EPIC DISCOVERY - A First of Its Kind Summer Adventure Experience
BACKGROUND

Problem Statement:

How can ski areas operating on federal lands under Forest Service Special Use Permits propose additional year-round recreation activities other than skiing or snowboarding?
WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?
Economic - Work Force - Access to Public Recreation Opportunities

• Ski areas are areas previously designated for developed recreation.
• Ski areas typically do not earn money for nearly half of the year.
• Ski areas lay off most of the seasonal winter work force.
• Ski areas have extensive infrastructure that sits idle for several months each year.
• Not a predictable outcome among Forests.
SO WHAT DID IT TAKE ....
To amend the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 to clarify the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture regarding additional recreational uses of National Forest System land that is subject to ski area permits, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
This Act may be cited as the “Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011”.

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.
The purpose of this Act is to amend the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b)—
(1) to enable snow-sports (other than nordic and alpine skiing) to be permitted on National Forest System land subject to ski area permits issued by the Secretary of Agriculture under section 3 of the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b); and
(2) to clarify the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to permit appropriate additional seasonal or year-round recreational activities and facilities on National Forest System land subject to ski area permits issued by the Secretary of Agriculture under section 3 of the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b).
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

- The initial list of appropriate activities was floored into the Bill.
- The overall concept of fit within the Forest & within the ski area (i.e., it is still a winter sports area).
- Developing the FSM Guidelines.
- Heavenly was one of the first ones to implement new summer activities along with Vail.
- Setting a high bar for others to follow.
THE SITE DESIGN & PLANNING PROCESS
(The What)

- Site Analysis
- Conceptual Plan
- Refined Plan
- Submitting the Project Proposal
- Understanding the Proposal
THE REVIEW PROCESS (The How)

- Land Use, Master Development Plan & Forest Plan Consistency
- NEPA effects analysis and laws of other jurisdictions: parallel review
- Engineering Plans/ Specs/ Calcs
- Owner’s 3rd party engineering review
- Public NEPA Process
- Regional Office Policy Review
DECISION PROCESS & IMPLEMENTATION (The When)

- Pre-Decisional Objection Process
- Decision Document
- Conditions of Approval
- Coordination with Other Agencies
- 45-Day Detailed Engineering Review
- Field Fitting Required

- What’s it Going to Look Like on the Ground?
A raindrop’s journey

Rain and snow in the mountains sustain life far beyond where they fall.

High above Tahoe, water vapor condenses into clouds, and eventually to Earth. The drops hit the boughed branch of a pine tree and drip down the needles to the earth. Their journey won’t be linear. Where have end up depends on where the wind takes them. Snowfall falling east of the Sierra Nevada, through California, into the Pacific Ocean. Snowfall falling west might cross the Sierra Nevada and become a part of the desert of Nevada. Their journey will come to an end in the deserts of Nevada.
LESSONS LEARNED: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE GOING FORWARD?

1. Approach as a Partnership
2. Engage the right vendors early, help them understand the process & requirements: manage expectations, speak the same language
3. Which Regs? Figure out all review standards and credentials: ASTM, ACCT, State of CA
4. Find ways to be efficient and thorough: short building & summer season; time is money; phase approvals & release in parts: don’t wait to do it all at once
5. Develop Forest Service technical review bench strength
6. Conduct Group Post Construction Evaluations: what worked, didn’t, what lessons can we share with ourselves and with others?
7. Create a complete experience, not just a series of individual activities; tell stories to connect people to the land and create a sense of place.
8. It’s about the staff & their ability to engage the guest