



November 19, 2009

Snyderville Basin Planning Commission

Commissioners:

As the heli-ski tenant of the site proposed in The Canyons Resort's application for a Low Impact Building Permit Wasatch Powderbird Guides (WPG) supports their effort to improve the safety and quality of experience for their clients and for all Park City based heli-skiers. WPG feels that the proposed improvements will provide significant benefits for Summit County residents with minimal impact.

In one form or another WPG has provided helicopter skiing services from the Snyderville Basin since the early 1980's. Through the various incarnations of Park West, Wolf Mountain and The Canyons Resort we have consistently flown Summit County residents and visitors, out of resort based helipads and parking lots, into the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest to experience the wonders of Utah's backcountry powder bowls.

The Silverado site will provide a less expensive and more convenient opportunity for heli-skiers to base their vacations in Summit County. They will no longer have to pay to fly or to use ground transportation to get to our base at Snowbird to heli-ski.

Summit County, with 3 major ski resorts, will benefit economically from having world class heli-skiing locally available. In WPG's 37 years we have seen how the sizzle of a heli-ski operation draws many visitors to the area who hope to one day achieve skiing's most exciting challenge, and therefore choose to vacation where the activity exists.

Local lodging, dining, and retail businesses will enjoy increased sales due the high spending habits of heli-skiers. Also, substantial sales tax revenues, from heli-skiers beginning their day at The Canyons Resort, will now be paid in Summit County instead of in Salt Lake County.

We recognize concerns that helicopter skiing affects other backcountry users and fears that helicopter noise may impact the daily lives of basin residents.

WPG's backcountry activities really have nothing to do with the building permit application. We operate under the direction of the Forest Service which limits our skiing in place, time, and size. Skiers flown from The Canyons Resort will be subject to these existing restrictions. In addition, WPG's backcountry operations have been exhaustively studied and all impacts on wildlife and other users have been mitigated.

The proposed site has been chosen, and will be managed, to minimize the impact on all residents. The increase in traffic, parking, lighting, and utility use will be insignificant.

The site is better than other suggested sites, such as the Burns Fire Station, since all flights will be able to go directly into the backcountry without having to fly over residential areas, roads, or buildings.

The noise of helicopters is consistent with other resort sounds such as buses, chairlifts and other commercial activities. The many visiting skiers who are excited by the sound of the ski patrol using explosives to minimize avalanche risk will likely find the presence and sounds of the ski helicopter exciting as well.

However, WPG has learned to minimize noise impacts by operating stealthfully and by avoiding flights over populated areas. Our pilots follow the Helicopter Association International's Fly Neighborly Guide. We operate Light /Small helicopters that are among the quietest available and we can assure basin residents that most encounters with our aircraft flying by will be no louder than normal vehicle traffic.

In addition, WPG's activities are quite limited. A very small number of flights occur on about 70 days during the winter ski season and generally only during daylight hours.

What is important to recognize is that helicopter skiing is one of the most exciting, rewarding, and highly sought after activity on skis. As an international resort community Summit County deserves the benefits of having this activity available to residents and visitors alike. The Canyons Resort is the ideal place for basing this activity and the proposed site improvements will help provide this benefit in a safe and appropriate manner.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

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Wasatch Powderbird Guides, Inc.