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October 29, 2001

Mr. Larry Donovan, Team Leader
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
21905 64th Avenue West
Mountlake Terrace, Washington 98043

Re: Crystal Mountain Draft Environmental Impact Statement - 2001

Dear Mr. Donovan:

I am the Director of Communications and Public Affairs for the Northwest Ski Club Council, an organization representing 39 ski and ski/snowboard clubs, 25 in Oregon and 14 in the state of Washington. We represent approximately 10,000 snowsports enthusiasts, including alpine and cross-country skiers, as well as snowboarders. In this letter when I refer to "skiers," I really mean to include all varieties of "snow riders" who enjoy developed ski areas.

I write this letter on behalf of our member skiers and snowboarders, who are typically part of the "silent majority," and would rather ski/board than concern themselves with writing letters. I have been involved with NWSCC since its inception as the Portland Area Ski Club Council in 1979, and since that time have had input into every ski area master plan proposal on Mt. Hood in Oregon, as well as Department of Transportation plans for highway development and improvement. I am pleased to have this opportunity to have input for the first time on behalf of one of the Pacific Northwest's finest ski areas, Crystal Mountain.

Personally, I feel especially qualified to speak on behalf of the skiers because I am an avid advanced skier, and have skied at over 50 ski areas throughout the United States and Canada over a thirty-five year period, so I have a basis for comparison of the amenities offered by ski areas of all sizes. Crystal Mountain is one of the areas where I have skied several times over the years. Every year a number NWSCC member clubs take trips to Crystal Mountain. My first visit was over 25 years ago with Plaza Ski Club, based out of Portland. I was impressed with the mountain then, and am more impressed each time I visit.

I write in support of the Crystal Mountain Master Development Plan proposal outlined in Alternative 2 of the August 2001 Crystal Mountain Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As usual in any such documents I have reviewed, the DEIS is a very thorough, comprehensive study of every aspect of the proposed expansion. The ski area has done a very thorough job of designing all proposed improvements to have the minimum impact upon sensitive aspects of the environment.

I favor the ski area's proposal, Alternative 2, with some specific comments following that relate to recreational enjoyment of the ski area.

Proposed New Chairlifts

Skiers today want high speed lifts. One of my memories of Crystal Mountain from 25 years ago was riding three lifts to access the top of the mountain, with long lines that made the entire trip take 45 minutes. By the time I got to the top I was freezing and all I wanted to do was go back

down to the lodge. High speed lifts eat up lines and disperse skiers. The new chairlifts access some terrain that I have been drooling over in my previous visits to Crystal Mountain. The proposal for the Summit Tram would be an excellent addition for summer use of the area, providing disabled persons, as well as the general public, with an opportunity to enjoy the breathtaking scenery and view of Mt. Rainier which is one of the highlights of skiing at Crystal Mountain.

Terrain/Snowmaking

One of the reasons I enjoy skiing Crystal Mountain so much is its high percentage of black diamond and double black diamond terrain, giving advanced skiers an "in bounds back country" experience. However, I know that every ski area needs to attract beginners and intermediates, and the suggested minor increase in area of 239 acres includes terrain that will add to Crystal Mountain's appeal to those skiers.

Snowmaking is another improvement which greatly assists beginner and intermediate skiers, as it is applied to the lower slopes to assist in coverage, providing better consistency in snow conditions and making a more enjoyable learning experience. The proposal for the new wastewater treatment facility to provide reclaimed water to a storage lagoon or for use in snowmaking seems like an excellent recycling method.

Base Area/Support Facilities

Expansion of both lodging and base area facilities are essential. The addition of the proposed second base area at Bullion Basin would be a huge help in relieving peak congestion. Additional housing for guests (adding 100 rooms) and employees (adding 200 beds) will make Crystal Mountain even more of a destination resort for skiers outside the greater Seattle area, and should assist in mitigating highway congestion, as more people will be able to stay at the mountain and not have to commute daily. Expansion of the night skiing area will also spread out the times for peak travel. Expansion of the parking lots is another important feature; proximity to the lifts is the most important aspect of parking. Adding a variety of restaurants around the mountain will also add to Crystal Mountain's appeal as a destination resort, as well as relieving congestion in the base area.

Environment

The preferred alternative is very well researched and includes a commitment to maintain the water quality around the mountain, including installing a new tertiary treatment system. I am aware from my dealings with Mt. Hood ski areas of the extent of the efforts ski areas make to be good stewards of the environment.

Conclusion

Crystal Mountain is a real jewel among the Pacific Northwest's ski areas. The terrain is world class, but the resort facilities currently do not support its potential. In order to continue growing skier visits, and especially to appeal to skiers outside the greater Seattle area, it is vital that Crystal Mountain be allowed to expand both its lift, lodging, and base facilities. All of the proposals would add to the enjoyment of families, individuals and groups visiting the area, both in winter and in summer. Also, all of the proposals are in line with plans for Crystal Mountain originally envisioned in the 1960's. It is time to put these plans into effect.

The Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest offers vast expanses for those seeking a wilderness experience. The minute area devoted to ski areas offers a less threatening mountain experience to those who still wish to enjoy the beauty of the mountain year round. The ski slopes in summer are covered with wildflowers whose beauty should be appreciated by everyone. Some of the proposed summer usages would make the area accessible to disabled persons who might not

otherwise be able to enjoy a "close encounter" with the mountains. With the base facilities in the beautiful mountain setting, the opportunity for outdoor recreation, the new tram, and the addition of a USFS or NPS interpretative center at the Summit House, Crystal Mountain will truly be a world class year round resort.

We urge you to consider the views of the group that has the most interest in the best possible winter recreation experience at Crystal Mountain: the skiers and the snowboarders. They are active people who love the outdoors, in winter as well as in summer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda A. McGavin

Director of Communications and Public Affairs
cc: John Kircher, Crystal Mountain Area Manager
Stacy Schuster, Sales & Marketing Director
Scott Kaden, Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association