

Mission Ridge needs Kittitas Valley access

If the new owner of the Mission Ridge Ski Area wants to make money on his investment, he should build a chairlift on the Kittitas Valley side of the ridge. Period.

Larry Scrivanich of Woodinville purchased the resort south of Wenatchee from Harbor Mountain Co., the company announced last week. The selling price wasn't disclosed, but Harbor had asked for \$2.2 million in July.

There are two places to build. One is via Coleman Canyon, but the more direct route would be via Naneum Canyon. To minimize the impact of a parking lot, people could take a shuttle on the road up the Naneum Canyon - a good road that is closed to public access - until they reach a base, from where a lift would take them to the top of the mountain. There would be no ski run initially on this side, just a lift.

Access to that road could be negotiated with the owner, Boise Cascade. In fact, the logging company is looking to sell their land in the area, which is without trees. Clear cutting means it has a clear-cut price.

The idea of a Kittitas Valley route to Mission Ridge goes back to the 1940s. The big sticking point all along has been concerns by a Wenatchee elk-hunting group over elk population.

However, the elk during the winter won't be as far up in elevation as the chairlift. During the summer the chairlift won't be used. And the shuttle would have far less impact than the snowmobiles, dirt bikes and the four-by-fours already in use in that part of the forest.

Also, there are concerns from Wenatchee merchants over losing customers.

The reason Mission Ridge had been on the selling block for four years is because it is hard to reach. It hurts the bottom line. You have to drive through scrambled Wenatchee streets, find a back road heading south, then meander up the mountains until you reach the base. For people in Seattle, it takes three hours to get to the resort.

If easy access from I -90 to Mission Ridge keeps the ski area economically alive, how could Wenatchee and Ellensburg not benefit? It obviously isn't better to let the ski area shut down for good.

The board at the Phoenix Economic Development Group in Ellensburg is excited about the prospects of Kittitas Valley access to Mission Ridge and has begun studying the idea so that it can come up with a proposal.

We hope Mr. Scrivanich listens to the board's plan.