



Source: Catskill Heritage Alliance www.catskillheritage.org

News Release

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NEW REVIEW DOCUMENTS PROVIDE FOR MODIFICATION TO BELLEAYRE RESORT PROPOSAL, SAYS CATSKILL HERITAGE ALLIANCE

CHA Would Support Project Under Certain Conditions, Affirms Public Comment Will Determine Outcome

[Pine Hill, NY – April 17, 2013] Today the NYS Department of Environmental Protection (DEC) released the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), Unit Management Plan (UMP) and Cumulative Impact Statement for new development at the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center (BMSC) and a private resort proposed by Crossroads LLC. The release of the new documents marks the beginning of a 60-day public comment period on the project. The local citizens' group Catskill Heritage Alliance (CHA) is reviewing the documents and stressing the importance of area residents using the comment period to weigh in.

CHA notes that the filed documents leave plenty of room for envisioning different versions of the project. In particular, they contain options for developing the Belleayre site without New York State purchasing additional land adjacent to the Ski Center and without the resort building a luxury spa on Highmount, both of which CHA opposes.

“The permit application file is complete, but that doesn't mean the Crossroads' proposal is a done deal,” said Kathy Nolan, chair of CHA. “On the contrary, what happens now with Belleayre really depends on what residents say during the comment period. Our members don't believe spending public money to help build a private, oversized ski resort for the wealthy on a sensitive ridgetop is in the public interest, and we've got research to prove it. Instead, we support approaches to developing Belleayre, including base area expansion at the Ski Center, and a resort hotel that isn't so oversized, so high up and so out of touch, which would serve the public well. These options are provided for in the

documents filed today, and they could become reality, if we turn out to back this approach for our community. Public comment in the next 60 days will really determine which approach prevails.”

CHA has long been on record opposing Crossroads proposal to build a roughly 500-unit, private, luxury ski-in/ski out resort atop Highmount, enabled with New York State taxpayer funds. CHA’s analysis showed Crossroads’ claims that the Resort would create many hundreds of permanent jobs are unfounded, and that it is unlikely to attract visitors without taking them away from other existing local businesses and causing economic damage to businesses and communities along the Route 28 corridor. CHA objects to the Resort’s lack of a detailed, credible business plan, a valid market study, or any commitments from a credible lender for financing, a capable hotel/resort operator or time-share franchisor.

CHA has commissioned a review of the SDEIS and Appendices from an independent economic consultant, now underway. In a March 27, 2013 letter to the DEC (posted on www.catskillheritage.org), CHA states that initial findings show the proposed resort to be vastly oversized when skier and lodging facility metrics for other similar New York State ski resorts are applied. The letter also details the negative environmental impacts of the proposed ridgetop development, such as exacerbated flooding, erosion and stormwater management issues, and says research on deteriorating prospects for ski resorts due to climate change casts further doubt on Crossroads’ projections of Resort economic performance.

At the same time, CHA has long been on record favoring a modified approach to the project. It supports base-area expansion at the BMSC, such as renovation of the existing lower lodge or construction of a new lower lodge, and has long stated it would accept a more appropriately sized and sited Belleayre Resort. As it awaits the results of its full review of the SDEIS and other new documents, CHA has formulated the conditions under which it might support the project, including the Belleayre Resort. They include siting the Resort below Route 49A instead of at high elevation, scaling it back to about half of its currently proposed size, and not spending New York State public funds to purchase new land for ski-center expansion. For CHA to support them, plans for the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center (BMSC) and for the Catskills region must also:

- be based on solid information, sound economics, and climate realities;
- focus on in-fill development and development in existing hamlets;
- preserve the character and beauty of the Catskill Forest Preserve;
- protect water quality, including that of the Pepacton Reservoir, the only non-impaired West of Hudson reservoir for the NYC water supply;
- focus on low-environmental impact, non-motorized ("human-powered") recreation;
- utilize the newly acquired 1,200 acres east of Belleayre Mountain for low-impact, non-motorized recreation such as mountain biking, hiking, birding, horse-back riding and cross-country skiing; and
- respect ORDA's current approach to expanding all-season recreational opportunities at the BMSC within its existing footprint and linking to other recreational and cultural initiatives in the Catskills, instead of regarding Belleayre as a ski area linked to a resort.

CHA will review the SDEIS and other documents with these criteria in mind and submit formal comments on the Crossroads project during the 60-day comment period. We urge all concerned residents to do likewise. The public can access Crossroads' SDEIS and other information on the project on CHA's website, www.catskillheritage.org.

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Note to Editors and Producers: Kathy Nolan and other CHA spokespeople are available for interviews on request. To arrange one, or for documentation or other information, contact Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com, 914-589-5988

The Catskill Heritage Alliance is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to preserving the harmony between people and wilderness in the central Catskills. It seeks to protect the unique wilderness environment that is the region's abiding treasure and its most reliable economic engine.