



In case you didn't know skiing was a dirty pastime, Bruson, Switzerland, lays it all out there.

DROPPING THE GLOVES

CAN A SKI RESORT REALLY BE GREEN?

A tree hugger squares off with an eco-realist.

SKI WHERE IT'S GREEN BY AUDEN SCHENDLER

I'm not universally loved in the ski industry. I've written articles chastising ski resorts for hyping business-as-usual programs like recycling or upgraded snowmaking as their environmental initiatives.

But I've changed. Recent events, some of them seismic, make me believe that the ski industry is on board with the green revolution. Ski-industry leaders increasingly understand the fundamental

point about modern environmentalism: It's not about public relations but climate change, which threatens the future of skiing and our entire business. In May 2007, National Ski Area Association president Michael Berry testified in the Senate that ski areas were concerned about global warming. Then Colorado Ski Country's former head Rob Perلمان got most of Colorado's ski-resort CEOs to sign an essay, published in the *Denver Post*, supporting a

SKIING IS DIRTY BY MEGAN MICHELSON

In October 1998, environmental terrorists from the Earth Liberation Front set fire to four chairlifts and three buildings at Vail resort, causing roughly \$12 million in damage. ELF was protesting the expansion of the resort into lynx habitat. But ELF's broader message reverberated throughout the Western U.S.: Ski resorts are a destructive and rapidly growing force.

Since then, resorts have hired public-relations experts to clean up their collective mess. Some have even created new positions for environmental stewards (yes, Auden, I mean you). And they're doing a damn fine job convincing us that skiing is good for the environment. With all the organic nachos and the carpooling and the biodiesel cats, every day is Earth Day at the ski hill.

Please. A single high-speed

statewide climate action plan.

And things are happening on the ground. Take Mammoth's energy program, run by a trench warrior named Bob Bradbury, who has succeeded in reducing energy use each year through small, cost-effective measures like timers on heaters in lift shacks and computerized energy-management systems.

Then there's Jiminy Peak, Massachusetts, a 170-acre ski resort that installed a 1.5-megawatt wind turbine to power a third of the resort. That is what sustainability looks like on the ground.

Yet the problem is simply too big for carbon offsets and efficient light bulbs. Making a real difference means finding, and using, the biggest lever we have. For the ski industry, that means using ski resorts' mainstream profile to drive policy change at the highest levels. For example, when Aspen Skiing

Company filed a brief to the Supreme Court demanding that the Environmental Protection Agency regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant, it got attention and helped the cause. (The plaintiffs won.)

Customers seem to be responding. Resorts are seeing rapid growth in guests' concerns about environmental issues. We all understand that skiing has huge impacts, but that doesn't mean we're going to give it up.

So here's my proposition: Find a resort that legitimately gets climate change and is working to stop it at the highest levels. Go ski there. And let's put the other dirty bastards out of business forever.

Auden Schendler is Aspen Skiing Company's executive director of sustainability. He is the author of Getting Green Done, which will be published this winter.

chairlift pumps 200,000 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere during one winter. That's the equivalent of flying round-trip from San Francisco to Tokyo 25 times. And snowmaking? Large resorts use between 300 and 400 million gallons of water each year. I'm sorry, but no number of fluorescent bulbs in the cafeteria or low-flow toilets in the lodge is going to correct that. And you know what? Though we're environmentally minded, we're also skiers. We understand what it takes to make skiing possible. So who do they think they're fooling?

Resorts using their clout to seek environmental action on the political level are admirable, no doubt. Same with large-scale green developments, like Whistler's new hydroelectric plant that'll produce as much energy as the resort uses. Or Kirkwood's

plan to build 20 wind turbines. But many resorts' green initiatives are unproven. Today, 68 resorts in the U.S. offset emissions by buying wind and solar energy credits. But big resorts are still consuming resources as hungrily as small cities. They need to reduce their impact, not offset it.

Consumers are eating up the zero-emissions/organic fad and resorts can't ignore consumer patterns. But no one wants a lecture on free-range burgers. And nobody cares about floor mats made from recycled tires. We recognize the environmental cost, and we realize that resorts will never be perfect. Can't we just shut up and go skiing already?

When Associate Editor Megan Michelson isn't eating endangered species, she drives her F-350, looking for trees to murder.