally Feasible"

This is how the developer's own economic consultant characterized the viability of the proposed Belleayre Resort: "We conclude that the proposed subject hotel is marginally feasible." (DEIS, Appendix 5, HVS, Section 7, p. 8). And that was before the stock, credit, and housing markets crashed in 2008! CHA's own economic consultant concluded that the proposed resort was greatly oversized when skier and lodging facility metrics for other similar New York state ski resorts are applied. Were the resort to be built as proposed, it would fail to meet its operating pro-forma—that is, its projected future status—which would cause it to cannibalize market share from existing communities, businesses, and proprietors in the Route 28 corridor and elsewhere in the Catskills. In short, an oversized resort that is "Too Big To Succeed."

Climate Change Trumps All

Numerous studies have concluded that climate change will make future winters warmer. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)'s 2012 "Climate Impacts on the Winter Tourism Economy in the United States" pegged the temperature increase at up to 10 degrees by the end of the century. The New York State Climate Action Council Interim Report predicts that the length of the snow season in the northeast will be cut in half. In New York and New England, snow cover is projected to decrease by 50 to 75 percent, depending on a lower or higher emissions scenario. NYSERDA's 2011 "ClimAID Report" concluded that by mid-century "expected annual reduction of ski-season length for the three major ski regions in New York (Western, Northeastern and Southeastern) are expected to be in the range of 12 to 28 percent." All of these studies point to an inescapable conclusion: a sustained decrease in snow cover of even 5 to 10 percent would likely cause the developer's pro-forma to seriously underperform.

All Water Flows Downhill...

Although it may take several years for the effects of climate change to play out in the ski industry, Catskill communities have already seen and felt the outcome of more frequent and intense storms, the 100-year events like Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee that devastated Catskill hamlets in 2011 and Hurricane Sandy that wracked New York City in 2012, with tidal surges extending up the Hudson River as far as Saugerties. The impervious surfaces of development collect, redirect, and speed runoff downhill. The natural absorptive capacity of soils and vegetation is altered. Control resides in an engineered system. Given the size, density, and elevation of the proposed

resort, there is ample opportunity for storm water runoff to breach intended systems of control. The result? The residents of Fleischmanns already know the answer: flooded streets, buildings knocked off their foundations, loss of life. The solution? Downsize it to lower, flatter elevations.

...and Downstate

As stewards of the Catskills, one of our greatest responsibilities is to the 10 million downstate residents who rely on our communities to safeguard the watershed that provides their drinking water. In exchange for economic development funds, Catskill communities agreed to restrict certain types and levels of development so the New York City water supply could remain unfiltered. The EPA-granted FAD, or Filtration Avoidance Determination, not only helps guarantee downstate residents clean water but also saves NY taxpayers upwards of \$20 billion—the projected cost of a massive water filtration plant. One of New York City's ailing reservoirs, the Ashokan, benefitted from the developer's agreement to sell 1200 acres east of BMSC to the state and thus prevent erosion and pollutants from contributing to the Ashokan's further demise. But we must ensure that another reservoir, the Pepacton, perhaps the cleanest in the NYC system, remains unharmed. Recent extreme storms and floods carried debris, chemicals, and silt from far upstream westward into the Pepacton. Runoff from a high elevation development on Belleayre could add to this. And potential hydrofracking wellheads (if natural gas hydrofracking receives DEC approval) near the Pepacton could pollute this drinking supply as well. Clearly, with so many threats facing it, the Pepacton needs all the protection it can get to remain clean and open to expanded recreational uses—a move the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protect is embracing to help upstate communities sustainably develop their economies.

Who Benefits?

The developer, Crossroads Ventures, has in the past made no secret of its intentions to partner with a large corporate resort developer. Make no mistake, the proposed Belleayre Resort is not a folksy mom-and-pop operation; it's a speculative corporate real estate deal designed to be flipped to corporate developers at

a healthy profit to the investors. A "permitted" development prospectus is central to the pitch—just as is all the talk of jobs, tax revenues, and benefits to the local economy. At the end of the day, it's the corporate bottom line that benefits. And as any analyst will tell you, in a tight and marginal market, which characterizes much of the resort industry, the road to a healthy bottom line includes low

staffing ratios and wages along with avoidance of as many taxes as possible. This is a high price for a community to pay so a small percentage of people can ski out of a private development onto a public ski area that is being developed primarily for their benefit, not that of the public.

CHA Position: Build Smart!

The Catskill Heritage Alliance—600-plus members strong—and its supporters were early opponents of the Crossroads Ventures resort proposal. The group objected to the proposed development on the grounds of its environmental insensitivity, the economic damage it would cause local businesses and workers, and the co-opting of a public recreational resource to realize private profit for a few investors, while turning the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center into an "amenity" to which private hotel guests and time-share owners would have special access.

'A Development We Would Support and be Glad to Live With'

CHA continues to object to the Crossroads Ventures proposal, back for a second time before the DEC's permitting authority. But the organization is by no means "anti-development" and actively supports alternatives proposed in the Unit Management plan for Belleayre Mountain released by the DEC April 17.

The organization has long advocated for the expansion of the Ski Center base area, the renovation of the Discovery and Sunset Lodges, and the expansion of recreational activities in the newly acquired 1200 acres east of Belleayre Mountain. It is also on record as favoring the construction of more lodging, sited not on a sensitive, high-elevation ridge-top where it would exacerbate flooding and erosion, but below Route 49A, and appropriately sized at about half the "Disneyland proportions" of the current proposal. The lodging contemplated by the Crossroads proposal calls for 600-plus units, many in multi-unit duplex buildings. Such numbers are out of proportion to comparable ski resorts, prompting past CHA chairman Roger Wall to describe the resort proposed by Crossroads as "too big to succeed!"

Instead, CHA argues that the current proposal—and all alternatives for development—should be judged within the context of five basic criteria:

Development plans should be based on solid information, sound economics, and the realities of climate change. The current proposal, says Wall, "forgot all three." In fact, the bulk of the data on which the projections of the current 2013 proposal are based is from 2008 or 2009—before the full effects of global recession, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, Hurricane Sandy, etc.—"another world," in Wall's words.

Development should focus, as so many studies have urged, on existing hamlets so that, rather than taking business away from local communities, it strengthens the existing enterprises along the Route 28 corridor.

Any development must preserve the character and beauty of the Catskill Forest Preserve. Period.

Development must protect water quality, including that of the Pepacton Reservoir, the only non-impaired west-of-Hudson reservoir for the NYC water supply.

Development must maintain Belleayre as a center for all-season, low-impact recreational opportunities that run the gamut of what New Yorkers love to do: ski, fish, hunt, hike, ride bikes and horses, watch birds and paint waterfalls, find solitude.

"A development that meets those criteria is one we would support and be glad to live with," says CHA chair Kathy Nolan, "and alternatives that do just that are before the DEC and ready to become reality. It's an approach we back wholeheartedly."