

Inside Stevens

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Mountain Events & Stevens Pass

Mountain events are a fun and historic part of the winter here at Stevens Pass. From base area Rail Jams, to the Glenn Wilcutt Telemark Race, to the American Cancer Society's Hope on the Slopes 24 hour ski-for-the-cure event, Stevens Pass produces and promotes a wide variety of events for the viewing and participatory pleasure of our guests. In this month's Inside Stevens, we will explore the why's, what's, and how's of producing a successful event at Stevens Pass.

To begin, let's discuss what makes a successful event at Stevens Pass. With all our events, we begin with our departmental mission: "To create family friendly, fun, and financially viable events that are appealing to our guests and employees alike."

We begin the planning process during the summer prior to the following winter operation. The creation of the events calendar accounts for the many variables inherent in operating events in a mountain environment look. Factors we examine include past events, guest suggestions/feedback, expected daily business levels, alliance partner relationships, and the strengths of our on mountain staff.

By examining the successes and shortcomings of events in the past, we compile a list of the events that we would like to produce during the upcoming season. We then are able to begin strategizing the timing for each of these events during the season based on expected snowfall, visitation forecast, surrounding holidays, and on mountain resources. Certain events have inherent strengths and weaknesses that we must take into account during this planning process. For example, a rail jam requires far less build time and base area snow than a Quarter Pipe Jam. As a result, Rail Jams are more successful during the early part of the winter when snow quantity could be in question.

Using these guidelines, we are able to assemble a rough calendar with dates for each specific event. This calendar allows us to plan the specifics of each event, sponsorship, expected attendance, volunteer resources, and risk management. Prior to each event, we meet with representatives from other mountain departments to review the plans for the event, and discuss any potential areas for improvement.

While we do our best to plan for multiple weather conditions, anticipated business levels, and expected participation outcomes, we are often faced with conditions that require flexibility and change. Regardless of the best prior plans, variables exist outside of our control that demands attention and flexibility immediately before, or even during the event. We will briefly explore the Winter Mountain Bike Race as a prime example of this flexibility.

During the initial planning for this event, we aim to pick a weekend with a lower forecast for visitation, as we will be closing off Brennans Trail during the event. We also need specific snow conditions to make this event a reality; too much snow and bikes will not be able to navigate the course, but too little snow and we cannot safely build the berms and features required to conduct this event. To complicate things further, bikes require fairly hard surface conditions, as they roll, not slide, down the mountain.

With these variables, it is important that we plan for multiple dates and contingencies regarding each event. Our vendors, event partners, competitors, and spectators also remain adaptable to the changes that Mother Nature frequently throws our way.

The day of the event, our plans are set into action and the hard working men and women of the Stevens Pass Events Host team kick into action. Early in the morning, the crew sets up barriers and closures that keep the course, and the public, safe from any additional risk the event may create. A registration team works with Guest Relations to expedite the release waiver, payment, and processing of each event contestant while additional teams coordinate sound, music, sponsor tents, additional decoration and set up, as well as any provisions for a competitor/guest after party.

Prior to each event, we hold a competitor safety meeting so that all event participants have the most up to date and accurate information regarding the course, conditions, and schedule of festivities. All event participants are required to attend this pre-start meeting.

Music and other forms of entertainment add animation and energy to any event. As an all ages, family resort, we are very selective in choosing the music and DJ's for each event. While music and entertainment has to be age and market appropriate, we uphold a zero tolerance policy for foul language associated with any component of the event, whether music, announcing, or competitor language. We clearly set this expectation ahead of time in order to minimize the risk of any guest experiencing foul language associated with an event.

Above all, events at Stevens Pass are meant to entertain, inform, and offer quality experiences to our guests. We are always looking for suggestions and feedback with regards to events. Thanks very much for taking the time to familiar yourself with the process behind events at Stevens Pass, I personally look forward to seeing you on the mountain!

Chris Rudolph
Marketing, Public Relations, and Events Manager