

Inside Stevens

Monday, November 26, 2007

Greetings Skiers and Snowboarders!

Welcome to the first edition of *Inside Stevens*. The purpose of this column is to provide an inside look at the "what and why" of procedures, programs and our vision for Stevens Pass. As valued guests of our resort we want you to know the whys of what is happening on the mountain straight from the decision makers rather than learning it through the grapevine. We'll have a new column each week by a number of different people who work at the resort, each tackling a topic of interest to our guests. So stay informed and check out *Inside Stevens* every week.

In this first column we'll discuss the burning question of: *when will you open?* It is a question that comes naturally, and often, this time of year when the first snow begins to fly. It is understandable when we're all excited to be on the slopes again. However, the answer isn't as simple as one would like it to be.

Let me first say, the Stevens Pass philosophy is to open with a quality mountain experience, versus being the first to open. It is more important to us that our guests have as good a snow surface on our primary groomed runs as is possible given the conditions. We believe it is better to start the season with a snow surface and experience our guests will enjoy rather than having you go home disappointed with your first day on the mountain.

Obviously we can't open until we have a sufficient accumulation of snow. As all of us know, the fall weather pattern in the Northwest can be wildly variable and unpredictable. Given this, as a general rule on November 1 we are operationally ready to open in four (4) days of having enough snow and a favorable weather forecast. Then on November 15, we are prepared to open in three (3) days. This timing allows us to complete final on-hill and facility set up, including taking delivery of perishable food and preparing it for the first day.

What is a sufficient accumulation of snow? Our rule of thumb is an accumulation between 24 and 36 inches of snow. Other factors include: the type of snow we receive, how much flow is in the creeks and how frozen is the ground.

The most important of those factors is the type of snow, whether it is wet and heavy or dry and light. Basically, wet snow packs better under our grooming machines thus building a more solid base with a little less accumulation. A dry snow doesn't pack as well therefore requiring greater accumulation. It all has to do with how well the

snowflakes adhere to each other. Think of it like building a snowman. The wetter the snow the better it sticks together to make the body and head. A colder, drier snow is harder to pack into a ball and takes more to make the same size snowman.

Snow accumulation is also important when filling in the numerous creeks that run through the area. The more water flow in the creeks, the more snow it takes to fill them in.

Ideally, the ground has frozen fairly solid as we begin to get snow accumulation. If the ground is frozen the snow packs better and is less susceptible to thawing from underneath when we have those inevitable warm fall days.

Beginning in early November we watch the weather forecasts closely and monitor the mountain to get an idea of when we may be able open. However, it isn't until we have a solid accumulation of snow and a weather forecast that will sustain our operation that we announce an opening day. Historically, our season begins the end of November. While we would like to open by Thanksgiving weekend, it happens only about 50% of the time. When Thanksgiving is early in the month, like this year, it is typical for us to open well after the holiday.

As I write this column, we're ready and excited to get started for the 2007-08 season. Like you, we're waiting for Mother Nature to give us a big dump of snow, preferably the wet kind, so we can start turning the lifts. We'll keep our web site updated daily with the latest snow accumulation and anticipated opening date – so check there often. You can also see what is happening real time by looking at our web cams – we now have two mountain views and a highway view on our site.

Thank you for your interest in Stevens Pass and for taking time to read this column. I hope you find this one, as well as future columns, interesting and informative.

Looking forward to seeing you on the slopes!

John Gifford
General Manager

PS – Questions and comments can be sent to customerservice@stevenspass.com.