



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

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PRESS RELEASE

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Borough moving forward on Hatcher Ski project

PALMER – Borough efforts to put ski lifts, a day lodge, and a Nordic trail system at Hatcher Pass are moving forward.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough contracted in July with Dowl Engineers to begin an environmental analysis of the area for the recreation project. The analysis will include alternatives. Dates are not pinned down yet, but in the next few months, a project team will be conducting a scoping process to learn what concerns the public and regulating agencies may have about a ski development and resulting infrastructure, such as roads, parking areas, water and sewer systems.

Hatcher Pass has been a winter sports venue for Alpine and Nordic skiing, and sledding since the 1940s. Other activities such as snow machining and snow boarding have taken root there as well. In summer it is a scenic hiking, camping, and blue berry picking destination.

A new Web site will be dedicated to the project at www.hatcherpass.com. A link to it will be on the Borough's Web site as well www.matsugov.us.

Borough staff expect the environmental study and alternatives analysis to be completed by the summer of 2008. Construction of the ski areas could begin following Borough adoption of the final recommendations. Once the size and scope of the project has been identified, various funding sources will be considered.

Over the past two decades, private developers and the Borough have considered development options, but have not been able to identify a project that has broad public support and that is financially feasible. Past plans considered residential and commercial development as part of the development package. This plan does not and starts smaller.

Ron Swanson, project manager for the Hatcher Ski project for the Borough, has been working with the administration and looking at other day-use ski areas to come up with a new plan for developing the recreational opportunities. "I have titled this project "Hatcher Pass — A New Beginning." My goal is to capture the good ideas from past proposals, to eliminate the ideas that did not receive widespread community support, and to come up with a new or modified plan, which will garner support. The new plan must be financially feasible to build, generate enough revenue to support its operations and at the same time be affordable to local skiers and families," Swanson said.

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The new Hatcher Ski Project under consideration includes:

- a day lodge about 12,000 square feet in size for Alpine skiers. This lodge will include rental areas, ski school facilities, lockers, food and beverage service. The lodge could also be used for visitor services and private community events during summer months.
- the Alpine ski area will offer a T-bar or platter lift for beginning skiers and snowboarders.
- a quad lift will take intermediate and advanced skiers up 1,350 vertical feet into the Government Peak bowl. A second T-bar lift will take advanced skiers another 900 feet up.
- the Nordic ski area has been designed to offer 16 km of Olympic or international class trails, in all, 24 km of recreational trails.
- a sledding hill with future pony lift
- a small chalet with warming facilities and restrooms that could also be used for small group or community activities
- a natural outdoor amphitheater would house spectators of winter sports and summer concerts

Work already done at Hatcher Ski area includes:

- the Borough acquired title to 3,000 acres of prime winter recreation terrain at Hatcher Pass and has management authority over the additional 7,000 acres that make up the Government Peak Management Area
- extended electrical power to proposed ski areas
- conducted geotechnical studies
- identified potable and snowmaking water supplies for the Alpine area

For more information, visit the project fact sheet on the Borough Web site. Or call Ron Swanson, project manager for the Borough at (907) 694-9564 or by email at ronswanson@mtaonline.net