



February 13, 2004

Ski Resorts Fight Back to Dampen Global Warming

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN, CA – Saturday, February 21, Mammoth Mountain will be hosting *Sustainable Slopes Day*, a day set aside by the National Ski Areas Association to focus on environmental issues related to the ski industry.

NSAA is promoting “Keep Winter Cool” as this year’s educational theme in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an influential national organization. Participating resorts, including Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA), will be highlighting the impact of global warming on winter recreation, as well as presenting specific ways that everyone – employees and guests alike – can help solve the problem.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the science of global warming is well understood and generally accepted throughout the world’s scientific community. The main culprits are identified as “greenhouse gases” (GHGs), which are large molecule air pollutants building up in the atmosphere and holding in too much of the sun’s heat, thereby causing the earth’s surface to warm beyond what is natural. Like a greenhouse, the earth’s atmosphere is meant to trap heat, making life as we know it possible, but most scientists now believe that human-caused air pollution is rapidly building up the atmospheric gas walls and effectively changing the world’s climate.

Researchers can now accurately predict the level of warming that results from increased GHGs in the upper atmosphere and have identified carbon dioxide (CO₂) as the principle GHG. Currently, the levels of CO₂ are rapidly increasing and are predicted to be double that of pre-industrial times by 2100. In fact, the atmospheric levels of CO₂ are as high as they’ve been in half a million years, based on ice core measurements. What the scientific community doesn’t agree upon, however, are the consequences of global warming; precisely what will happen to weather patterns, crop yields, regional temperatures and rainfall amounts.

“Global warming is a tough challenge, but we know how to fix it,” said Dr. Daniel Lashof, deputy director and chief scientist for the NRDC Climate Center. “The problem is pollution from cars and power plants, which traps heat in the atmosphere. The answer is cleaner, smarter energy technologies that pollute less.

The ski industry is calling attention to the threat, and more important, the solutions that exist right now to fight global warming.”

Plans for the “Keep Winter Cool” event at Mammoth Mountain include an educational booth located outside (weather dependent) at Main Lodge with solar heater demonstrations and a biofuel-powered snowcat offering rides to the public. ‘Cool’ gifts will also be available while supplies last to those who stop by to check it out.

As part of its commitment to environmental protections and GHG reductions, the resort is currently running pilot projects using alternative biodiesel fuel in snow-grooming machines at Tamarack Lodge and solar thermal air panels to provide back-up heating for on-hill lift houses. According to Lisa Isaacs, MMSA’s Environmental Programs Manager, energy audits have also been completed on over 100 of MMSA’s facilities to help increase the efficiencies of traditional energy systems, thereby decreasing the amount of fuel needed to power the systems and resulting emissions.

Many of MMSA’s employees have also been doing their part to conserve resources and help reduce GHG emissions. For some, carpools are the ride of choice. Noelle Sharp, a member of Mammoth’s Unbound Terrain Park crew, regularly carpools to work from Town with other Unbound crewmembers. “I like it. I get to hang out longer with my friends,” she explains.

Others prefer the free public bus service provided by MMSA’s Transportation Department. “The majority of my staff (70+) do not even have vehicles simply because they can depend on the bus service for all of their needs,” noted Launa Strickland, the Executive Housekeeper at Mammoth Mountain Inn.

MMSA also provides transportation for employees who live outside of Mammoth Lakes. Dena Dill, a buyer for Mammoth’s Purchasing Department, regularly rides the employee bus with about 20 other Bishop-area residents. “I like the atmosphere. Everyone is really friendly and the drivers are awesome,” she says. “I’m saving money by not using as much gas and I’m not contributing to the pollutants in the air. Sometimes it’s not so convenient, but I still do it because the benefits outweigh the inconvenience.” And those who work at June Mountain have a choice between carpooling and riding an employee bus. About 30 employees a day regularly take advantage of alternate transportation modes to and from June, notes General Manager Carl Williams.

When combined, all these employees – whether carpooling or riding a bus – are saving a huge amount of GHGs from entering the atmosphere. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency,

driving an automobile that gets 25 mpg 50 miles a week (about the amount an employee would drive commuting from Town to the Main Lodge) emits about 2,597 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere per year. If the commute is extended to Bishop (about 450 miles per week), the amount is a whopping 23,372 *pounds per year or almost 12 tons!*

“When you consider how many employees are carpooling or riding the bus to work, hundreds of tons of carbon dioxide are being prevented from entering our air basin every year,” Isaacs exclaims. “And when you add in the million-plus visitors who ride the bus, the savings are mind boggling.”

To learn more about how GHGs are affecting climate patterns and what you can do to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, plan on attending the “Keep Winter Cool” activities this Saturday during Sustainable Slopes Day at Mammoth Mountain’s Main Lodge. For more information, please contact MMSA’s Department of Environmental Programs at (760) 934-0773. For more information about NSAA’s “Keep Winter Cool” campaign, go to: www.nsa.org.

To calculate your own GHG emissions, go to: www.climatestar.org
or www.ucsus.org/carboncalculator.html.



In partnership with Inyo National Forest